

An abstract painting featuring a large, yellow and orange coffin-like shape in the foreground. A hand is visible inside the coffin. The background is dark and textured with various colors like red, green, and blue. The painting is divided into sections by white diagonal lines.

Colored Coffins

RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN
THE ARMED CONFLICT IN YEMEN
APRIL 2013 - DECEMBER 2018



Mwatana
for Human Rights

July 2020



Mwatana is an independent Yemeni organization involved in defending human rights. Mwatana started in 2007, but the former regime of president Ali Abdullah Saleh declined to provide the organization with the permit even after re-submitting the request for several years. With the 2011 uprising that ended Saleh's regime, Mwatana was able to obtain the necessary permit on April 23, 2013. In 2018, the Baldwin Award recognized our work. Human Rights First announced awarding the 2018 Roger N. Baldwin Medal of Liberty to Mwatana. In the same year, the 10th International Hrant Dink Award was granted to Mwatana for informing the world about the status of human rights in Yemen and for struggling against rights violations in the country

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APRIL 2013 - DECEMBER 2018

This study was prepared by Mwatana for Human Rights (MWATANA) in cooperation with an expert



Sanaa, July 2020

www.mwatana.org

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Executive Summary

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Non-recruited children in Yemeni society are exposed to constant recruitment attempts. This suggests that recruiting parties are persisting in their child recruitment strategies.

Executive Summary

Mwatana for Human Rights conducted a study on child recruitment and the use of child soldiers in the armed conflict in Yemen. The study is the first of its kind devoted to the phenomena of child recruitment, examining its causes, mechanisms, direct effects and possible future directions. The study was based on information collected by a trained team of Mwatana field research assistants. The study used systematic, individual interviews as the data collection tool. The study sample consists of 50 interviews with recruited children, and 45 interviews with guardians of recruited children. To gain additional indicators on the possible future outlook of the phenomenon, Mwatana also conducted fact-finding interviews with 90 children who had not been recruited and guardians of children who had not been recruited but who live in an active recruiting environment. Moreover, interviews were conducted with three people involved in child recruitment in order to gain a better understanding of recruitment mechanisms.

The study covered 19 governorates in Yemen: Sanaa (the city), Sanaa governorate, Amran, Sa'adah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Al-Mahweet, Raimah, Al-Jawf, Hodeidah, Taiz, Aden, Ibb, Lahj, Abyan, Marib, Shabwah, Al-Baidha and Hadramout. The sample cases were selected from these governorates taking into account the characteristics of child recruitment, its dimensions and to ensure that the cases included all the parties involved in child recruitment, namely: Ansar Allah (the Houthi armed group), the Yemeni army forces affiliated with the internationally recognized government, forces loyal to the internationally recognized government, forces affiliated with the UAE-Backed Southern Transitional Council, the Joint Forces lead by Tariq Saleh (the nephew of the former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh), Yemeni army brigades affiliated with the Saudi/UAE-led coalition stationed in the southern Saudi borders, and Ansar Al-Sharia.

Section I

Legal Framework Prohibiting the Use and Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Armed Conflicts

This section provides an overview of the international and Yemeni legal frameworks prohibiting child recruitment and use in armed conflicts. The section looks at the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), Additional Protocols I and II of the Geneva Conventions, the Optional Protocol of the CRC and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which regards recruitment of children under 15 a war crime. As far as Yemeni law is concerned, Act 45 on the Rights of Children, issued in 2002, strictly bans recruiting children under the age of 18 or engaging them directly in war. The present study discusses some gaps that exist in Yemeni law, particularly given the current rules do not cover various other aspects of child recruitment and

use, including indirect engagement of children in hostilities, fails to establish mechanisms to prohibit recruitment of children, nor ensure accountability for violations and processes for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Section II

Causes of Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers in the Armed Conflict in Yemen

Economic conditions are a major cause of child recruitment in the armed conflict in Yemen. Poverty often compels Yemeni families, some allowing their children to participate in the conflict to provide their minimum, necessary survival needs and others allowing their children to be recruited in order to increase the family's utterly limited income. There are also some cases where children join the army themselves because they feel the hardship of living under poverty and they find their families unable to provide their personal needs. Economic reasons account for 40.7% of the causes for child recruitment based on the study sample.

Social reasons (which account for 37.8%) play an important role in driving child recruitment. Yemen is considered a low-educated country with widespread illiteracy. Influence and social pressure, based on widespread social norms that normalize and further child recruitment, also drive many children to join military units of different parties to the conflict. For example, there exist social norms which advocate that children be viewed as capable to take responsibility, including to carry arms and fight. Political and ideological reasons, on the other hand, accounted for 14.1% of the interviewees' cited causes of child recruitment. These included ideological allegiance to the recruiting party, as well as political and ideological affiliation and or support to a particular political issue. The desire to carry and use weapons and to imitate adults who participate in the war in some environments was found to be the least significant cause, only cited by 7.4% of the sample.

Although these reasons vary in terms of importance, they all play an influential role. It would be difficult to ascribe the phenomenon of child recruitment to one single cause—in many cases, multiple causes, or push factors, were at play. For example, not all poor families allow or encourage their children to fight. In other words, if the poverty factor does not combine with another factor, for example social pressure through the influence of relatives and friends, it may not necessarily lead to child recruitment. The co-occurrence of both economic and social push factors was seen in a large percentage of children recruited who cited economic reasons.

Likewise, causes for child recruitment vary by different warring parties. Economic reasons, for instance, played a less important role in recruiting children into Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces than social reasons and the reverse for the national army affiliated with the internationally recognized government, the forces loyal to the government, the UAE-backed forces of the Southern Transitional Council, the forces

affiliated with the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and the forces of Tariq Saleh. One potential explanation for this is that economic expectations—in terms of pay and other material benefits—from both the child and his family when recruited by Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces are relatively less than those for other forces. For this reason, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group depends on its social influence as well as ideological and political factors more than other recruiting parties, with the exception of Ansar Al-Sharia, whose child recruits are mainly influenced by ideological factors.

Section III

Patterns and Mechanisms of Child Recruitment

Compulsory child recruitment (i.e. recruiting by force) accounted for 55.8% of the sample and can be regarded as the prevailing pattern of child recruitment. This includes recruiting children while threatening the family, abducting children and recruiting them without their family's consent. Voluntary recruitment (i.e. with family authorization) accounted for 44.2% of the sample cases, a relatively high percentage compared to compulsory recruitment. "Voluntary" recruitment does, however, include instances where families felt compelled to allow their children to be recruited due to deteriorating economic conditions, social influence or ideological mobilization. Children are not often mobilized for recruitment individually. 80% of the sample of the present study were recruited collectively. In other words, recruitment was carried out through collective mobilization in small and large groups, suggesting how important social influence of other children is in this phenomenon.

The parties to the conflict assigned people from different social groups to recruit children and to make it more attractive to them, such as mobilizing supervisors, children's relatives and friends and, to lesser degree, parents and brothers. Different parties followed different mechanisms to recruit children. Ansar Allah (Houthi armed group) promoted the idea of 'Jihad' to influence children, whereas the army of the internationally recognized government and other forces often recruited children by offering financial benefits.

Section IV

Conflict and Recruitment Dynamics

Child recruitment has taken an upward trend in the conflict, i.e. recruitment increases as the conflict continues. Children play an important role in fighting and providing security for the warring parties. A large percentage of children have been killed (31.6%) from the overall sample of those recruited, demonstrating there is a high level of reliance upon children for fighting and security tasks. This in turn indicates at least part of the reason why parties to the conflict continue recruiting child soldiers – their participation is viewed as considerably important to all parties.

There is an ongoing debate on the phenomenon of child recruitment in Yemeni

society. There are some conflicting trends related to this phenomenon during the continuing conflict. Despite the fact that child recruitment has a tendency to rise, 11.6% of families which agreed to have their children recruited changed their position and had their children return back to the family. These families took their children back for several reasons, including fear for their children's lives (especially as fighting escalated) and improvements in household income. 17.19% of the recruited children left their units for different reasons which had nothing to do with pressures experienced by their families. People's posture towards recruitment (such as after being exposed to bad recruiting practices) can change based on changes of social position as well as the development of conflict dynamics. Moreover, economic intervention for families whose children have been recruited also appears able to reduce the magnitude of the phenomenon and impact its course in a positive way.

Section V

Violations against Recruited Children and Family's Reactions

Child recruitment is considered a violation of national and international law. It also exposes children to other dangers and abuses, including death, injury, rape and sexual violence. Recruited children have also been subjected to harsh conditions, had severe bodily injuries and been maltreated. The study shows that 68.4% of children recruited in the sample suffered from different dangers and abuses by parties to the conflict, including being killed during confrontations with the other party, abduction, rape and sexual violence.

The reactions of children's families towards the dangers to which their children were exposed (specifically their deaths) were generally muted due to constraints which neither offer opportunities for them to express their stance openly nor allow them to take legal action in the case of violations due to the absence of the rule of law in the context of the conflict. The majority of families held recruiting parties responsible for dangers or abuses to which their children were exposed, while 30% of the families blamed the party that directly caused the suffering of the recruited child (for example, the opposing party if the child was killed during fighting). This indicates that the social attitude is not determined by the accompanying violations to child recruitment.

Section VI

Direct Effects of Child Recruitment

There are many negative effects of recruiting child soldiers. Three major negative effects that came out of the study are highlighted. School dropout is one of the main negative effects of this phenomenon. 90.5% of the recruited children were school boys prior to recruitment. These children have lost their education as they believe that recruitment may provide them with future opportunities which they believe may not be attained by continuing their education, for example getting a permanent job in

the military. Moreover, child recruitment results in changes in thought and behavior which impact children's manner of thinking about the future on the one hand and dealing with family and society, on the other, for example, acquiring ideas from the recruiting party and attempting to take on new roles inconsistent with their age. Another major negative effect of child recruitment is the expansion of carrying weapons in society. 69.5% of the recruited children did not carry weapons prior to recruitment. However, they now carry weapons, including in areas where arms proliferation was not common.

Section VII

Child Soldiers Recruitment – A Future Outlook

According to the study's findings, the majority of recruited children are eager to leave their units in cases where living conditions improve. On the contrary, only 18.9% of the recruited children expressed their interest to continue in their units. 15.1% of the recruited children answered "I do not know" when asked whether they would leave their units.

Given that the majority of recruited children wanted to leave units if living conditions have improved, the economic factor again appears an essential factor determining the evolution of the phenomenon. Thus, improvement in the economic sphere is likely to limit the expansion of the child recruitment phenomenon. However, achieving economic improvement that can be reflected in the whole population may not occur if the conflict continues. In other words, the positive impact of improved economic circumstances depends on ending the conflict. If the conflict does not stop, children are likely to continue being recruited, perhaps at increased rates, due to deteriorating living conditions.

Through assessing the likelihood of the expansion of child recruitment by conducting scoping interviews with non-recruited children living in an active recruiting environment, it was found that non-recruited children who expressed interest to be recruited accounted for 57.7% of these interviews, whereas those who did not express interest were 42.3%, some of whom opposed the idea of child recruitment more broadly. The majority of non-recruited children appeared strongly inclined to be recruited and join fighting. They believed that recruitment was a way to get money and gain weapons, which some have been dreaming to attain.

Moreover, exposure to recruitment efforts is high, with the result that families' control of their children, especially those who are inclined to be recruited, has weakened. The study shows that exposure to recruitment amongst non-recruited children accounted for 53.8% of the sample. Likewise, 73.1% of the respondent parents revealed that they have concerns that their children may engage in recruitment in the future without their knowledge.

Key Recommendations

Despite the fact that child recruitment occurred in Yemen prior to the current conflict, connected to factors such as the political and social structure, political instability, lack of resources, proliferation of fighting and widespread norms and values that normalize children carrying arms, child recruitment as it currently exists cannot be understood nor adequately addressed without understanding its form in the context of the current conflict.

We must first recognize that children recruitment has been a central element of this war, rather than a minor factor. To address child recruitment, the international community should adopt a comprehensive vision that combines remedies and solutions to put an end to the phenomenon. The vision should also include strategies for ending the conflict entirely, and achieving a comprehensive and fair political settlement. This would lay the groundwork for rearranging political structures in Yemen and restoring peace for the whole nation.

In addition, the following recommendations can be made to the international community:

Strengthening resilience to recruitment for the child and the family

1. Undertake an immediate program to assist families whose children have left fighting forces after being recruited aimed at reintegrating them into society, including by accommodating them in schools and paying special attention to girls who have been recruited and may be at risk of social stigma.
2. Consider a program to support children's return to school and adopt effective mechanisms to monitor school dropout and support conflict sensitive education.
3. Intensify humanitarian aid within mass displacement environments to overcome difficulties of integration within host communities.
4. Resume the "cash for work" program, which provided temporary job opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers through labor-intensive projects implemented by the World Bank by the Social Fund for Development during earlier periods.
5. Consider a program devoted to injured, formerly recruited children provided that they do not go back to fighting.
6. Consider the establishment of assistance programs for poor families who have had their children recruited and examine whether assistance can be tied to families' committing not to facilitate their children's recruitment in the future.
7. Render legal assistance to families whose children have been abducted, killed and those who suffered grave violations due to child recruitment and use in the conflict.

Special measures for ending child recruitment in the course of ending the conflict

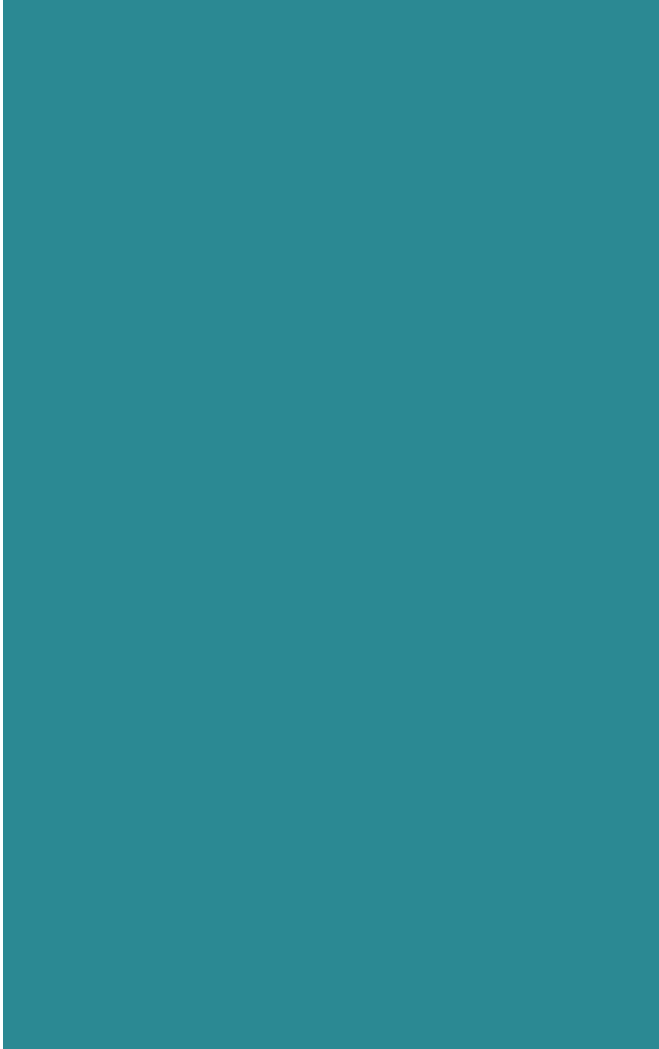
1. Ensure the collective release of children recruited by all parties to the conflict as a step towards paving the way to reach a political settlement, rather than postponing this step by treating it as a result of an intended settlement.
2. Consider collective release of recruited children and a commitment to stop child recruitment as confidence building measures between the warring parties.
3. Warring parties should collectively release all children who have been recruited, with a priority on those currently detained, and disclose information related to child soldiers, including informing families of the identities of children killed.
4. Begin negotiations between the major warring parties with an aim for them to commit not to use starvation as a method of warfare, and to reach an agreement for paying salaries of civil servants, facilitating the flow of basic food commodities, humanitarian aid and humanitarian and other essential commodities.
5. Ensure a commitment to end child recruitment and their use in conflict is included in any prospective political settlement, as well as substantial guarantees for child soldiers' release, and demobilization and reintegration activities within a specified time frame, and supervised by the United Nations.
6. Include in a political settlement a ban on integrating forces of the parties to the conflict into the official army if these forces still have recruited children in their ranks, or individuals were children at the time of recruitment.

