

end
child
marriage

A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE



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2024 Annual Results Report

Yemen

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage

Canada



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation



Government of the Netherlands

Norway



UKaid
from the British people



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL
BRIDG A BETTER WORLD
FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



unicef
for every child



“

My life has changed. I was afraid of meeting people before but now I am more confident and independent.

I can now provide all my needs without depending on others.

**a 19-year-old child marriage survivor
who received vocational training
and has since become a successful seamstress**

”





COUNTRY SITUATION

Child marriage remains a major issue in Yemen. There are 3.8 million girls and women living in Yemen today who were married before age 18, 1.3 million of whom were married before they were 15.¹ Currently, nearly 1 in 3 (30 per cent) of young women aged 20 to 24 married before age 18, and 7 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 married before they turned 15.²

Yemen remains politically divided, with weak parliamentary structures in both the north (de facto authority) and the south (internationally recognized government), limiting the ability to review, amend, or enact new legislation. The protracted conflict since 2015 has severely disrupted humanitarian efforts, displacing over 4.8 million people³, including many adolescents. Prolonged violence, economic collapse, and weakened support systems have increased risks such as malnutrition, limited access to education and health, and increased exposure to gender-based violence (GBV). Women and adolescent girls are disproportionately affected, facing restricted access to basic and reproductive health services, food, and education, including restrictions on participating freely in daily activities, and on movement without an adult or male guidance (Maharam). According to the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP)⁴, 6.2 million women and girls face GBV risks, with 90 per cent of rural areas lacking GBV services, including access to programming that addresses child marriage.

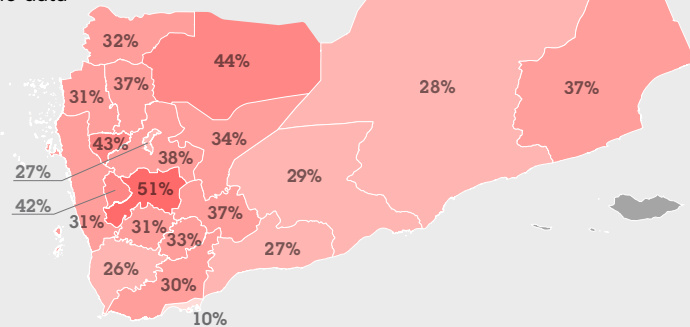
In Yemen's ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis, women and adolescent girls are often deprioritized in favour of life-saving interventions. Adolescent-specific needs – such as vocational training, psychosocial support, and reproductive health – are rarely addressed, especially in the north where such programmes receive minimal funding and pushback from authorities. Limited support for adolescent-focused initiatives, including safe spaces and empowerment programmes, places pressure on families and contributes to child marriage. Extreme weather and climate events have worsened Yemen's humanitarian crisis, compounding the effects of conflict, eco-

conomic collapse, and displacement. Ranked among the world's most climate-vulnerable and least prepared countries, Yemen has limited capacity to cope with climate impacts. In 2024, severe flooding affected 19 governorates and over 500,000 people, destroying homes and livelihoods, displacing families, and contaminating previously safe areas with unexploded ordnance. These conditions have intensified food insecurity, shelter needs, and health risks, especially among internally displaced persons. As a result, families often resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as early marriage. GBV incidents also surged during peak displacement periods: for example, the number of reported GBV cases rose sharply between July and September, coinciding with the peak of the rainy season, which triggered widespread flooding and large-scale displacement.⁵

Prevalence of child marriage in each region of Yemen

0 100

● No data



National prevalence

30%

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18

Absolute number

3.8 million

the total number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before age 18

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations, and are for illustrative purposes only.

