

BUILDING CHILDREN'S RESELIENCE

CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY CENTERS NEEDED FOR PROTECTION OF YEMEN'S CHILDREN

GROWING PROTECTION NEEDS

Yemen has been experiencing a protracted and complex crisis for over 11 years, resulting in the widespread destruction of infrastructure, the collapse of essential public services, and a sustained economic downturn, alongside the fragmentation of public institutions. Within this fragile context, displaced populations—particularly girls, boys, and women—face heightened vulnerability and have an increasing need for well-organized support through comprehensive child protection activities.

UNICEF COMMUNITY CENTERS IN YEMEN

Today, UNICEF works through eight community centers to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable girls and boys in Yemen in this context by providing them with a range of structured activities and services. These centers provide safe public spaces for girls and boys from diverse social backgrounds and engage them in social and recreational activities while accessing integrated protection services. Caregivers are also included in awareness sessions and open days.

UNICEF also supports adolescent girls at risk of child marriage and Gender Based Violence (GBV) through awareness, safe referrals, psychosocial support, life skills, and vocational training. In addition, it strengthens access to justice for children through documentation services, child-sensitive referrals, and coordination with justice actors.

YEMEN SITUATION IN NUMBERS¹



- > **9.6 MILLION** children and women need humanitarian assistance.
- > **4.8 MILLION** Internally displaced people (IDPs)- 1.6 million are in Marib IDPs.
- > **6.19 MILLION** women and girls face GBV risks, (90% of rural areas lack GBV services).
- > **12,000 CHILDREN** were killed or maimed due to the conflict between March 2015 and the end of September 2025.²
- > **3.2 million children** aged between 5-17 are out of school.
- > **29%** of children under 5 have birth certificates.
- > **5 million people with disabilities;** (21% of children between 5 and 17 have a form of disability).

¹ Yemen Humanitarian Response & Needs Plan 2025

² According to the United Nations Country Taskforce on Monitoring and Reporting Grave Violations against Children, 2025.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY COMMUNITY CENTERS

1. Psychosocial support (PSS) and psychological first aid through structured, recreational activities to help children and families cope with distress.
2. Referral to free specialized mental health treatment centers.
3. Support for obtaining civil documentation, including birth certificates, to help children access their rights and essential services.
4. Provision of legal aid and legal representation for vulnerable individuals, including sensitive child protection cases, in coordination with the Ministry of Justice.
5. Health, medical and nutrition screening services by doctors, including the identification of health and nutrition concerns and referral to appropriate healthcare providers.
6. Case management services for vulnerable and at risk children followed by referral to service including conditional emergency cash assistance for critical cases to cover essential needs of the most vulnerable children.
7. Awareness and counseling sessions for families on psychosocial, social, legal, and health-related topics.
8. Referral to economic empowerment and livelihood support services for children and their families.

UNICEF COMMUNITY CENTERS IN NUMBERS



8

Centers in Aden, Marib, Taiz, and Lahj.

9

Team members in each center.

2,250

Annual number of beneficiaries per center.

IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Children are identified and referred to UNICEF-supported Community Centers through an integrated, multi-sectoral child protection approach that links schools, health facilities, community structures, and specialized referral pathways. Teachers, healthcare workers, social workers, and community-based personnel play a key role in identifying vulnerable and at-risk children and referring them for appropriate support services.

WHY GIRLS AND BOYS NEED COMMUNITY CENTERS MORE THAN EVER?

A community center can be the bridge a vulnerable child may use to survive. Married off at the age of 13, Amat wouldn't have been able to stand again on her feet if it wasn't for a social worker from a community center in Marib, who identified her case and provided her with support.

16-year-old Amat arrived at the community center in early 2026, after hearing about its services from a community member. At just 16, she was taking care of two children, while her husband was ill and unable to work. She faced overwhelming financial and emotional challenges.

Through the community center in Marib, where most displaced people reside³, Amat was engaged in a handcraft and handmade accessories training. She quickly developed strong skills, enabling her to produce and sell items such as shawls, head coverings, and woolen garments. Today, she markets her products within the camp and through WhatsApp groups, generating a stable source of income to support her family.

Amat's journey reflects a powerful transformation from vulnerability and hardship to resilience and self-reliance. She is now a confident young woman who believes in her ability to shape her future and has become a source of inspiration for other girls in her community.

Amat is one of more than 18,000 children and adolescents UNICEF worked to serve through these community centers, while aspiring to continue extending the support to more children, who have different situations created by the conflict.



Amat AL-Ghafoor, 16, shows her products to sell them. The training Amat received in a UNICEF supported community center in Marib enabled her to have a stable source of income. © UNICEF/UNI998048/Hasan

CHALLENGES

Community centers are operating in an increasingly complex and constrained environment. Some of the challenges they face are:

- **Growing protection needs:** Children are facing increasing protection risks, as well as greater exposure to violence and exploitation.
- **Funding gaps:** Insufficient and unpredictable funding threatens the continuity of these centers. Currently, there is no funding secured for centers beyond 2026.
- **Limited coverage:** The number of centers remains limited compared to the scale of needs, particularly in IDP camps and underserved communities.
- **Overstretched referral pathways:** Health, education, legal, mental health, and livelihood services are often overstretched or unavailable, making it difficult for community centers to connect children with specialized support.
- **Heavy staff caseloads:** Social workers and community-center teams are managing high caseloads and increasingly complex cases, requiring sustained training, supervision, and resources to maintain quality and child-sensitive support.

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³ 1.6 million IDPs out of 4.8 million IDPs in Yemen live in Marib governorate.