Strengthening the legal and institutional framework

1. Operationalize the action plan signed by the government and the United Nations regarding the release of recruited child soldiers, stopping re-recruitment, seriously following up its implementation and creating mechanisms for the supervisory role of the United Nations.
2. Exert pressure on other parties to the conflict and develop similar action plans as that signed by the government and follow up on their implementation.
3. Increase reports by organizations interested in children that cover developments in the phenomenon of child recruitment in Yemen.

Strengthening local and international partnership for children

1. Raise the level of cooperation between child rights NGOs and civil society institutions working in Yemen, to strengthen monitoring and documentation of the phenomenon of child recruitment and to assist in conducting in-depth studies of the phenomenon at the level of the most enlisted governorates.
2. Conduct proactive workshops aimed at designing reintegration and rehabilitation programs for children recruited and used in the conflict, including with a focus on psychological and social care, and through learning from experiences of countries that witnessed similar civil conflict, with broad participation from civil society organizations.



Introduction

Introduction

Yemen is one of the countries witnessing an internal armed conflict in which hundreds, and maybe thousands, of child soldiers are engaged. Persistent reports and information from the human rights sector indicate that the number of recruited soldiers is continuously rising in Yemen, primarily because the conflict in such a poor and war-torn country presents a fertile context for the expansion of this phenomenon, the diversification of its methods and mechanisms, and the deepening of its negative societal effects.

Yemen houses tribal communities which often do not ban child recruitment, but rather encourage it. The tribe is typically considered the first recruiter for children prior to the eruption of the conflict at the end of the year 2014. Many tribes have been known to use child soldiers in their conflict with other tribes as well as their confrontation with government forces. During the confrontations between the government and Ansar Allah (Houthis) group from 2004 to 2009, pro-regime tribes participated in this conflict using hundreds of child soldiers. Ansar Allah (Houthis) used more or less the same number of recruited children.

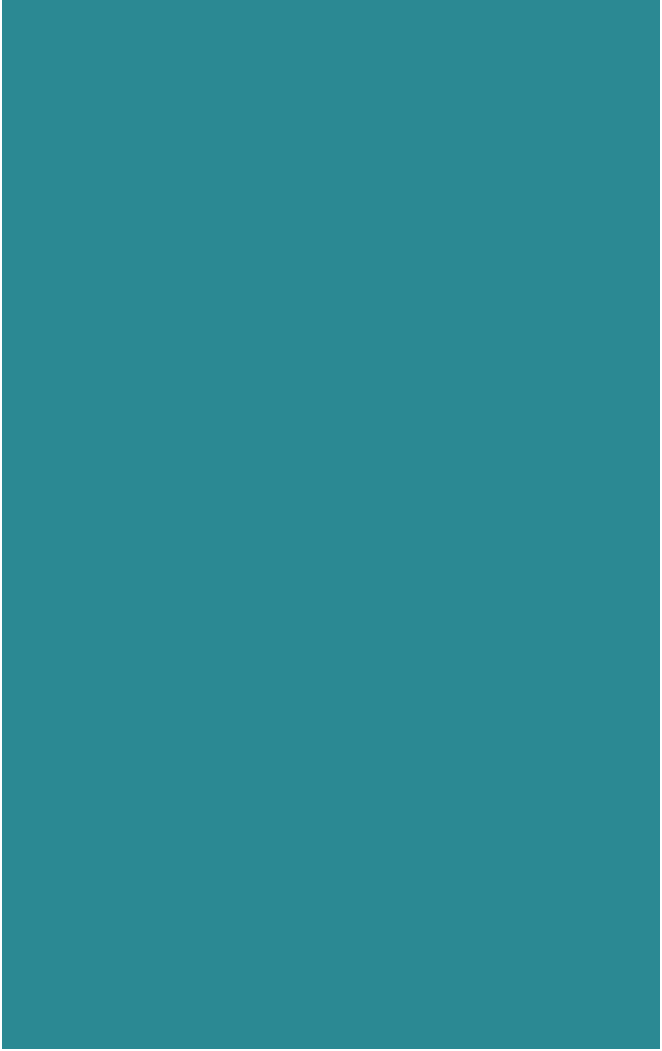
Following the breakout of the conflict in Yemen with the control of Sanaa' (the capital city of Yemen) by Ansar Allah (Houthis) group in September 2014 and the military intervention by Coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia and UAE in March 2015, many young fighters found an open space to participate in the armed conflict. However, they dispersed over the different conflict parties and they no longer acted to defend their tribal interests but rather the recruiting party to which they belong. The tribe has become a means of recruitment in the interest of certain parties to the conflict, and no longer practices recruiting for confrontation with other tribes.

Due to the persistence of the conflict in different Yemeni districts, child recruitment expanded even to some districts in which carrying weapons was unacceptable such as Aden, Taiz, Hodeida, and Hadramout. It is here where conflict and poverty converged, and the lack of social awareness among several families has made it possible to increase the rate of child recruitment in these districts. The conflict has become gradually rampant in all Yemeni districts and there seem no significant differences in its spread across Yemeni districts and its continued ability to draw in thousands of children.

Unfortunately, recruiting children has become an integral part of conflict practices and an 'ideal' means for penetrating society to pull it into cycles of war to make people adapted to it. Despite the variations of child recruitment levels among conflict parties and the diversity of methods and purposes for which different parties use children, many of these parties keep broadening the phenomenon making its effects devastating on society as they are persistent to continue moving on such an illegal and immoral conduct.

Therefore, the present study addresses the phenomenon of child recruitment in Yemen during the armed conflict employing a comprehensive methodology that expands angles of consideration to include all aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon to analyze its complex nature, explore it in-depth and identify its root causes and its dynamics and functioning mechanisms in social reality. The study is the result of collaborative work by Mwatana for Human Rights and the academic community (which holds the tools for examining such a complicated phenomenon) as well as a constructive collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). These efforts fall within the framework of the joint attention to human rights which focus on the humanitarian situations during the armed conflict, monitor violations to play an active role in defending rights cases without bias or prejudice. What distinguishes this study from earlier works conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights is that the present study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the phenomenon of child recruitment during the armed conflict in Yemen. The study is based on data that has been collected comprehensively and systematically using an analytical and explanatory approaches rather than monitoring and documentation based on the criteria normally followed in conducting scientific research taking into account the characteristics of legal discourse.

The current study serves as one of the pioneer studies that Mwatana aims to carry out in the future, which are conducted to achieve the desired goals and contribute to developing new and comprehensive approaches to promote the status of human rights in Yemen. The study is based on interpretation and in-depth realistic analysis of the phenomenon of child recruitment which involves grave violations of human rights. It should be mentioned that the study is foundational due to the fact that there is a lack of studies on child recruitment in the Yemeni and Arabic contexts alike. Nevertheless, the study has certain limitations due to the novelty of the subject and the difficulties arising from the delicacy of the topic.



General framework of the Study

| General framework of the Study

Study Objectives

- To achieve a set of quantitatively supported comprehensive and logical deductions for identifying the characteristics of the phenomenon of child recruitment within the context of armed conflict in Yemen, its causes and dimensions and predict its future directions.
- To provide recommendations, remedies and practical procedures for the international, regional and local actors and organizations working in human rights to help reduce this phenomenon, stop its spread, remedy its future effects in collaboration with efforts to stop the war and include prohibiting and criminalizing child recruitment in all its forms in any future political settlement.

Methodology

The study follows a mixed-mode methodology employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. It analyzed the relations and correlations between the elements of the phenomenon using quantitative data which were collected by Mwatana field research team who trained and equipped with adequate guidance of the research tool and its proper use for research purposes. The study was expanded in order to explore some relevant ambiguous meanings and conduct logical analysis for the field data. The study was carried out using the following procedure:

Identifying the population and sample

The population of the study covers recruited children (male and female) and their families; however, the overall number of recruited children in Yemen has not been clearly defined. Therefore, to establish a solid ground, the study used the number of recruited children mentioned in the United Nations' report regarding violations against children between April 2013 to December 2018 in Yemen. The number of recruited children in the report is 3034 and so this number was designated as the population of the study. Based on this number, a sample of 95 individuals were selected (50 recruited children and 45 relatives of recruited children, the majority of whom are parents). It could be said that the sample of the study is representative for the purpose of the study and sufficient to establish the reliability of the results for the following reasons:

- The population of the study is relatively homogeneous as it consists of children and families who are subjected to similar circumstances. It can also be said that the results of the study are reliable and generalizable because the sample of the study has been chosen from geographical areas in which active recruitment actions are carried out and thus the sample is likely to include age and social characteristics of the population.

- The sample size fits the analytical nature of the study which aims to interpret the phenomenon of child recruitment and its association with the dynamics and transformations of the conflict.
- The sample size fits investigating highly sensitive phenomena in the context of armed conflict as it reduces access constraints to field information.
- In addition to the information generated from the sample, interviews were conducted with other citizens, non-recruited children in active recruiting environments and people who are loyal to parties that practice recruitment as well as people who have practiced recruitment. This approach was useful to collect the required information, helped achieving the research objectives and included all the dimensions of the phenomenon.

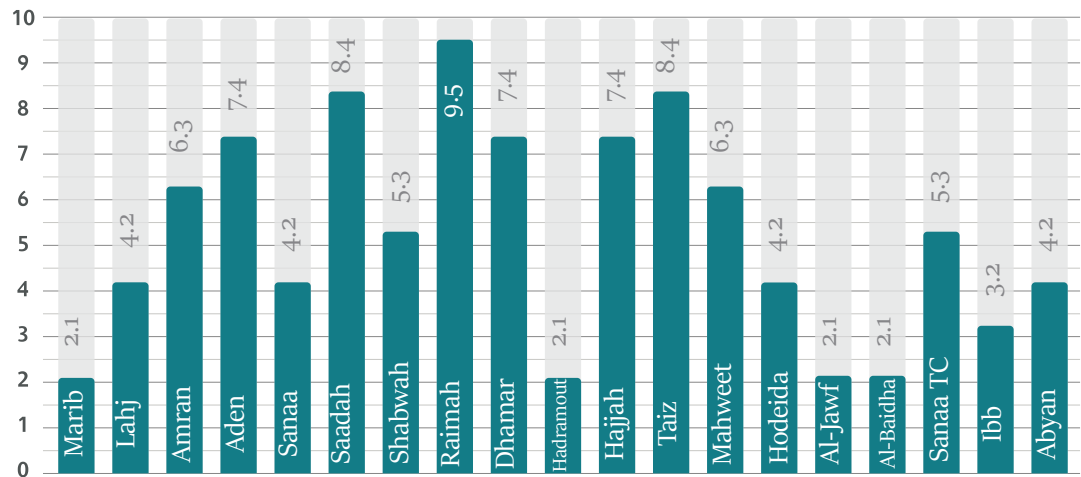
The selection of the sample

The geographical areas which were considered active child recruitment environments in Yemen were identified. These included 19 Yemeni governorates namely Sana'a (the capital city), Sana'a (the governorate), Amran, Saadah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Mahwaet, Raimah, Al-Jawf, Hodeida, Taiz, Aden, Ibb, Lahj, Abyan, Marib, Shabwah, Al-Baidha and Hadramout^[1]. These governorates reflect diversity within the Yemeni local environments as they include almost all warring parties which recruit and use children in the conflict namely Ansar Allah (Houthis), the national army of the internationally recognized government, the forces loyal to the government, the UAE-backed forces of the Southern Transitional Council, the brigade forces of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, forces of Tariq Saleh and Ansar Al-Sharia. The sample of the study was selected using the following procedure:

1. Some specific districts (within the aforementioned governorates) which are believed to be the most active recruiting environments were selected. For example, some governorates are under joint control of some warring parties and therefore they have different recruitment levels.
2. The sample (95 cases) was selected from the aforementioned governorates based on the condensed recruitment activity, heavily populated areas as well as the actual accessibility (See Figure 1).

[1] The researcher could not have access to Al-Dhali' governorate (which is believed to be an active recruitment by UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces and the stronghold of the Southern Transitional Council) due to logistics reasons on the one hand and the study was carried out while there were confrontations between the army of the internationally recognized government and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council. Moreover, Al-Maharah governorate was excluded due to difficulty accessing recruited children engaged in fighting for financial benefits.

Figure 1. Distribution of the Sample on the governorates under study



3. Since the areas controlled by Ansar Allah (Houthis) are the most heavily populated areas and they witness a wide range of child recruitment based on United Nations reports, 55.8% of the sample was selected from the recruited children in Ansar Allah (Houthis) and the rest of the sample was selected from other parties (See Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the Sample across Parties recruiting children

Recruiting party	Percentage %
Ansar Allah (Houthis)	55.8
The army of the Internationally recognized government	24.2
The forces loyal to the Internationally recognized government	3.2
UAE-Backed Southern Transitional Council	10.5
Ansar Al-Sharia group	2.1
The Joint Forces led by Tariq Saleh	2.1
The Army Brigades of the Arab Coalition led by Saudi and UAE ^[2]	2.1
Total	100

The respondents in each governorate were selected based on a certain quota and the information available on the most active child recruiting districts within the respective governorates as well as accessibility to recruitment environments.