¹ Child Marriage Data Portal, Yemen country profile, <https://childmarriagedata.org/country-profiles/yemen/>

² Yemen Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2023

³ 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP):

<https://yemen.un.org/en/287505-yemen-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-january-2025>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UNICEF, Child Protection Report, 2024

2024 YEMEN GLOBAL PROGRAMME KEY RESULTS

18,294 adolescent girls aged 10 to 19 were engaged in the adolescent life skills programme⁶



132 adolescent girls aged 10 to 19 were supported by the Global Programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school



17,125 boys and men, including 300 influential leaders, were engaged in educational discussions addressing harmful masculinities and gender norms, which contributed to averting 33 cases of child marriage, and the re-enrolment of 85 girls in school



350 local actors (200 women and 150 men), such as traditional, religious, and community leaders, were engaged in meaningful dialogues and consensus-building efforts to end child marriage



62,614 individuals (13,474 boys, 28,169 girls, 7,314 women and 13,657 men) participated in community education/ dialogue sessions on the consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality



209,300 people (50,000 girls, 50,300 boys, 30,000 women, and 79,000 men) were reached via social media through five videos on GBV, shared across YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok



The Global Programme mobilized three youth and women-led organizations to support the implementation of the child marriage programme



86,371 children (44,947 girls and 41,424 boys) in programme areas benefited from prevention and protection services, including critical GBV prevention and response



250 adolescent girls (either victims of or at risk of child marriage) benefited from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes through the provision of vocational skills training and start-up kits to support their economic independence



Five formal and informal partnerships were established to deliver poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes

⁶ While quality gender-responsive education for adolescents was provided, the provision of comprehensive sexual education (CSE) was only possible in the south.

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Table 1: Summary of output indicators performance for 2024

	2024	
Indicator	Target	Result
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas	30,000 (adolescent boys and girls)	(18,294 girls 8,947 boys)
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the Programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	200	132
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	N/A	17,125
Indicator 1221: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	20,000	62,614
Indicator 1222: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	300,000	209,300
Indicator 1223: Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	475	350
Indicator 1231: Number of women-led and youth-led, feminist organizations, networks and coalitions of CSOs mobilized by the Global Programme this year in support of challenging social norms, mitigating the pushback and setbacks and promoting gender equality through advocacy, community mobilisation and capacity-building efforts	4	3
Indicator 2102: Number of girls and boys in programme areas who accessed prevention and protection services	N/A	86,371
Indicator 2111: Number of primary/ secondary/ non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	108	88
Indicator 2121: Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/ gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	44	42
Indicator 2201: Number of girls (10-19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes	200	250
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services	5	5
Indicator 3111: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support	2	0
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence-informed interventions to address child marriage implemented	1	0
Indicator 3122: Number of policy and budget analysis documents developed and disseminated to inform budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive planning to address child marriage	N/A	N/A
Indicator 3201: Number of evidence and knowledge products addressing child marriage which have been used in policy decisions, programme design and advocacy	N/A	N/A



MAIN PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024

★ The economic empowerment of adolescent girls:

250 adolescent girls – either survivors of child marriage or at risk of early marriage – received vocational skills training, followed by the provision of start-up kits to help them apply their skills and achieve economic empowerment. As part of post-training support, they also participated in business and small project management training, in partnership with the Technical Education and Vocational Training Office in the governorates. Each girl received economic empowerment grants and starter kits tailored to their chosen field, such as solar-powered sewing machines, fragrance-making materials, canvas painting supplies, accessories, and crochet tools. These kits were selected based on market analysis to ensure the girls could produce marketable products. The initiative aims to foster financial independence, encourage saving habits, boost self-confidence, strengthen social networks, and – particularly for married girls – help ease marital tensions. An ongoing assessment is underway to evaluate the progress, sustainability, and areas for improvement of these interventions.

The story of Nadia⁷, an 18-year-old orphan from northern Yemen who fled her abusive brothers, illustrates the life-changing impact of vocational and life skills training – not only for programme participants but also for those around them⁸. “*I learned how to be self-reliant, how to manage myself, how to be patient and cooperative during the life skills training. In the vocational training, I learned sewing and how to design new clothes,*” said Nadia. Thanks to the sewing machine she received after the training, Nadia has begun making and selling clothes, earning enough income to buy food and other necessities. She has also shared the new knowledge and skills she gained with a friend who frequently visits her and was unable to attend the training, allowing her to use the sewing machine and start her own business as well.