4. The respondents in each governorate were selected based on accessibility and

[2] The Army Brigades of the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition consist of Yemeni recruited soldiers some of whom belong to the army of the internationally recognized government and some others are civilian volunteers. These brigades were formed by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition with the initiation of its military operations for the protection of the borders between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

random sampling taking into account basic characteristics of sampling.

5. In addition to interviews with child soldiers, other interviews were also conducted with non-recruited children as well as people whose children are not recruited in active recruitment environment. These interviews were conducted to obtain indicators on the evolution of the phenomenon. Three interviews were also conducted with people who have recruited children into Ansar Allah (Houthis) forces to explore the mechanisms used in recruitment.

Data collection tool

Interviews were determined as the data collection tool in the present study due to the fact that children are likely to face difficulties to deal with information with other data collection tools such as questionnaires which require written information.

The individual interviews (close-ended and open-ended interviews) are considered a good instrument for collecting data as they allow researchers to direct questions in a simple language that is likely understood by respondents. It also makes it possible to repeat some questions, clarify some points and discuss with the respondents in cases they raise some issues that are not mentioned in the interview questions. Individual interviews are interactive in nature as they allow the researcher to take notice of the body language used and evaluate the extent to which respondents express the truth. Another reason that influenced the selection of the individual interview is that collective interviewing restricts freedom of interviewees and they are difficult to carry out in the present circumstances. Structured interviews were then designed based on the target groups. Structured interviews are likely to reduce answering randomly and help the researcher to focus on the questions to collect useful information for the research purpose.

Structure of the study

The study comprises seven major sections:

Section I

In this section, the phenomenon of child recruitment is described in terms of its size, geographical distribution and parties carrying out child recruitment. It provides a brief contextual analysis for the political, economic and human rights conditions in the context of the Yemeni conflict. It also provides a legal framework for the study by reviewing the legal literature locally and internationally on prohibiting child recruitment and using them in armed conflicts. Moreover, it provides definitions of some concepts such as child, recruitment as well as some other terms related to them and sheds light on United Nations efforts to end this phenomena and reactions to these efforts by the local community. The section wraps up by identifying the general characteristics of the phenomenon based on the sample of the study.

Section II

This section addresses the different causes of child recruitment in the context of the conflict and their interrelationships. It also determines the substantial differences between the causes of recruitment for the urban and rural areas, between parties to the conflict carrying out child recruitment.

Section III

This section addresses patterns, types and mechanisms of child recruitment among the recruitment parties as well as the methods they use to attract children for recruitment and the people who work in recruitment.

Section VI

This section investigates the relationship between recruitment and conflict in order to address the child recruitment phenomenon as an integral component in the system of war, and being an essential component of parties' objectives. In this section, the study examines the upward trend of child recruitment and the actual engagement levels and its significance for the warring parties. Moreover, this section also examines the effect of conflict dynamics on families' stance towards recruitment and the significance of change in stance on the continuation of the conflict.

Section V

This section addresses the types of violations against recruited children, the parties involved in child recruitment and the stance of families of recruited children as well as the significance of the change of stance towards this phenomenon.

Section VI

This section sheds light on the direct effects of recruitment by looking into some characteristics of the phenomenon and the implications derived from the sample of the study.

Section VII

This section attempts to explore the future of child recruitment by predicting its course and influencing factors of its development.

Finally, the study draws a general conclusion, makes some recommendations and practical measures that should be taken to reduce the prevalence of the phenomenon and address its future impact in the short term and reengage children into society in the long term.

Section I

Legal Framework Prohibiting the Use and Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Armed Conflicts

Estimates regarding the extent of child recruitment in Yemen

According to reports based on observation and accounts provided by the local community, the number of recruited children in the armed conflict in Yemen reached thousands of child soldiers. Human rights organizations working in Yemen also estimate the number of recruited children under the age of 18 amounts to several thousand, but no complete, accurate figure has been provided until the present moment.

Despite efforts by local and international organizations to monitor the phenomenon and document related violations, there exist inconsistencies and a lack of clarity on the number of recruited child victims. Based on such estimates, it is impossible to reach the actual magnitude of the phenomenon^[3]. Ravina Shamdasani, United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights spokesperson, said, “The numbers are likely to be much higher as most families are not willing to talk about the recruitment of their children, of fear of reprisals^[4].”

In 2017, the United Nations stated that 842 recruited children were verified, including some as young as 11 years old.^[5] According to the same report the following year, the number of verified recruited children decreased remarkably to 370 children. The United Nations Secretary General’s report on children and armed conflict stated that the decrease in number was due to “access and security restrictions, the fear experienced by communities, should they report, owing to the risk of repercussions, and cases of the deprivation of liberty of monitors.”^[6]

In early 2017, the Security Council Panel of Experts failed to document child recruitment cases, but stated that the phenomenon is widespread in Yemen. Human Rights Watch stated that the recruited children in Yemen are an estimated one- third of the recruited forces from all parties.^[7]

According to a report by the United Nations regarding grave violations against children during the period from April 2013 to December 2018 in Yemen, the number of verified cases of child recruitment was 3034, documented in collaboration with local organizations.^[8]

[3] <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1918621.pdf>”6. See website: <https://news.un.org/ar/audio/2017/02/361632>

[4] UN Secretary General report, Children and Armed Conflict, 2018, p.36

[5] UN Secretary General report, Children and Armed Conflict, 2019, p 29: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1918621.pdf>”6. See website: <https://news.un.org/ar/audio/2017/02/361632>

[6] The final report of the panel of experts on Yemen, January, 2019, p.62

[7] see website: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2018/country-chapters/313455>

[8] See URL: <http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2019/06/ultimately-only-peace>

Ansar Allah (Houthis) recruited 1940 children during the period whereas the army of the internationally recognized government was responsible for recruiting 274 children.¹⁰ Other parties, including the armed forces of the Southern Transitional Council, and other forces loyal to the internationally recognized government and Ansar Al-Shariah, recruited varied numbers.^[9]

According to the report, while the UN report did not verify any cases of recruitment by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, forces supported by the coalition were found to have recruited children. However, the report stated that “due to difficulties in monitoring in Yemen,” the real figures are likely greater. Locally, Mwatana for Human Rights in its annual report on human rights in Yemen said it had documented 1117 incidents of child recruitment⁹ during the year 2018 alone^[10].

Given the difficulties in monitoring and documentation on the ground, the actual number of recruited children could reach several thousands. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the specificity of the figures provided, the figures provide a rough estimate appearing to approach the actual scope of the phenomena, as they accord with the tragic reality in the context of the conflict, deteriorating economic conditions and ongoing attacks on educational facilities and their use for military purposes.

It should be noted that the warring parties, as well as extremist religious groups, use children in fighting and for other purposes, including working at checkpoints, at security barriers, guarding government installations, patrolling, delivering food and drink to soldiers and carrying out espionage activities.

The status quo of the conflict – an overview

The political situation

Although six years have almost passed since the armed conflict erupted in Yemen, there seems no real prospect for a political settlement that is likely to pave the way for sustainable peace. There are, for instance, a few confidence-building steps that emerged in the context of the conflict such as limited processes of prisoners’ exchange. These processes, however, disappeared following each military escalation, which undermines hopes for peace. The conflict has remained the human disaster which is likely to lead Yemen over the brink into famine.

In September 2014, Ansar Allah (Houthis) seized control of Sanaa using armed force undermining the political process which was moving towards implementation of the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. The Peace and Partnership Agreement, signed by political parties and Ansar Allah (Houthis) under the auspices of the United Nations, ultimately failed. In February 2015, the tension reached its highest level. While Ansar Allah (Houthis) were expanding their military control towards Taiz and

[9] See URL: <http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2019/06/ultimately-only-peace>

[10] Mwatana for Human Rights: Withering life, Human Rights Situation in Yemen, July, 2013, p.56

some other southern governorates following their full control of Sana'a, President Hadi (who was under house arrest imposed by the Houthis) managed to escape to Aden. He then called on Saudi Arabia to militarily intervene due to his forces' loss of control over the city of Aden.

On March 25, 2015, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE commenced airstrikes on Ansar Allah (Houthis) and their ally, the former president, Ali Abdallah Saleh. Within a few weeks, the coalition was able to end Ansar Allah (Houthis) control of Aden and some other southern areas. However, the Houthis had succeeded in reestablishing their control of strategic areas at the borders between the north and south of the country and strengthened their control of Sana'a, taking advantage of their alliance with the forces of former president Saleh and the de-escalation of military ground operations by the Saudi and Emirati-led coalition following their control of Aden.

In April 2015, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution demanding Ansar Allah (Houthis) end without condition their unilateral actions. The resolution called upon Ansar Allah (Houthis) to withdraw their troops from districts of which they had recently seized control, including Sanaa, relinquish arms they had seized from military institutions and stop exercising governmental functions. In May 2015, the international community started to exercise pressure on the warring parties to engage in negotiations based on Resolution 2216. Thus, Geneva 1, June 2015 and Geneva 2, December 2015, were held between the internationally recognized government and Ansar Allah (Houthis) and their allies (former president Saleh). However, these negotiations failed and conflict resumed at even higher levels until the middle of 2016. The United Nations then succeeded to reduce escalation and reach a long-term humanitarian truce by convincing the warring parties to engage in extensive negotiations from April to August 2016 in Kuwait.

Unfortunately, the Kuwait negotiations were also not successful despite the efforts extended by the United Nations. This gave rise to an unprecedented escalation. The Saudi and Emirati-led coalition, along with the internationally recognized government, shuttered Sanaa international airport, started to carry out military operations in Hodeida, home to a strategic port, and intensified air strikes, which have killed civilians. On their part, Ansar Allah (Houthis) strengthened their alliance with former president Saleh. They formed a political council and a national salvation government in an attempt to create a de facto parallel authority that worked against the internationally recognized government. This has complicated the conflict even further. Warring parties again started indiscriminately shelling in densely populated areas.

In parallel to this escalation, the conflict caused a devastating humanitarian crisis, with human suffering increasing, government staff salaries suspended, epidemics spreading and many people, particularly from the Western Coast, displaced. In 2018, several political, military and humanitarian factors led the warring parties to engage

in new negotiations in Stockholm. For the first time, the two parties reached an agreement which included mutual withdrawals from the three ports in Hodeida namely, Hodeida, Saleef and Ras Isa ports, as well as withdrawal from the city of Hodeida. The parties also reached an agreement for exchange of prisoners and lifting the imposed siege on Taiz city. Despite the efforts extended by the United Nations throughout the year 2019 to implement the agreement, including forming a UN-delegation to monitor the ceasefire in order to support the Hodeida agreement (UNMHA), the agreement was not implemented. Thus, Hodeida, which serves as a virtual lifeline for 80% of the population and is under Ansar Allah (Houthis) control, remains susceptible to substantial military confrontations at any given moment.

In July 2019, the conflict appeared to have moved towards a political solution and some regional arrangements emerged as UAE officials expressed their interest to withdraw their forces from Yemen. Surprisingly, the UAE withdrew their Patriot base from the western coast and Marib governorate, but they strengthened their presence in southern areas, especially Aden. Moreover, the UAE dispatched a series of military vehicles and equipment to their allies namely, the Southern Transitional Council, Elite Forces, and Security Belts. In August 2019, the army of the internationally recognized government was preparing to seize control of Aden; however, the UAE carried out airstrikes against government forces at the entrance of Aden. The government forces then retreated to Shabwa governorate, adjacent to Marib governorate, the stronghold of the army of the internally recognized government and under the control of the Yemeni Islah party (a party that is a branch of the Muslim brotherhood in Yemen to which the UAE is significantly hostile and accuses of terrorism).

Following this incident, Saudi Arabia was able to contain the conflict between the Southern Transitional Council and the army of the internationally recognized government. The two parties signed an agreement later known as the Riyadh Agreement in early November 2019. The agreement stated that both parties must carry out mutual withdrawals which would enable the internationally recognized government to return to Aden along with Saudi protecting forces and one army brigade from the Presidential Guards. It also stated that the forces of the Southern Transitional Council should be integrated into the official army and ensure Southern Transitional Council participation in any prospective power-sharing which would end the dominance of the Islah party (as claimed by members of the Southern Transitional Council). Despite that the UAE welcomed the agreement, it has not yet been implemented, except for the return of some ministers in the government to Aden to carry out some tasks including the payment of salaries to some civil and military staff in the territories controlled by the internationally recognized government.

Following Ansar Allah (Houthis) claiming attacks on Saudi oil installations (Aramco) in Bageeg and Khurais in eastern Saudi Arabia in September 2019 (some argue the Houthis did not actually carry out the attack, but that it was Iran, or another Iranian ally), the Saudi government started to open channels of negotiations with Ansar Allah (Houthis) via regional and international mediation. These indirect negotiations

resulted in the cessation of missile rockets and drones on Saudi vital installations. In return, Saudi Arabia released dozens of Ansar Allah (Houthis) prisoners and allowed a limited resumption of air traffic from Sana'a International Airport to Cairo and Amman for humanitarian purposes. However, fighting in Yemen continued. Political matters remained pending as Ansar Allah (Houthis) demanded an end to all military operations carried out by Saudi Arabia and UAE prior to entering into any talks regarding security and political arrangements. In addition, Ansar Allah (Houthis) rejected listing its strategic relations with Iran in negotiations. Recently, Ansar Allah (Houthis) managed to seize control of high mountains in Nihm, a district east of the capital city of Sanaa, in their attempt to protect their presence in Sanaa and strengthen their political and negotiating position.

Economic Situation

Yemen's economy continued to severely deteriorate amidst the ongoing conflict and the absence of indicators for a genuine political settlement. The cessation of exporting oil and gas and lack of foreign investment are crucial factors that led to the rapid collapse of the economy. According to a report issued by UNDP in September 2019, the conflict in Yemen has hindered development, with Yemen losing 89 billion since the war erupted. The report anticipated that economic decline in Yemen may last two decades, including because the country's infrastructure has been completely destroyed.^[11]

Since 2014, the report projected that the poverty rate had risen to 75% at the end of 2019 from 47% before the conflict. If fighting continued until 2022, UNDP projected that more than 79% of the population in Yemen would live below the poverty line.^[12]

Due to food price inflation, lack of job opportunities and suspension of government staff salaries, Yemeni people are now threatened by famine and experiencing daily hardships to secure even minimal survival needs.

By 2019, the number of people suffering from food insecurity reached 20 million, of whom 10 million were hungry, 17.8 million people lacked access to safe water and sanitation, and 19.7 million people lacked adequate health care,^[13] while the number of suspected cholera cases recorded in 2019 had already reached 460,000 cases halfway through the year^[14].

While the humanitarian situation has worsened, the year 2019 witnessed a noticeable decrease in the level of donor fulfillment of their financial obligations towards urgent

[11] See URL: <https://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen>

[12] Ibid.

[13] An Overview of Humanitarian Needs in Yemen, 2019, UNDP, see URL: <http://ye.one.un.org/content/unct/yemen/ar/home/publications/country-specific/yemen-2019>

[14] Annual Report of United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights for Yemen. A detailed Report of Regional & International Experts Group for Yemen, September, 2019, p. 254

humanitarian needs in Yemen. On August 2019, the United Nations warned of the suspension of 22 aid programs in Yemen due to the failure of donors to fulfill their obligations.

The warring parties have failed to adopt economic solutions that are likely to relieve the suffering of the population, including a mechanism proposed by the United Nations to pay government staff salaries (around 1.5 million government staff salaries have been suspended since 2016) and secure essential food commodities by taking advantage of revenues from the three ports in Hodeida. The Group of Eminent Experts has raised serious concerns that the warring parties are using starvation as a method of warfare^[15], including by targeting infrastructure facilities and obstructing humanitarian assistance.

Moreover, the economic measures imposed by the warring parties have increased the suffering of the population. For instance, decisions made by the economic committee of the internationally recognized government have complicated importing oil derivatives in the districts controlled by Ansar Allah (Houthis). Moreover, delaying and preventing fuel vessels unloading at the Hodeida ports by the Saudi and Emirati-led coalition caused recurrent crises in oil derivatives that negatively impacted critical sectors like health. The development of custom points in Ibb, Dhamar and Sanaa by Ansar Allah (Houthis) has also led to food price inflation. Additionally, manipulating lists of food relief resulted in the World Food Program suspending programs in June 2019 in areas controlled by Ansar Allah (Houthis) for several months, depriving hundreds of families from food aid.

Furthermore, the forceful takeover of the temporary capital city of Aden by the forces of the Southern Transitional Council has undermined the capacity of the central bank of Yemen to establish exchange rate stability to provide the required liquidity for the banking sector (which consists of 17 public and private banks). It is anticipated that the central bank, which was moved to Aden in 2016, will not be able to fully correct irregularities without a political agreement with the Southern Transitional Council in the south and Ansar Allah (Houthis) who control the pre-2016 central bank in Sana'a.

Human Rights Violations

By the end of 2018, according to the UN, 6,872 civilians had been verified as killed and 10,768 wounded by the conflict, the majority by Saudi and Emirati-led coalition air strikes, followed by Ansar Allah (Houthi) attacks.^[16]

The Saudi and Emirati-led coalition has attacked schools, hospitals and civilian objects. Ansar Allah (Houthis) has killed scores of civilians as a result of indiscriminate shelling on heavily populated residential areas. They have also planted different types

[15] Annual Report of United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights for Yemen, September, 2019, p. 254

[16] See URL: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2019/country-chapters/325751>

of land mines, including antipersonnel and anti-vehicle mines, in different areas in Yemen. Mwatana documented around 52 mine incidents in nine governorates in Yemen during 2018, forty nine by Ansar Allah (Houthis). These mines exploded and killed 60 civilians (including 8 women and 26 children) and injured at least 51 (including 12 women and 21 children).^[17]

As a result of impunity, warring parties continued to commit grave violations, some amounting to war crimes, including attacks on civilian populated areas. The Group of Eminent Experts concluded that the Yemeni, Saudi, and UAE governments, as well as Ansar Allah (Houthis) and their popular committees, took advantage of the absence of accountability and continued committing violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The warring parties have not carried out credible investigation into violations their forces have committed, as they are obligated to do under the laws of war.^[18]

During the period from October 2017 to September 2018, the United Nations verified 2367 grave violations against children (including 1483 cases of killing and maiming for boys and girls). The experts referred to an unspecified number of children who have been detained under the pretext of allegedly belonging to some parties. Some children were raped and otherwise sexually abused.^[19]

By the end of 2019, the conflict had caused continued large-scale displacement, with 3.6 million persons, mostly women and children, displaced, including 1.28 million returnees.^[20]

Moreover, from January 1 to July 2019, around 328,182 people were displaced either escaping fighting and accompanying hostilities or due to the loss of livelihood.^[21]

Human rights in Yemen have witnessed an increasing deterioration throughout the years of the conflict due to the absence of rule of law and lack of accountability. All warring parties have committed different human rights abuses, including arbitrary and abusive detention, torture, enforced disappearance, mistreatment and sexual violence. Additionally, freedom of speech has been restrained and several activists and journalist detained. Many other violations have been committed, including the targeting of medical and humanitarian workers, sniper attacks on civilians (which have killed dozens of people) and extrajudicial executions by some warring parties.

Several vital installations have also been shuttered, besieged or blockaded by the

[17] Mwatana for Human Rights: Haiath Tadhwi's Report: Human Rights Situation in Yemen, Sanaa, July, 2013, p.50

[18] See URL: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2019/country-chapters/325751>

[19] Annual Report of United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights for Yemen, September, 2019, p. 239

[20] See URL: <http://ye.one.un.org/content/unct/yemen/ar/home/about-us/iom/>

[21] International Organization for Migration in Yemen: Fast-Tracking of Displacement, July, 2019:

warring parties. Examples of this include the closing of Sanaa International Airport by the Saudi-UAE-led coalition, the siege on Taiz city imposed by Ansar Allah and the siege imposed by the Giant Brigades loyal to the internationally recognized government on Duraihmi district in Hodeida. In addition, the Red Sea Floor Mills, which contain 51,000 ton of grains that could feed 3.7 million people for a month and is subject to spoiling,^[22] has been shut down due to disagreement amongst the warring parties on distribution plans under the supervision of the World Food Program.

The International Legal Basis for Prohibiting Child Recruitment

Due to the devastating effects of World War I, an international movement emerged at the beginning of the 20th century to shield children from the ravages of war. Following WWI, it came to light that thousands of people, including children, were killed, while others died of hunger, with little help extended. The devastating effects of war on children had shocked the universal conscience. People of conscience were mindful of the legal vacuum related to issues affecting children and children's rights. Within a short period, several voluntary organizations were formed to provide relief for children in different parts of Europe, and many other organizations incorporated activities aimed at children during conflict. Examples of these organizations are the Red Cross Societies, Save the Children Fund and Children's Relief International. Children's Relief International proposed a declaration for children's rights called the "Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child," which was adopted by the League of Nations in September 1924. The declaration appealed to the global conscience to seek to provide relief for children beyond all other consideration. The declaration laid the groundwork for a universal framework establishing the priority of delivering relief to children during difficult circumstances and armed conflicts. With its five articles, the declaration laid the foundation for a new era and sowed the seeds of establishing internationally-recognized fundamental rights of children.

Following World War II, which took an even greater toll, in December 1946, the United Nations established UNICEF to provide food and health care for the children affected by the war. UNICEF has made considerable efforts for children's care worldwide. It also plays a crucial role contributing to the development of international law for the protection of children and urging governments to establish legal safeguards for preserving children. In December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, including stressing the right of childhood to special care and assistance (Article 25). The Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were important milestones in the child rights movement, which has continued to push for greater legal protection and care in the best interests of children.

[22] Annual Report of United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights for Yemen, September, 2019, p. 272

Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. The Declaration recognized the child as a human being with particular legal protection, including the rights set forth in the Declaration, including the right for protection from all forms of neglect, cruelty, and exploitation.

The Declaration did not explicitly prohibit child recruitment, but provided that a child should not be used before a minimum age set by a state, or in any work that posed a risk to the child's health and education, or that might hinder his physical, mental or spiritual growth. Moreover, it did not determine a specific legal age of a child; it defined the characteristics of a child as a physically and mentally immature human being. The imprecise definition of a child left ambiguity with regards to who actually enjoyed the rights contained in the declaration. It became important to exert further efforts to fill this legal gap in the Declaration.

Additional Protocol I and II (1977) to the Geneva Conventions

The two 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions explicitly prohibit child recruitment. Protocol I demands warring parties not involve children less than 15 years old in direct hostilities. Protocol II (which applies to non-international armed conflicts) prohibits recruitment of children under the age of 15 in armed forces and groups. However, both Protocol I and Protocol II do not define the age of the child, focusing on children under 15. Moreover, Protocol I does not prohibit the involvement of children in indirect hostilities in international armed conflicts.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, formulated by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, introduced a clear, international legal definition of a child for the first time in 1989. It defined the child as “a human being under the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

Article 38(2) of the CRC provides that, “States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 15 years do not take a direct part in hostilities.” The CRC's language does not depart much from that of the Additional Protocols; both prohibit child recruitment and use below the age of 15 years. The mismatch between the defined child's age (those under 18 years, according to the CRC) with the age where recruitment and use prohibited in direct hostilities (those under 15) was opposed by a number of countries, as was the fact that the CRC did not clearly prohibit the indirect participation of children in hostilities. A number of states made reservations and declarations to Article 38, requesting that the minimum age for recruitment be 18 rather than 15 years, and that indirect participation also be prohibited.

The CRC clearly established the principle of prohibiting recruitment and use of children below 15 directly in hostilities. In 1998, it was included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as a war crime. International efforts continued to raise

the minimum age for recruitment, prohibit the indirect use of children in armed conflicts and get rid of distinctions between voluntary and compulsory recruitment.

First Optional Protocol to CRC (2000)

The countries which ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict (170 countries) raised the minimum age of compulsory recruitment and engagement in hostilities to 18 years. The Optional Protocol also encouraged states to raise the minimum age of voluntary recruitment to 18, and where states permitted voluntary recruitment below 18, to maintain safeguards ensuring the recruitment is genuinely voluntary, that it is carried out with the informed consent of the child's legal guardians, that the child is fully informed of duties involved in military service and the child provides reliable proof of age. Armed groups were prohibited entirely from recruiting or using any person in hostilities who was under 18 years old.

In 2007 in Paris, organizations working on child protection, including UNICEF, international agencies and some regional and international non-governmental organizations, “pledged themselves to spare no efforts to raise the minimum age of recruitment to 18 years under any circumstances.”^[23]

This movement ultimately aimed to establish a global legal consensus for prohibiting recruitment or use of persons under the age of 18, either at present or in the past by state armed forces or armed groups no matter what functions these forces undertook, including boys and girls used in fighting, as well as those used for cooking, porting, spying or for sexual purposes— including those who have engaged directly and indirectly in hostilities.^[24]

The Paris Principles also defined child recruitment as “compulsory, forced and voluntary conscription of children into any kind of armed force or armed group.”

Prohibiting Child Recruitment in Yemeni Law

The Republic of Yemen ratified the CRC in April 1991 and the Optional Protocol to CRC relating to armed conflict in 2007. Yemen also supported the Paris Principles' Guidelines for prohibiting child recruitment. Additionally, Yemen signed the Rome Statute on December 28, 2000, but did not ratify it. According to Yemeni Law 67/1991, the minimum age of compulsory and voluntary recruitment and use is 18 years.

Article 149 of Yemeni Law 45 Relating to Child Rights issued in 2002 stipulated that state authorities must respect applicable international norms regarding armed conflicts relating to children, provide legal protection to children and refrain from recruiting children or engaging them directly in hostilities under the age of 18 unless majority attained is earlier. The Yemeni Law defined the child as “a human being below the age

[23] Paris Principles (rules and guidelines for children associated with armed forces or armed groups, February 2007, p. 9.

[24] Ibid.

of 18 years unless majority is attained earlier.” (Article 2). The majority was defined in article (59) as at the age of 15 years old if the person reaches that age enjoying his mental powers and rational behavior.

Yemeni law relating to child recruitment contains some loopholes. First, article (149) is limited to direct engagement in hostilities. Second, the article does not identify the legal age for recruitment and such ambiguity is analogous to that in the CRC article which excludes children who attained majority from the prohibition on recruitment. Third, the law does not provide for the priority of support, relief and protection to children during times of conflict. Fourth, the law does not contain punishments to deter those who conduct child recruitment, whether it is an individual or a group, and did not establish national mechanisms to prevent child recruitment or ensure accountability for violations. Fifth, the law does not address significant issues related to child recruitment including prevention and redressing its effects, such as through rehabilitation and reintegration of affected children.

Prohibiting Child Recruitment in Practice: United Nations Efforts and Domestic Responses

Since 2005, United Nations efforts in Yemen to reduce the phenomenon of child recruitment have strengthened, including as part of the United Nations movement to operationalize the international mechanism established by the Security Council to follow-up and evaluate the extent of governments’ commitment to ending child recruitment, releasing recruited children and reengaging them and preventing violations against them at the national level.

Due to the positions adopted, including denial, by Yemeni governments on the issue of child recruitment, United Nations agencies for children were not able to make much progress on this issue. Following the eruption of protests against the regime of the previous president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, in 2011, Saleh’s government started to lose control of the flow of information regarding the phenomenon of child recruitment. Significant information on child recruitment in government and Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces began to be disclosed as a result of the political crisis, the increased flow of information and civil society movements. In his report on children and armed conflict in 2012, the United Nations Secretary General listed Yemeni government forces, Ansar Allah and Ansar Al-Sharia on his list of states and groups that recruit children and use them in conflict.

The National Dialogue Conference which was held from March 2013 to January 2014 between political forces in Yemen successfully incorporated the issue of child recruitment into the major issues to be addressed by the Dialogue members. The Dialogue outcomes criminalized child recruitment and their use in political and armed conflicts.^[25]

[25] The National Dialogue Conference Document, Sanaa, 2013-2014, p.74

This represented national recognition of the phenomenon and its dimensions in a time when the course of the political future of the country was being laid. In February 2014, the United Nations Security Council issued its resolution (2014/2140) about the political situation in Yemen. The Council welcomed the outcomes of the NDC and expressed its concerns about continuing child recruitment by the armed groups and government forces, which violates applicable international law.^[26]

The resolution called on the Yemeni government to develop a plan and implement it to prevent child recruitment in Yemeni armed forces. The resolution urged the armed groups to allow access to United Nations personnel to the areas they control and facilitate monitoring and reporting.

The Yemeni government signed an action plan (which the Security Council called for in May 2014) and committed itself to instruct military commanders to prohibit recruiting children under the age of 18 years old, to verify claims of child recruitment in its forces and allow access to the United Nations to monitor completion of the plan. In addition, the government made a commitment to harmonize national legislation with international norms.^[27]

In turn, the United Nations pledged to support the implementation of the plan and re-engagement process and, if the plan was implemented, delist the army of the internationally recognized government from the Secretary General's list.

The plan has not yet been implemented. The government failed to abide by some articles of the agreement. The Human Rights Council Group of Eminent Experts reported that they have received very little information about the actual procedures taken by the government and other armed groups to ensure the release of recruited children. They stated that “the only solution they were aware of is that the Yemeni armed forces sent some child prisoners to a non-governmental organization in Marib city for rehabilitation.”^[28]

Moreover, the Yemeni government's approach towards the procedures, decision-making and implementation of the plan has been slow. The Yemeni armed forces were not ordered to prohibit child recruitment and report violations under the second section of the plan until March 2018. It was only three years after signing the plan that a presidential decree was issued to organize a national committee for investigating human rights violations. This committee was already established in 2012 and has become linked directly to the presidential office under a presidential decree. The committee is expected to conduct investigations and report to the judiciary. The Group of Experts stated that the committee's report which was issued on human rights violations by all parties has become “more-balanced over time.”^[29]

[26] Security Council Resolution (2140), February 26, 2014

[27] See URL: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/ar/>

[28] Annual Report of United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights for Yemen, September, 2019, p.237-238

[29] Annual Report of United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights for Yemen, September, 2019, p. 303-304

However, the committee is not able to operate with the required impartiality and effectiveness due to its structure, including being directly under the President.