★ The successful prevention of 33 cases of child marriage in villages, and the re-enrolment of 85 girls in school:

While these numbers seem small, this is a good achievement given the current context in Yemen. This progress, which reflects a shift away from resistance to addressing child marriage, is largely attributed to **increased community-level engagement** on the harmful impact of child marriage on adolescent girls and the importance of supporting their development. More specifically, **one of the key strategies adopted by the Global Programme in Yemen is the engagement of men and boys as active agents of change** – advocating for and supporting the realization of women’s and girls’ rights, their development, and their access to life-saving protection, education, and health services. Through the Yemen Women Union (YWU), one of the Global Programme’s implementing partners, a total of 17,125 people – including 11,621 men and 5,504 boys, among them 300 influential leaders – were mobilized in 2024. They contributed to the prevention of cases of child marriage and the re-enrolment of girls in school by actively participating in awareness-raising, group education, and dialogue sessions addressing gender-based violence, child marriage, and other harmful practices.

★ The creation of a network of 68 mosque preachers advocating against child marriage:

The faith leaders engaged by the Global Programme through community dialogues are now using their Friday sermons to raise awareness within their communities on the negative impacts of child marriage.

★ The formation of a National Committee to advocate for child marriage issues, comprising 10 judges and 38 legal trustees (28 in Sanaa and 20 in Hodeida) from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Endowments and Guidance (legal trustees).

⁷ Name was changed to protect the identity of the interviewee.

⁸ UNICEF Yemen, ‘An orphan girl overcomes violence with new skills and determination’, 2024, www.unicef.org/yemen/stories/orphan-girl-overcomes-violence-new-skills-and-determination

PROGRAMME CHALLENGES

The major challenges faced by the Global Programme in Yemen in 2024 include:

Ongoing security and humanitarian crisis constraints:

The ongoing conflict, particularly in northern governorates, limits the ability of NGOs and INGOs to operate effectively and access the intended programme beneficiaries. Security concerns hinder the reach of awareness campaigns and programmes aimed at supporting GBV survivors and those at risk of child marriage. Security constraints also hinder data collection, which is heavily censored by the authorities, particularly in the north. The lack of accurate, up-to-date data on GBV hampers effective monitoring and evaluation, making it difficult to assess the impact of interventions and adjust strategies accordingly.

Restrictions on discussing child marriage and GBV:

Due to local regulations, UNICEF, UNFPA and partners are prohibited from directly addressing child marriage and GBV in certain areas, particularly in the north.

Legal framework issues and weak legal protection for women and children:

In Yemen, the absence of a legal framework to prevent child marriage is compounded by deeply rooted traditional norms and customs, which reinforce and legitimize these restrictions, especially among the many families that prefer early marriage for girls. In addition, the fragmented legal framework and weak enforcement mechanisms for protecting women and children from GBV and child marriage limit the effectiveness of legal protections and support services for survivors.



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Cultural norms that condone harmful practices, including child marriage, GBV, and female genital mutilation (FGM):

These deeply entrenched cultural norms make it difficult to change attitudes and behaviours. Addressing them requires sustained community engagement and ongoing awareness-raising efforts. Despite these constraints, the Global Programme has successfully adapted by discussing child marriage within broader discussions on women's empowerment in rural communities, allowing for continued engagement without violating legal constraints.

Limited funding:

The high demand for cash assistance far exceeds available resources, posing a significant challenge in meeting urgent needs. Many survivors, particularly those living in extreme poverty, face limited access to basic services. Coordinators have worked to carefully assess cases to prioritize those most in need of services. In addition, liquidity shortages in Yemeni banks, especially in northern governorates, have created significant challenges in processing financial transactions, thereby affecting the timely disbursement of funds for project activities. Delays in receiving allocated funds have made it harder to implement planned activities on schedule, creating obstacles for project teams and partners in delivering timely services to beneficiaries. Reduced funding has hindered the ability to scale up GBV and child marriage programmes, limiting their reach and effectiveness in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.