As regards Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, reports indicate that the group continued recruiting children into its armed forces at a high level. Ansar Allah has not adopted an official agreement to prevent child recruitment. The United Nations Security Council's resolution (2015/2216) demanded Ansar Allah (Houthis) immediately end child recruitment and release all the recruited children in their forces without conditions^[30] and refrain from undermining the political process in Yemen. In February 2012, during their meeting with the representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Ansar Allah pledged to release children under 18 years in their forces,^[31] and their leader claimed that he instructed his followers not to recruit children under the age of 18 years.^[32]

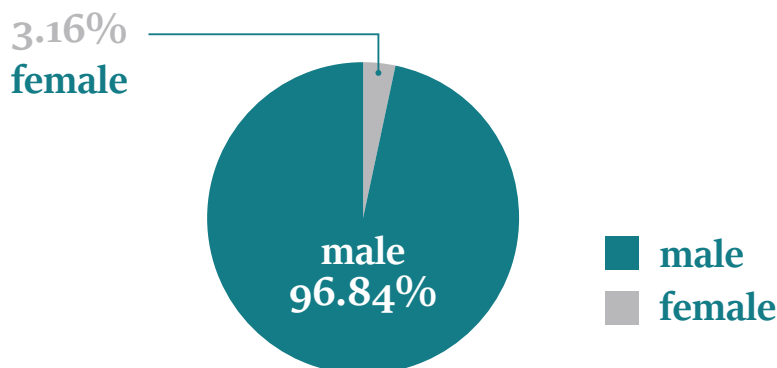
However, nothing took place on the ground, where Ansar Allah (Houthis) remains the party with the largest number of recruited children, according to reports of the United Nations Secretary General and international agencies for children's rights.

An Analysis of the Sample

In this section, we provide an overview of the sample data and its characteristics, including a number of variables: gender, education, bearing arms, household source of income, and others. Based on these characteristics, we can identify the nature of the phenomenon of child recruitment, its determinants, and general tendencies in the armed conflict in Yemen.

Child recruitment and gender

Figure 2. Distribution of the sample based on gender



[30] Security Council Resolution (2216), April 14, 2015

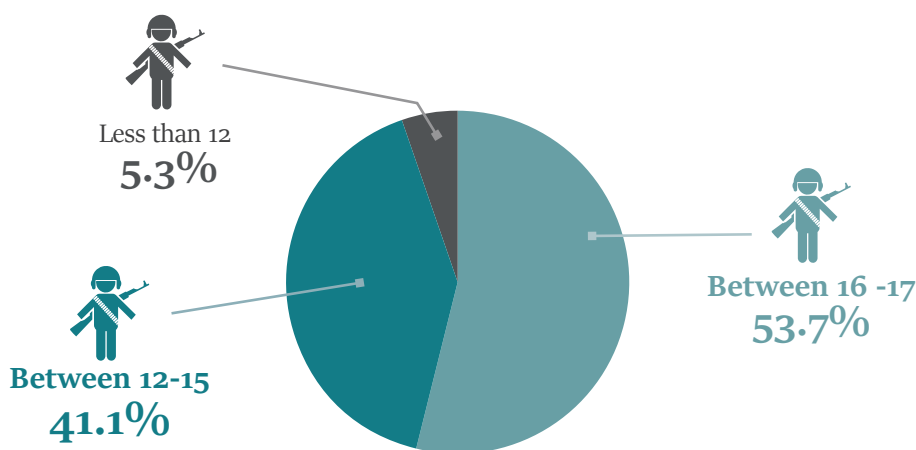
[31] See URL: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/ar/>

[32] Annual Report of United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights for Yemen, September, 2019, p.238

The far larger proportion of those subjected to child recruitment are boys, whereas the rate of female child recruitment is very low. This could be due to social norms in Yemeni society which tend to limit the recruitment of girls. However, some warring parties have tended to increasingly abandon these norms and to use and recruit girls in the conflict. The limited number of girls recruited is almost always confined to non-combat duties, although there are some girls who receive training on the use of arms. Other purposes for female recruitment include use in security tasks, spying on other women, cooking, nursing and washing clothes for the interest of the recruiting party. Overall, child recruitment in Yemen is extremely concentrated on boys.

Approximate age of children at the time of recruitment

Figure 3. Distribution of sample by age



The highest proportion of recruited children is those 16 and 17 years old, or aged below 18 and above 15 years. This age group is seen by society as capable to take on adult responsibilities. Such a perception often makes children enthusiastic towards fulfilling the needs of their poor families, adapted to prevalent perceptions in society that value manhood and courage. Older children often seek to attain what society expects of them and many believe recruitment is a means to meet these expectations. Warring parties often target children aged above 15 for additional reasons, including for use attracting new children to fulfill security purposes and other tasks. Children below 12 are normally not equipped to fulfill similar roles: the younger the child the less capable he is for recruitment tasks. Moreover, children under 12 often are more firmly under the care and control of their family and have less ability to act independently than other age groups.

Educational Status of Children Prior to Recruitment

Table 2. Distribution of sample by Education status

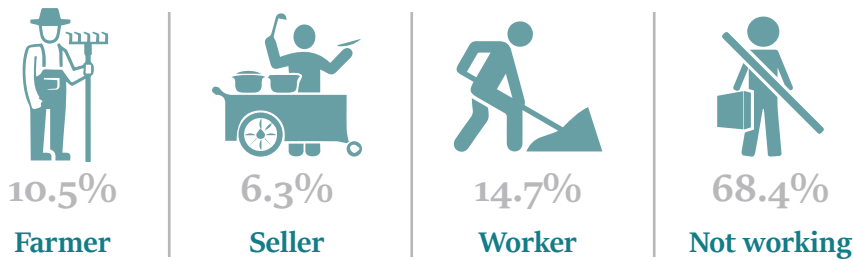
Educational Status	%
Primary school	29.5%
Preparatory school	52.6%
High school	8.4%
Out of school	9.5%
Total	100.0%

The highest percentage of recruited children comes from those who attend school. Regardless of its quality, education was common prior to the war and recruitment activities have occurred in schools. It can be noticed that most of the recruited children had enrolled in preparatory school; this is the stage where children reach the age of 13-15 years. As the official entrance age for school is 7 years and some children join school late (especially in rural areas), and some struggle in early grades, most recruited children are from the end of primary level and preparatory levels, i.e. those who reach the age of 15 or a little above.

Children’s work prior to recruitment

Table 3. Distribution of sample by job prior to recruitment

Child’s job	%
Farmer	10.5%
Seller	6.3%
Worker	14.7%
Not working	68.4%
Total	100.0%



The percentage of children recruited who did not have a job prior to recruitment is far higher than that of working children. Recruitment serves as a job opportunity which generates a reasonable income especially for children from poor families. It is likely that children will not seek recruitment if they have another job opportunity. As for children who did work prior to recruitment (31.5%), they used to be daily-paid workers in shops, gas stations, restaurants, groceries and farms. Various reasons drive these children to join recruitment units. These include inappropriate working conditions, low wages, children's assumption that recruitment may offer a better job opportunity and some other social and ideological determinants within the work and social environment.

Carrying weapons prior to recruitment

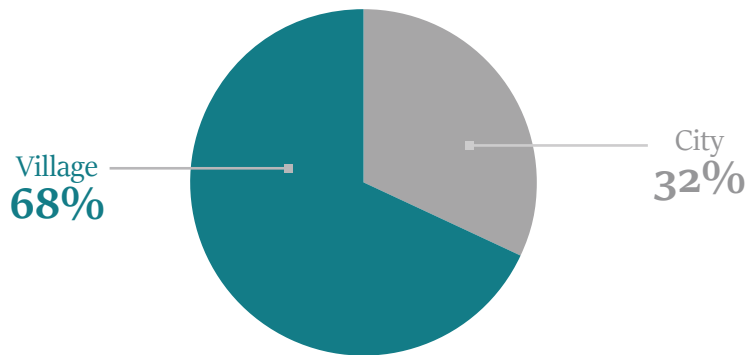
Table 4. Distribution of the sample based on carrying weapons

Governorate	Carrying a weapon prior to recruitment		Total
	Carries a weapon	Doesn't carry a weapon	
Abyan	0%	100.0%	100.0%
Ibb	0%	100.0%	100.0%
Al-Amanh	0%	100.0%	100.0%
Al-Baidha	100.0%	0%	100.0%
Al-Jawf	0%	100.0%	100.0%
Hodeida	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Al-Mahweet	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Taiz	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
Hajjah	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Hadramot	0%	100.0%	100.0%
Dhamar	0%	100.0%	100.0%
Rimah	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
Shabwah	100.0%	0%	100.0%
Sa'adah	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%
Sanaa	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Aden	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
Amran	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
Lahj	0%	100.0%	100.0%
Marib	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	30.5%	69.5%	100.0%

Contrary to the common assumption, more children who had not carried weapons before being recruited were subjected to child recruitment than children who had carried weapons before recruitment. This is one of the paradoxes which reveals some unusual characteristics of the phenomenon of child recruitment. This could be attributed to the widespread phenomenon where carrying weapons is traditional culture. Regardless of the variation in rates of prevalence, child recruitment has been widely spread all over the country across Yemeni governorates. As children who did not carry weapons before being recruited joined military units from 2018 and after, it is possible that during the first years of the conflict a large proportion of the children who had carried arms before the war were recruited. In other words, it is possible that the child recruitment phenomenon is now moving independently from whether or not a child carried weapons, unlike the trend at the beginning of the conflict when carrying weapons fueled the phenomenon and helped extend it.

The area where recruited children come from

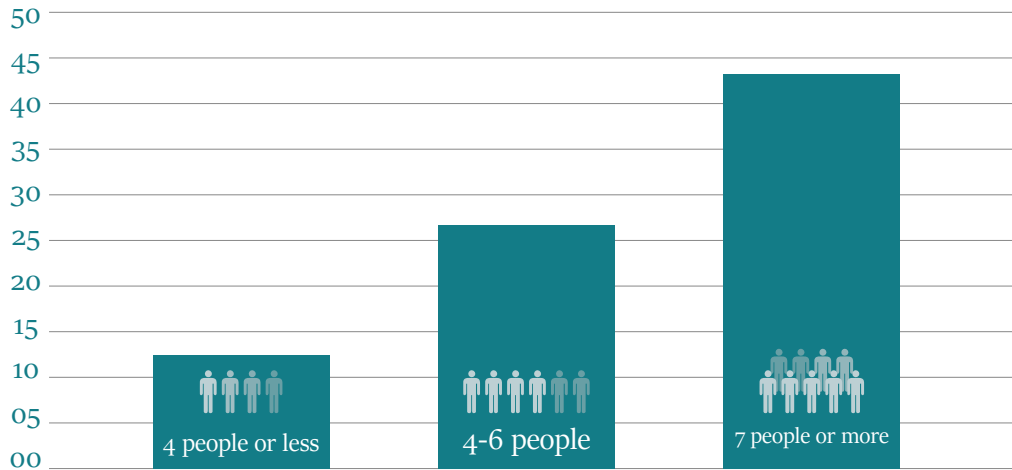
Figure 4. Distribution of Sample by area



Child recruitment in rural areas is much higher than urban areas. The child recruitment gap between rural and urban areas may actually be smaller than in the sample, or slightly larger. The gap might result from the movement of the conflict from cities to rural areas. The rural nature of the conflict is represented by the presence of an armed political and rural force, i.e. Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, which has a long-term war strategy that is not confined to seizing cities but also attempts to infiltrate into rural areas to ensure its continued political and ideological existence. Moreover, some confrontations in the first year of the conflict that occurred in major cities were resolved and some others ended with joint control by the warring parties over urban areas, as in Taiz city. Fighting has moved almost completely to the rural areas. The rural areas have become a place where the warring parties push to increase their strategic depth of support, influence and control.

Family size

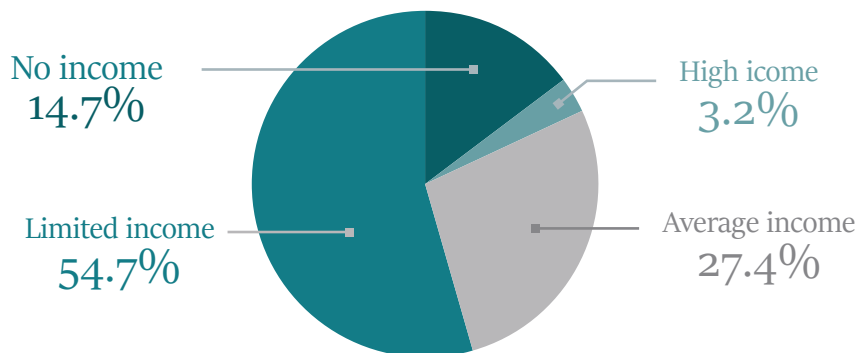
Figure 5. Distribution of the sample by family Size



Large families with more than 7 people tend to have a higher percentage of child recruitment than medium-sized and small families. Large families tend to be weaker in their struggle with poverty than other families. Moreover, small and medium-sized families tend to avoid and or reject recruiting their children especially if they only have one male child.

Economic Status of the Recruited Child's family

Figure 6. Distribution of the sample by family Size

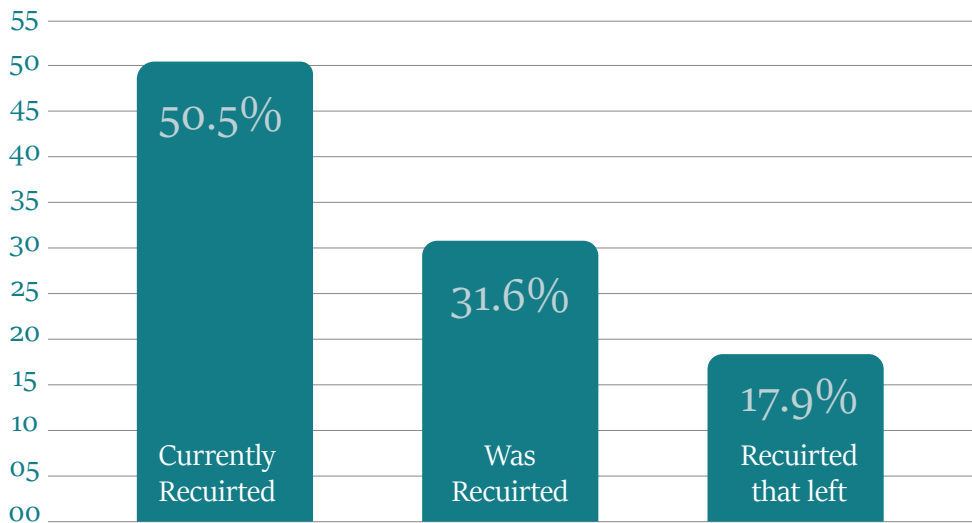


The highest percentage of recruited children came from families with limited income. Due to poverty and unemployment, these families serve as a key source for child recruitment. It should be noted that limited incomes have become the dominant economic reality for the majority of Yemeni families due to suspension of salaries, low wages and little income generated by handicraft professions, agriculture and micro-projects. What exacerbates the economic conditions further is the high food prices and thus need for increased spending.

Children who are from completely poor families that have no income constitute a considerable percentage (14.7%) of child recruitment due to their family's failure to provide basic survival needs. The suffering of this group has increased since the disruption of social insurance benefits as a consequence of war. Children from average-income and high-income families appear to join recruitment for social and ideological reasons.

The Current Situation of Recruited Children

Figure 7. Distribution of the sample according to the current situation of recruited children



The highest percentage of recruited children are currently recruited into one of the warring parties' forces. The second highest percentage of recruited children are those who were killed during their engagement in hostilities and or security work for one of the recruiting parties; they constitute almost a third of the sample. The smallest percentage of recruited children are those who left their recruitment units for several reasons, including the lack of adaptability to the recruitment environment, family pressure and others.

Classifying recruited children in this way can help us to understand some of the characteristics of the child recruitment phenomenon which is in a constant interaction with economic and social realities in the context of the conflict. The continued engagement of children in recruitment units indicates that the phenomenon is relatively stable and that children are associated to their recruitment units. The large number of casualties from child soldiers indicates that they are actually engaged in hostilities and their close association to the armed forces of the recruiting parties. This shows that the warring parties view child recruitment as a war strategy rather than peripheral practice. However, it can be said that some changes have taken place to the phenomenon due to returnees who had left their recruitment units, and this might indicate that there are some fluctuations in the course of the phenomenon i.e. it has not taken an upward trend under certain circumstances.

Section II

Causes of Child Use and Recruitment in the Armed Conflict

Collective Causes

Social phenomena are often caused by a set of complicated factors. A social phenomenon, for instance, comprises several aspects and dimensions which make it difficult to ascribe it to one single cause, no matter how significant that cause may be. While it is recognized that some causes are more significant than others, the impact of these factors depends upon their interrelation with one another. Thus, it can be said that social phenomena appear within a complicated and interrelated system of variables that should be viewed as integrated whole. This is particularly relevant for child use and recruitment as a social phenomenon in the armed conflict in Yemen.

Causes of Child Recruitment: Dynamic Analysis

There are several factors that cause child recruitment in Yemen, which altogether serve as a system whose parts cannot be understood in isolation. There are several interrelated causes that influence this phenomenon. The economic causes are considered the key determinants of the phenomenon as 40.7% of the sample were recruited for economic reason such as limited income, i.e. income that is insufficient for the basic survival needs for the recruited child and his family. Social causes, manifested by the pressures exercised in the social environment, is the second most important as it constitutes 37.8% of the sample. Political and ideological causes make up 14.1% of the sample. Psychological causes, however, represent only 7.4% of the sample. Psychological causes include self drives resulting from the interaction of the child with widespread social behavior (such as carrying weapons). Despite the fact that psychological causes are less influential than the other causes, they still influence the attitude of this portion of the sample towards recruitment.

Table 5. Collective Causes of Child Recruitment during Armed Conflict in Yemen

Collective Causes of Child Recruitment	
Economic Causes	40.7%
Social Causes	37.8%
Ideological and Political Causes	14.1%
Psychological Causes	7.4%
Total	100.0%

Table 5 shows that economic causes have the most remarkable impact on the evolution of child recruitment in Yemen. This is not surprising given the expansion of poverty in Yemen in which the family’s capacity to meet the basic needs of life is increasingly reduced. Not only this but there are several families who have completely become impoverished facing severe challenges to survive.

Thus, poverty turns into a breeding ground for recruiting children even without their family's knowledge as a result of deprivation and material need. Poor children have often been abused by recruitment parties, away from their families, with parties attempting to exploit children's painful feelings and tempting them towards recruitment with promises that it will meet their needs. Some impoverished families are unwillingly driven to accept allowing one of their children to enlist in recruitment units to provide the minimum income to secure their survival needs. Some of the advantages of recruitment include ration cards provided to the recruited child's family and/or future job opportunity.

The higher the expectation of benefits (including a good salary and other advantages) of recruitment for the child and his family, the more likely economic causes influence recruitment. However, it is unlikely that poverty is the only cause for recruitment if the financial advantages do not meet the minimum needs of the child and his family. This is because children from poor families may be able to seek some other means of living such as finding other work or begging to avoid being trapped in recruitment.

Table 6. Correlation between the collective causes for collective causes of recruitment

Collective causes of recruitment	Economic causes	Social causes	Ideological & Political causes	Psychological causes	Total
Economic causes	19.2%	15.6%	2.2%	3.7%	40.7%
Social causes	15.6%	13.3%	5.2%	3.7%	37.8%
Ideological & Political causes	2.2%	5.2%	6.7%	0.0%	14.1%
Psychological causes	3.7%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Total	40.7%	37.8%	14.1%	7.4%	100.0%

As recruitment is not the only option for recruited children and their families to receive some money or other benefits, other than in cases where high material advantages are expected, economic causes are not the sole cause of recruitment—there are some other determinants. The study shows that of all the children who joined recruitment units for economic reasons (40.7%), only 19.2% were extremely poor and felt forced to engage in recruitment. The rest (15.6%) joined recruitment units due to economic and social causes. In other words, other determinants coexist with economic causes. Poverty is not the sole cause that directly drives children to recruitment in all cases. There are additional social causes (like temptation and influence of friends). This makes it quite difficult to determine which causes have a more significant impact. Child recruitment may be the result of a combination of both causes.

The second influential cause of child recruitment is social causes which account for 37.8%, with only slight differences from the economic causes. This confirms that poverty and the social environment go hand in hand to shape the child recruitment phenomenon in Yemen and that the association of these phenomena is entrenched under conditions of the conflict. Social causes reflect the influence of socio-cultural notions and negative influence exercised by the social environment on children. Moreover, the social causes of recruitment indicate that there is a lack of social awareness about the dimensions and future negative effects of child recruitment.

Political and ideological causes of child recruitment accounted for 14.1%.^[33] These causes are not often correlated with economic causes because they are normally based on thoughts instilled by recruiting parties on children and the child and families' ideological background, regardless of the economic conditions of children and their families.

However, psychological causes only accounted for 7.4% of the overall causes of child recruitment. These causes are seen as contributing factors in some cases of recruitment as they have an impact in combination with economic and social causes. Personal inclinations are often influenced by the social environment as well as prevalent socio-economic conditions.

Correlation between Causes of Child Recruitment and Geographical Distribution

There exist some variations in the influence of causes of child recruitment between rural and urban areas. Table 4. shows that recruitment in rural areas is highly frequent (68.4%), and that rural areas are slightly affected by economic causes (35.2%). By contrast, child recruitment in urban areas is greater influenced by economic causes (52.3%). Child recruitment in rural areas, on the other hand, is influenced much more by social causes (40.7%), which are less influential in urban areas (31.8%).

[33] The researcher encountered some difficulties in dealing with ideological and political causes of child recruitment as two independent causes of recruitment. This is due to interrelatedness between these two causes for parties with ideological background such as Ansar Allah (Houthis), Islah party (an Islamic party) and Ansar Al-Sharia. Therefore, ideological and political causes were combined in order to avoid repetition and achieve accuracy in dealing with recruiting parties and their relationship with recruitment causes. For example, families affiliated to Islah party urge their children to get recruited in the army of the internationally recognized government for ideological and political motives. Likewise, Ansar Allah (Houthis), families loyal to Ansar Allah (Houthis) do not only urge their children to recruit in Houthis' armed forces only for Jihad but they also do this for their deep faith in Wilayah (i.e. derived from Wali who is the possessor of authority). Thus, Wilayah is correlated with politics to the extent that it is difficult to disintegrate the two concepts. However, as stated in political and ideological causes' section, the armed forces of the Southern Transitional Council and Joint Forces led by Tariq Saleh mostly recruit children for political motives.

Table 7. Distribution of child recruitment between rural and urban areas

Causes of Child Recruitment	Areas where children come from	
	Rural areas	Urban areas
Economic Causes	35.2%	52.3%
Social Causes	40.7%	31.8%
Ideological and Political Causes	15.4%	11.4%
Psychological Causes	8.7%	4.5%
Total	100%	100%

The influence of economic causes on recruitment in urban areas can be ascribed to several factors. First and foremost, as a consequence of war, displaced families normally settle in cities rather than rural districts. These families encounter difficult living conditions and so they accept recruiting of their children so that they can meet basic survival needs. Second, due to war, poverty and displacement, it can be noticed that many Yemeni cities have become full of begging children who are being exploited for recruitment. Third, the devastation caused by war in cities at the beginning of the conflict, economic recession, lack of job opportunities, and rental escalation has weakened displaced families and burdened them with additional commitments. In rural areas, on the other hand, several families depend on Qat agriculture as their source of income.

The social causes have more influence on child recruitment in rural areas due to the fact that people are more socially cohesive and there are various prevalent tribal traditions in rural areas that are exploited to convince families to recruit their children. Nevertheless, economic causes have a crucial impact on recruitment in rural areas and they serve as a basis for exercising social influence.

In the same context, ideological and political causes are relatively more influential in rural areas (15.4%) than urban areas (11.4%). Economic causes seem to be more influential even for families with ideological background. The higher occurrence of child recruitment for political reasons in rural areas indicates that partisan activities have started to decline in cities and that the conflict has moved to rural areas. Likewise, psychological causes have more influence in rural areas (8.7%) compared to limited influence in cities (4.5%). This could be due to the fact people in rural areas tend to boast about guns and thus children feel enthusiastic to acquire guns and this paves the way for recruitment.

Correlation between Recruitment Causes and Recruitment Parties

Table 8. Causes of recruitment by recruitment parties

Causes of Recruitment	Recruitment parties						
	Ansar Allah (Houthis)	The army of the Int. recognized government	Forces loyal to the Int. recognized government	Forces of UAE-Backed Southern Transitional Council	Forces of Ansar Al-Sharia	The Joint Armed Forces led by Tariq Saleh	The Army brigade of the Arab Coalition
Economic causes	33.3%	50.0%	75.0%	50.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Social Causes	42.0%	35.3%	25.0%	27.8%	50.0%	33.3%	33.3%
Politic. & Ideolog. Cause	11.6%	14.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%	0.0%
Psych. Causes	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 8. shows that Ansar Allah (Houthis) rely the most on social causes (42%) to recruit children whereas economic causes accounted for 33.3% in their armed forces. Psychological causes of recruitment reached 13.0% whereas ideological causes of child recruitment of all the recruited children in Houthi forces accounted for 11.6%. This indicates that Ansar Allah (Houthis) mostly rely on social causes in child recruitment which are often manifested by influence exercised in the social environment of the child and his family.

However, the army of the internationally recognized government mostly relies on economic determinants to recruit children, in which economic causes accounted for 50% whereas the social causes only amounted to 35.3%. This means that recruitment for the benefit of the army of the internationally recognized government is based on economic benefits the government provides including salaries, and this also applies to the forces loyal to the government. This is also similar to a large extent to the Joint forces led by Tariq Saleh, in which recruitment is based on economic causes; however, economic causes overlap with political causes since many children affiliated with General People's Congress (GPC) are often recruited in these forces.

The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, which demands separation from the north, depends mainly on economic determinants to recruit children in its armed

forces. Economic causes of recruitment into these forces accounted for 50.0%, social causes amounted to 27.8%, political causes reached 16.7% whereas the least are the psychological causes which only amounted to 5.6%. The plausible reason behind the high percentage of economic causes of recruitment into these forces can be ascribed to the high financial benefits as UAE has paid considerable salaries to these forces since May 2017. Social causes of recruitment into the Southern Transitional Council's forces reflect the council's growing capacity to exercise influence and politically exploit the southern cause to encourage recruitment of southerners including children. On the contrary, recruitment in Ansar Al-Sharia armed group is often done for ideological reasons because it does not provide any economic gains and its social influence is limited to some areas in some governorates including Al-Baidha, Shabwa and Abyan, but does not seem to have popular acceptance beyond these districts.

However, recruitment in army brigades formed by the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the Emirates for protecting the southern borders of Saudi Arabia is based on economic determinants. Due to the rewarding salary (around SR 1000) children expect to make, many children who come from poor families find recruitment in this army advantageous. Thus, economic determinants are probably the sole cause of recruitment into forces of this army.

The high percentage of recruitment for economic reasons in the army of the internationally recognized government does not show that living conditions in the areas under its control are more deplorable than areas controlled by Ansar Allah (Houthis). It rather indicates that children and their families believe that the army of the internationally recognized government offers more material benefits which are likely to meet their subsistence needs more than recruitment in Ansar Allah (Houthis) forces. Recruited children in the army of the internationally recognized government are paid a monthly amount of YR 60,000, three times more than the salary paid to recruited children into Ansar Allah (Houthis), who are paid YR15,000 and an amount of 25,000 as an allowance once in a few months when a child visits his family. However, many complain that Ansar Allah (Houthis) do not pay the salaries regularly and do not always fulfill their financial commitment. Likewise, it was found that 61% of the recruited children into the army of the internationally recognized government only joined recruitment units since the beginning of 2018, the date when the payment of salaries for the military has regularly been paid. This confirms the interpretation above which suggests that economic determinants of recruitment are more important in the government forces than the forces of Ansar Allah (Houthis).

Table 8 also shows that ideological and political determinants played different roles for different recruiting parties. For example, 11.6% of the recruited children in Ansar Allah (Houthis) joined these forces for ideological causes. This means that these children have embraced Houthis' Wilayah according to which Hashemites (supposedly the descendants of Hashim) are the only people who have the right for power; they currently believe that Abdulmalik Al-Houthi and his family are the only people who have the right for political power in Yemen. Unlike others, who merely repeat Houthis'

logos or claim that they are doing Jihad and or fighting against the “aggression” by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, these children fight for the sake of Wilayah. This indicates that not all the recruited children into Ansar Allah (Houthis) forces necessarily embrace such ideology. Nevertheless, the abovementioned percentage of ideological recruitment into Ansar Allah (Houthis) forces accords since it points to purely ideological causes.