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LESSONS LEARNED

Key lessons learned in 2024 include:

Economic empowerment for adolescent girls cannot be addressed in isolation from other essential services – particularly education: In humanitarian settings, one of the most significant lessons learned is that a holistic approach that combines psychosocial support, life skills, vocational training, and educational assistance ensures that girls gain not only critical knowledge but also practical, market-relevant skills to earn a sustainable income.

Partnering with women-led organizations is essential in a conservative context: Working with women-led organizations with well-established community structures such as women and girls' safe spaces facilitated easier access to vulnerable girls at risk of child marriage and to the community at large. These partnerships enabled the delivery of educational awareness interventions, identification and response to child marriage and GBV cases, and their referrals to specialized protection, legal and health services.

Using schools and community centres (Social Service Centres) as a platform to strengthen adolescent girls' agency through life skills training has proven effective, particularly because it contrasts with other programmes targeting women and girls that are closely monitored by the authorities. This approach allows for meaningful engagement in a less restrictive environment.

Creating safe and supportive spaces – including those offering vocational training and life skills – is essential for adolescent girls, particularly in conservative contexts like Yemen: Girl-only spaces, such as women and girls safe spaces (WGSS) and literacy classes, provide privacy and safety, enabling girls to learn, socialize, and express themselves freely. These environments help them focus on their education and economic activities without fear of harm, abuse, or judgment. Many adolescent girls participating in these programmes have mentioned that this is the only opportunity they have to leave their homes and connect with peers outside their immediate family or neighbourhood.

A holistic approach that actively engages communities, families, and local leaders in challenging harmful gender norms and practices has proven effective in empowering girls to participate in economic empowerment initiatives and pursue formal education. Involving local communities – including men and boys – in addressing GBV and child protection is essential. Community buy-in and participation lead to more sustainable outcomes and a greater impact. In addition,



involving children and youth in programme design and implementation ensures their needs and perspectives are meaningfully addressed. This approach fosters resilience and empowers them to become active participants in their own protection and well-being.

Given the current context in Yemen, it is more effective to focus programming on the implementation of direct services for adolescent girls – such as education, psychosocial support, and vocational training – rather than on policy and legal reforms, which are unlikely to be achieved in the short term.⁹

Programmes must remain flexible and responsive to shifting political, social, and emergency contexts: Collaborative efforts among UNICEF, UNFPA, local governments, and NGOs help maximize resources, reach, and technical expertise. Clearly defined roles and strong cooperation enhance the efficiency and impact of interventions. Ongoing training and capacity-building for local partners strengthen their ability to address child protection, GBV, and harmful social norms.

⁹ Due to the country's division and political context.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Global Programme's **priorities in Yemen for 2025** include:

➤ **Prioritizing access to social protection and economic empowerment programmes** to support adolescent girls at risk or survivors of child marriage. In addition, vocational training and economic empowerment initiatives can serve as effective entry points, particularly in the north, for introducing broader protection interventions;

➤ **Providing education, awareness, and local advocacy to combat child marriage and FGM in Yemen, through the partnership with the civil society organization (CSO) Human Access:** Key efforts include life skills training for teachers and students in high-risk schools in Hodeida and Taiz; community awareness sessions and dialogues across five governorates (Aden, Marib, Lahaj, Taiz, and Hodeida); distribution of educational materials and media campaigns; and support to local networks in Hodeida and Taiz to advocate against FGM and promote alternatives to child marriage. A community needs assessment will be conducted through focus group discussions in each targeted governorate to identify community needs and priorities related to child marriage prevention.

The Response and Support Services will provide case management services in collaboration with social affairs offices for children at risk of or affected by child marriage, along with vocational training programmes for survivors of child marriage and FGM, including on-the-job training opportunities to enhance employability skills, piloted with eight survivors. Finally, empowerment kits will be provided to graduates of vocational and on-the-job training programmes to support their economic independence;

➤ **Continuing partnerships with youth and women-led organizations** in southern Yemen to lead community-level implementation of the programme; and

➤ **Continuing to sensitize local authorities, religious leaders, lawyers, judges, and local law enforcement** about the negative consequences of harmful practices such as child marriage, while also working with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Endowments and Guidance **to advocate for the drafting of a national action plan to end child marriage and other harmful practices.**



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