Recruitment in the army of the internationally recognized government for ideological and political causes accounted for 14.7%. However, ideological causes in this army only accounted for 2.9% and these recruited children come from families who are affiliated with the Islah party and are opposed to Shia Houthi forces. The remaining percentage (i.e. 11.8%) recruited themselves for political reasons, mostly those who are affiliated to Islah party. As regards recruitment into forces of the Southern Transitional Council, 16.7% of the recruited children were recruited for political reasons. This is mainly because the Southern Transitional Council presumably defends the southern cause, which concerns southerners, and this plays an important role in recruitment into its forces. However, child recruitment into Ansar Al-Sharia for ideological reasons accounted for 50%. This is not surprising since it is consistent with the ideological nature of this organization. Recruitment into Joint Forces led by Tariq Saleh for political reasons amounted to 33%, most of whom are children whose families are affiliated to (GPC).

However, recruitment due to psychological determinants was confined to two armed groups namely Ansar Allah (Houthis) and the Southern Transitional Council. There is no clear, reasonable interpretation for this, as it does not preclude the presence of child recruitment in other parties for similar reasons. It is possible that the association of psychological determinants of child recruitment into these armed groups is due to proliferation of weapons in their social environment and the fact that they encourage children to carry guns because they are in critical need of fighters. Proliferation of arms is well-known in areas under the control of Ansar Allah (Houthis) and can also be easily noticeable for the Southern Transitional Council which has turned the southern districts under its control into de facto armories, including military vehicles supported by the UAE.

Economic Causes of Child Recruitment

Table 9. Economic Causes of Child Recruitment

Economic Causes of Child Recruitment	
Family's income limits	70.9%
Unavailability of a source of income as a result of the loss or disability of the breadwinner	18.2%
Child's needs for money for personal spending	10.9%
Total	100.0%

The findings show that children who were recruited for economic causes accounted for 40.7%. This percentage was distributed over three variables namely, family's income limits 70.9%, unavailability of a source of income as a result of the loss or disability of the breadwinner (18.2%) and the child's need for money for personal spending (10.9%).

Family's Income Limits

Of the three economic determinants, income limits are the most important economic factors in child recruitment. Economic causes of recruitment accounted for 40.7%, the percentage of children who joined recruitment due to income limits reached 70.9% of that number. As we saw earlier, limited income families amounted to 54.7% of the sample of the study (see characteristics of the sample), the majority of which were recruited for social causes and only a few who were recruited for other reasons.

Economic determinants constitute a pressing need for limited-income families for an additional income that helps the head of the family to provide the necessary survival needs or helps improve the family's ability to fulfil the evolving commitments for the rest of family members. In such cases, the family may agree to recruit one of its children so that he can contribute to the survival of his family. Thus, many children believe they did a good job if it is their families who approved their recruitment in a certain recruiting party.

Table 10. The relationship between economic situation of the family and its stance towards recruitment

Economic situation of the family	Family stance towards recruitment		Total
	Approving	Opposing	
Limited income families	24.2%	30.5%	54.7%
Medium-income families	11.6%	15.8%	27.4%
High-income families	1.1%	2.1%	3.2%
Impoverished families	7.4%	7.4%	14.7%
Total	44.2%	55.8%	100.0%

The limited-income families who approved recruitment of their children accounted for 24.2% whereas the majority of these families (30.5%) opposed recruiting their children but they were faced with a *fait accompli* following their children's engagement with recruiting forces. There are many cases where children seek agreement of their families to allow them to join recruitment units due to poor living conditions. However, if the child fails to get his family's approval, he presents them with a *fait accompli*. It is in this case where the social environment plays a role in child recruitment by exploiting the family's poor conditions.

Unavailability of a source of income

This category includes recruited children who have joined recruitment units due to the loss of their breadwinner (and or his/her inability to work); some of these children's mothers were obliged to work as servants in houses and farms. Such category of recruited children, who come from impoverished families, accounted for 18.2% of the sample of the study. These children along with their families felt that they have valid reasons for accepting recruitment as they have become primarily dependent on the income from recruitment; it accounted for 7.4% of this category. However, it was revealed that some impoverished families opposed recruitment of their children in the first place (see Table 10).

The Child's Need for Personal Spending

Another economic determinant of recruitment was related to the child's personal needs. It was found that 10.9% of the children who were recruited for economic reasons joined recruitment units due to the fact that their families either could not satisfy their needs or denied them. One child indicated that the reason why he accepted a recruitment offer was to buy a bicycle his family refused to buy. Another child stated that he accepted being recruited in order to pay for Qat which he used to chew without his family's knowledge although he comes from a medium-income family and his father spends on his needs.

Although it was found that this category of children has a low percentage compared to other categories, the way children think to make money in separation from their families indicate the phenomenon is not only associated with the poor conditions of their families but also children's own needs, some of which are magnified by their social environment, which are exploited by recruiting parties that offer recruitment as an opportunity to satisfy these needs.

Relationship between Economic Causes and Family Size

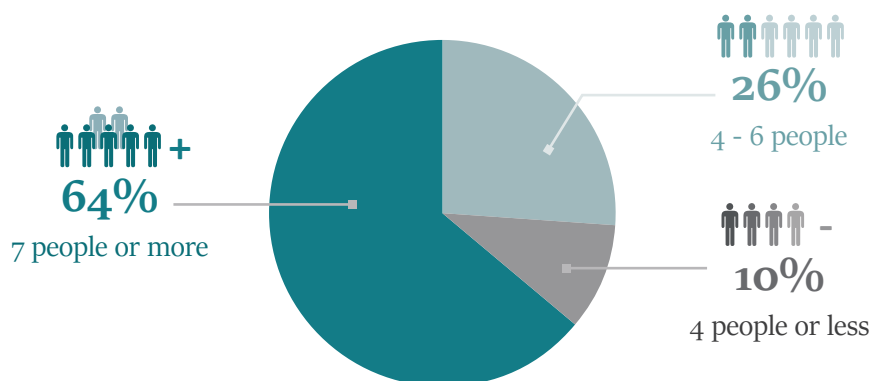
Table 11. Distribution of economic causes by family size

Economic causes	Family size			Total
	4 people or less	4-6 people	7 people or more	
Family's income limits	7.3%	20.0%	43.6%	70.9%
Unavailability of a source of income as a result of the loss or disability of the breadwinner	0%	5.5%	12.7%	18.2%
Child's needs for money for personal spending	0%	0%	10.9%	10.9%
Total	7.3%	25.5%	67.3%	100.0%

Table 11 shows that 67.3% of the children recruited for economic reasons come from large families (i.e. seven persons or more). The logical explanation for this is that large families are less able to cope with poor economic conditions compared to medium and small families. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that children who join recruitment units to make money for personal spending was limited to large families. The more members of a large and medium family, the less capacity they have to meet a child's specific needs.

Relationship between Family's Consent to Recruitment and the Family Size

Figure 8. Relationship between family consent to recruitment and family size



As we can see in figure 8, large families are considered a primary source of child recruitment due to poor living conditions. Very often, large families tend to be unaware of grave consequences of child recruitment and they justify that their children will only do security tasks rather than getting involved in fighting. Unfortunately, many families who have such an assumption failed to balance between the financial benefit of child recruitment and its high risks. It should be noted that most of the recruited children who were killed, had serious injuries, or were subjected to serious violations came from large families.

Relationship between Economic Causes and Recruiting Parties

Table 12. Distribution of economic causes of recruitment among recruitment parties

Economic Causes	Recruiting parties					
	Ansa Allah (Houthis)	The army of the government	Forces loyal to the government	Forces of the Southern Transitional Council	The joint forces led by Tariq Saleh	Army brigades of the Arab Coalition
Family's Income limits	56.5%	82.4%	100.0%	77.8%	100.0%	50.0%
Unavailability of a source of income	26.1%	11.8%	0%	22.2%	0%	0%
Child's needs for money for personal spending	17.4%	5.9%	0%	0%	0%	50.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As we can see in Table 12, family income limits constitute the most important economic cause of recruitment for all the recruiting parties. Extreme poverty due to loss of breadwinner and child's personal needs caused a smaller percentage of child recruitment. Table 12 also shows that poor living conditions experienced by Yemeni people have become a common denominator which most recruiting parties have exploited.

Social Causes of Recruitment

Table 13. Social causes of recruitment

Social causes	
The impact of social environment	49.0%
The lack of social awareness of child recruitment risks	37.3%
Family and social problems	9.8%
Violations occurring in the social environment	3.9%
Total	100.0

The study shows that social causes represent 37.8% of the overall causes of recruitment. There are four social variables namely, the impact of social environment (49.0%), the lack of social awareness of child recruitment risks (37.3%), family and social problems (9.8%) and violations occurring in the social environment (3.9%).

The Impact of Social Environment

Child responses to recruitment are often formed within a social environment that has effective means to influence children and pressure them. With such an environment capable of influencing decisions, intensified due to the armed conflict, children have become vulnerable and fallen into recruitment. Some families, lacking awareness of the issue or not well-educated, can also fall prey to social influence.

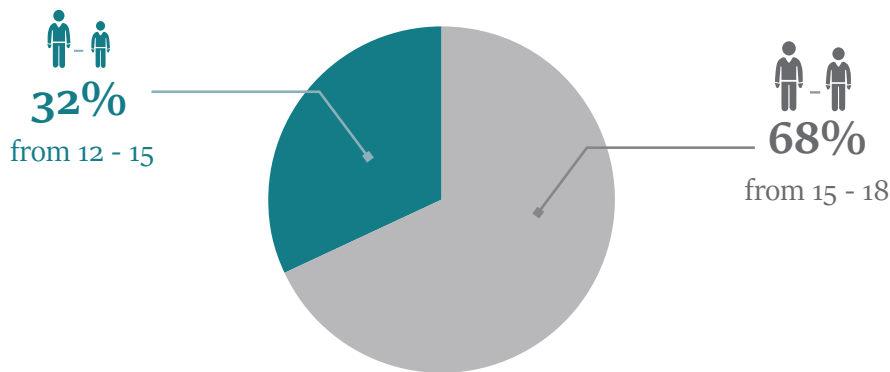
The study shows that the social environment plays an influential role in recruitment, with a percentage of 49.0%. The influence of the social environment is manifested in two ways. First, a direct influence often exerted in the child and family's close circle and environment, through relatives and friends, in which children receive encouragement to get recruited from some relatives who are associated with some recruiting parties. Moreover, children get influenced by friends who have come from battlefronts, who narrate amazing stories and adventures which spark children's interest in recruitment. Sometimes a child joins a group of friends, some of whom discuss recruitment, and over the course of time get engaged in recruitment activities. Another example of social influence is that some parents push their children to get recruited for the parents' own interests and social status. In such a case, child recruitment is considered crucial for some parents who need to prove one's loyalty towards certain recruiting parties and thus avert threats to them in the future. It may also be an effective means to acquire influence within a recruiting party and thereby exercise a sort of power including settling social disputes. A recruited child within Ansar Allah (Houthis) stated that his father was embarrassed by the Houthi supervisors who visited his father's house and requested him to enlist one of his sons in their armed group. Although the father rejected the idea at the beginning, he ultimately relented. He stated that, during the meeting, the recruited child asked his father's

approval to join the Houthi armed group and go to the battlefield instead of his brothers who were preparing for their General Secondary Examinations.

Second, the social environment indirectly influences feelings toward child recruitment in areas where child recruitment becomes common and thus a regular practice and people start to grow accustomed to it. The practice of recruitment has become widespread and thus more common for a considerable portion of society. This can be seen as a crucial factor in child engagement in recruitment in a collective manner especially in areas which are viewed as “recruitment reservoir” or from those areas from where military commanders or officers come. In the latter case, these military commanders offer recruitment as a social service for people in their areas and thereby they gain respect from the local community as well as some unclear financial gains. In one district in Raimah governorate (Assalfiah), it was found that the most important factor of recruitment into government forces is the social influence exerted by some military officers from that area.

Relationship between Social Influence and Age Categories of Recruited Children

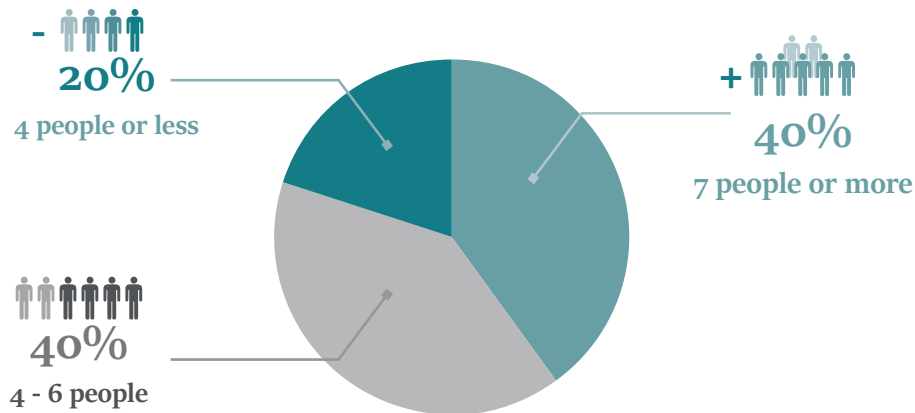
Figure 9. Approximate age of children at recruitment and Social influence



Social influence on recruitment mostly centers on children aged between 15-17 years, with a percentage of 68%. This age group is viewed by society as adults capable of taking responsibility, which facilitates the ability of others, including those affiliated with the parties, to influence them. Moreover, the families are less able to negotiate or prevent children of this age group from being recruited. However, families with children under the age of 12, were not directly influenced by the social environment.

Correlation between Social Influence and Family Size of Recruited Children

Figure 10, Relationship between social influence and family size recruited children



Equally, social influence centers on large and medium families which have several male children, with 40% each. These families often fail to resist child recruitment due to continued social influence.

Lack of Social Awareness of Child Recruitment Risks.

Lack of awareness of the risks of child recruitment is one of the reasons that some families accept enlistment of their children. The risks included here are not only being subjected to killing and injuries on the battlefield or during the tasks children perform, but also include risks of losing their normal life, including continuing their education. The study shows that the families that did not take account of future risks accounted for 37.3% of the families who agreed for their children to be recruited due to social causes. Lack of understanding of these risks and lack of social awareness were the chief reasons these families accepted recruitment, given these families did so without social influence. Poverty is not a sufficient justification for the above; there was a large percentage of impoverished families (55.8%) who rejected recruiting their children.

Family and social problems

Family problems have caused the recruitment of 9.8% of the recruited children due to social causes, the majority of whom joined recruitment units without their family's approval. This indicates that family disintegration plays a serious effect on a child's life. One of the children stated that he joined recruitment units because he was repeatedly beaten by his father due to failure to attain academic achievement. Another child who was recruited said it was due to the pressure of continued family disputes

between his widowed mother and his relatives. Another child stated that he joined recruitment units because his family turned down his request to pay for his wedding preparations.

Violations Occurring in Social Environment

The violations occurring in the social environment by certain parties to the conflict also cause children to join units themselves as a reaction to such violations. Child recruitment for this reason accounted for 3.9%. For example, one of the children justified his recruitment into the army of the internationally recognized government due to the fact that Ansar Allah (Houthis) demolished the Quranic school in which he used to study. Another child joined Houthi forces in Hodeida in response to the fact that one of the girls in his district was raped by a Sudanese soldier in the armed forces of the Arab coalition. Another child joined an Anti-Islah party force—the Abu Al-Abbas Salafi brigades—due to an attack by one of the leaders of the Islah party against the marginalized people in Taiz.

Relationship between Social Causes and Recruiting Parties

Table 14. Distribution of social causes of child recruitment among recruiting parties

Social Causes	Recruiting parties						
	Ansar Allah (Houthis)	The army of the Int. recognized Gov.	The forces loyal to the Int. recognized Gov	The Southern Transitional Council Forces	Ansar Al-Sharia	The Joint Forces led by Tariq Saleh	Army brigades of the Arab Coalition
Social environment influence	26.1	17.7	0%	5.6%	0%	0%	0%
Lack of social awareness of recruitment risks	8.7%	14.7%	0%	22.2%	50%	33.3%	33.3%
Family and social problems	5.8%	2.9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Violations occurring in social environment	1.4%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	42.0%	35.3%	25.0%	27.8%	50.0%	33.3%	33.3%

Table 14 shows that the social environment has a high rate of influence on child recruitment in Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces. This confirms what has been mentioned

earlier—that Houthis depend on social influence more than economic causes of recruitment. It also suggests that the Houthis have a high capacity to influence the social environment, undertaking effective activities through its supervisors. The table also shows that Houthis exploit family and social problems and exercise pressure on families if needed. However, the lack of social awareness plays an important role in child recruitment for all parties with little variation. This shows that the lack of social awareness presents a wide ground for the growth of the phenomenon of child recruitment in different areas of Yemen.

Ideological and Political Causes of Child Recruitment

Table 15. Ideological and Political Causes of Child Recruitment

Ideological and political causes	
Family's ideological and political allegiance to the recruiting party	57.9%
Political affiliation of child's family	26.3%
Political dedication to a certain cause	15.8%
Total	100.0%

Ideological and political causes of recruitment comprised 14.1% of the sample of this study. The percentage includes three variables namely, family's ideological and political allegiance, political affiliation and enthusiasm for a political cause. Family's ideological and political allegiance accounted for 57.9%. This is because the overall ideologically charged atmosphere in Yemen has led some families to motivate their children to join certain recruiting parties to express their allegiance, which they believe embody Jihad, Wilayah, application of Shariah law or defending the nation. The second most important political motive for recruitment is the family's political affiliation; it comprised 26.3% of the recruited children within the category of children who were recruited for ideological and political reasons. This suggests that fanaticism based on political party affiliation, though it is not clear, plays an important role in child recruitment. The third political determinant lies in dedication to a political cause such as the southern cause, which accounted for 15.8% within this category.

Table 16. Distribution of ideological and political causes of child recruitment among recruiting parties

Recruiting parties	Ideological and Political causes		
	Ideological allegiance to a recruiting party	Political affiliation of child's family	Political dedication to a certain cause
Ansar Allah (Houthis)	11.6%	0%	0%
The army of the Int. recognized government	5.3%	21.1%	0%
Armed forces loyal to the Int. recognized government	0%	0%	0%
UAE-Backed Southern Transitional Council Forces	0%	0%	16.7%
Ansar Al-Sharia	50.0%	0%	0%
The Joint Forces led by Tariq Saleh	0%	33.3%	0%
The army brigades of the Arab coalition	0%	0%	0%
Total	57.9%	26.3%	15.8%

Ideological and political causes into the armed forces of Ansar Allah (Houthis) accounted for 11.6% of the children recruited for ideological reasons. Unlike children who were recruited for political reasons into government forces, this percentage of recruited children into Houthi forces were recruited for ideological reasons. Although this percentage may be viewed as low compared to social and economic causes of child recruitment into Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces, it can be considered high when compared to percentage of recruitment for ideological reasons into other parties, with the exception of Ansar Al-Sharia. Most of the recruited children into Ansar Allah (Houthis) for ideological reasons came from families that joined Ansar Allah (Houthis) and embraced their principle of Wilayah. Nevertheless, traditional families especially those which claim to be descendants of prophet Mohammed do not recruit their children as they want to preserve them for leadership positions in the future.

On the contrary, the study shows that the impact of ideological determinants on child recruitment into the army of the internationally recognized government is considerably low; the percentage of which is less than 5.3% of the recruited children for ideological reasons in all the recruiting parties. 21.1% of the recruited children were recruited based on political party affiliation into the army of the internationally recognized government. This percentage of children recruited for ideological and political reasons is affiliated with the Islamic Islah party whose members serve in the army of the

internationally recognized government. However, ideological causes represent the chief causes of recruitment into Ansar Al-Sharia group as the group focuses on the ideological factor in recruitment.

For their part, the joint forces led by Tariq Saleh (former president Saleh's nephew) took advantage of political affiliation of some military commanders loyal to Saleh and affiliated to the GPC. One of the recruited children stated that he joined Tariq's forces due to the fact that the head of the GPC called upon the members of the party to join Tariq Saleh recruitment units. As for Southern Transitional Council, 15.8% of the recruited children in its forces were politically motivated, supporting separatism for the southern areas, which is a goal that Southern Transitional Council aspires to achieve using force and political negotiations.

Psychological Causes of Child Recruitment

Table 17. Psychological causes of recruitment

Psychological Causes	
Interest to carry arms and boast about them	60.0%
Following others	40.0%
Total	100.0%

Psychological determinants influenced the recruitment of 7.4% of the sample of the study, 60% of whom were recruited due to their inclination to carry arms and boast about them, whereas 40% were interested to imitate their peers and adults who were recruited and are apparently 'impressive' in the social environment. Some other children are keen to acquire the nickname some recruiting parties grant to their recruited soldiers. It should be noted that psychological determinants do not constitute a principal ground for child recruitment; they only work in combination with economic and social causes. The children's interest in guns generated by observing armed men as they wear guns fueled their desire to acquire weapons and paving the way for recruitment.

Table 18

Psychological causes	Recruiting parties		Total
	Ansar Allah (Houthis)	Southern Transitional Council	
Interest to carry arms and boast about them	60.0%	0%	60.0%
Following others	30.0%	10.0%	40.0%
Total	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%

Ansar Allah group (Houthis) took the largest share (90.0%) of the children recruited for psychological causes. Some Houthi recruitment officers deliberately give non-recruited children access to guns during social gatherings in order to nurture children's curiosity and connect children to weapons. Moreover, the aspects of daily life in areas under Ansar Allah (Houthi) control sparks the children's interest and provokes them to engage in recruitment.

The other 10% of those children recruited for psychological reasons were found in the forces of the Southern Transitional Council. This could be associated with proliferation of arms in the southern areas under the control of these forces, which are shown daily to children. Moreover, the Southern Transitional Council has always strived to disseminate a culture of weapons, connecting it with independence from the north of Yemen. This would seem to lead to substantial changes in society's awareness of carrying weapons and may undermine the community's condemnation of weapons proliferation for decades.

Section III

Patterns and Mechanisms of Child Recruitment

Patterns of child Recruitment

Table 19. Patterns of child prerecruitment

Recruitment pattern	
Voluntary	44.2%
Compulsory	55.8%
Total	100.0%

Table 19 shows that 55.8% of the sample were recruited compulsorily, without their families' consent. Compulsory recruitment takes several forms including child recruitment without the family's consent, recruitment under immediate threat to the family and, at the extreme end, child abduction. The researcher considered each form of recruitment without the family's consent as compulsory, including if the child consented to recruitment, given the susceptibility of minors to misleading information from the various recruiting parties. Voluntary recruitment, on the other hand, accounted for 44.2% of the sample. Voluntary recruitment included cases where the family consented to the recruitment, often for economic and social reasons. Voluntary recruitment also included cases where the family approved of the recruitment due to ideological reasons.

Table 20. Distribution of recruitment patterns among recruiting parties

Recruiting parties	Recruitment pattern		Total
	Voluntary	Compulsory	
Ansar Allah (Houthis)	18.9%	36.9%	55.8%
The army of Int. recognized government	12.6%	11.6%	24.2%
The forces loyal to Int. recognized government	1.1%	2.1%	3.2%
Southern Transitional Council	6.4%	4.1%	10.5%
Ansar Al-Sharia	2.1%	0%	2.1%
Joint forces led by Tariq Saleh	2.1%	0%	2.1%
Army brigades of the Arab coalition	1.0%	1.1%	2.1%
Total	44.2%	55.8%	100.0%

According to the sample, Ansar Allah (Houthis) incorporated a higher percentage of children through compulsory recruitment (36.8% , including two cases of child abduction), than voluntary recruitment, which accounted for 18.9%. Overall, voluntary and compulsory recruitment by Ansar Allah accounted for 55.8% of the total sample. Compulsory recruitment in Houthi forces took many forms, including threats, using social influence, and exploiting people's economic vulnerabilities. For other recruiting parties, there is greater similarities between their rates of voluntary and compulsory recruitment. For example, the sample showed similar percentages of

compulsory recruitment (12.6% of the total sample) and voluntary recruitment (11.6%) recruited by the army of the internationally recognized government. Economic determinants played an important role in both voluntary and compulsory recruitment patterns, without a strong effect on abduction and threat cases.

Types of child recruitment

Table 21. Types of child recruiting

Type of recruitment	
Individual recruitment	20.0%
Mass recruitment	80.0%
Total	100.0%

Table 21 shows that there is a considerable difference between individual and mass recruitment. 80% of the children in the sample stated that they were recruited collectively along with other children, although there were minor differences in how the collective recruitment occurred. Very often, recruiting supervisors specified a secret gathering point where children would meet in the evening or early morning, later taken to another larger gathering. In other cases, a group of children would go collectively to the nearest security checkpoint for a certain recruiting party and from there be taken to the recruiting supervisor who would finalize the necessary arrangements. The high percentage of mass recruitment indicates that families' control mechanisms are weak. It also indicates that child recruitment has permeated Yemeni society. Mass recruitment increases the level of children's participation in recruitment as children feel safer amidst the other children.

Table 22. Distribution of recruitment types among recruiting parties

ytrap tnemtiurceR	Recruitment pattern		Total
	lauidivdnI tnemtiurcer	Mass recruitment	
Ansar Allah (Houthis)	11.5%	44.2%	55.7%
The army of Int. recognized government	5.3%	18.9%	24.2%
The forces loyal to Int. recognized government	0%	3.1%	3.1%
Southern Transitional Council	1%	9.5%	10.5%
Ansar Al-Sharia	1.1%	1.1%	2.2%
Joint forces led by Tariq Saleh	1.1%	1.1%	2.2%
Army brigades of the Arab coalition	0%	2.1%	2.1%

Table 22 shows that most recruiting parties utilized mass recruitment more than individual recruitment. This indicates that recruitment activities are geared towards enlisting a large number of soldiers, including children. Recruiting parties often give orders to tribal sheikhs or district leaders to conduct mass recruitment or facilitate the work of enlistment officers. In some areas, there are many public recruitment centers which receive applications for recruitment. For example, the study detected an active case of mass turnout on recruitment after citizens heard in Shabwa governorate that the internationally recognized government’s army had opened registration for new recruits after its confrontation with UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council in August 2019. Some children who were missing some documents, like identification documents, had to seek assistance from mediators or brokers before being enlisted in these forces. In addition, many children opted for recruitment as they heard that recruits receive financial gains.

People who recruit children / Recruiters

Those who recruit children do not exercise only a transient impact on the child, but rather recruit him through practical steps that lead him to join in the hostilities or take on specific tasks.

Table 23. Persons carrying out recruitment

Persons carrying out recruitment	
Mobilization & recruitment supervisors	26.3%
Relatives	24.2%
Friends	23.2%
Fathers	10.5%
Brothers	5.3%
Others	10.5%
Total	100.0%

Table 23. shows that recruitment supervisors play the most important role in recruitment, with a percentage of 26.3% of the cases in the sample. These supervisors are often active within their local communities searching for children to recruit, especially during intense confrontations in the conflict or school vacations. Mostly, supervisors have social status within their communities, which enable them to conduct their tasks confidently and with ease.

Relatives have the second most important role in recruiting children; their role accounted for 24.3% of the cases in the sample. Some of these people are already members or fighters with the relevant recruiting party. They often do not show themselves as recruiters but they take advantage of kinship relations and seek to advise children and their families about the benefits of recruitment. Friends of children, especially those who are already recruited, also play an important role in recruitment and some of them have a significant influence on their peers. The children who were recruited by friends accounted for 23.2% of the sample. The friends of children often make arrangements for the children, along with instructions, making it easier for children to enlist themselves.

Fathers contributed to recruitment, with a percentage of 10.5% of the sample. The influence of the father is considered critical especially if they have ideological motives towards recruitment. Some children often accompany their fathers as escorts or conduct non-risky security tasks. Another category of persons who carry out recruitment are recruited soldiers who managed to recruit their smaller brothers into the forces they belong to, with a percentage of 5.3%. The rest of the children (with a percentage of 10.5%) were recruited by another category, which included district leaders, employers and mosque imams.

However, recruitment was also arranged by people not known to the children. The recruited children got to know these people who influenced their recruitment (other than relatives, friends and people in charge of recruitment already known to the children) in public places (42.9%), such as marriage ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, public gatherings and Qat daily sessions held to discuss issues of concern to a certain local district, and in private places (34.3%), in which a group of children met with recruiting supervisors. Recruiters also arranged recruitment through visits to work places (11.4%), in other words going to places where children work like shops, gas stations and groceries, going to schools (5.7%) and through mosques (5.7%), where the mosque imam meets with children.

Table 24. Places where people in charge of recruitment meet children

Places where recruitment supervisors meet children	
Public places	42.9%
Private places	34.3%
Workplaces	11.4%
Schools	5.7%
Mosques	5.7%
Total	100.0%

Some of the children who were recruited in rural areas stated that strangers used to visit their work place in the Qat fields where they worked as night security guards.

After several visits in which the recruiters preached to the children more generally on the obligation of 'Jihad' and the principles of the recruiting party to which they belong, children accepted recruitment.

Table 25. Distribution of person who conducted recruitment among recruiting parties

recruiting party	Person who conducted recruitment						Total
	fathers	brothers	Relatives	Friends	Recruitment supervisors	Others	
Ansar Allah (Houthis)	5.3%	1.0%	8.4%	10.5%	22.1%	8.4%	55.7%
The army of Int. recognized government	3.2%	3.2%	9.5%	5.2%	2.1%	1.1%	24.2%
The forces loyal to Int. recognized government	0%	0%	1.0%	2.1%	0%	0%	3.1%
Southern Transitional Council	1.0%	0%	3.2%	5.3%	1.0%	0%	10.5%
Ansar Al-Sharia	0%	1.1%	0%	0%	0%	1.1%	2.2%
Joint forces led by Tariq Saleh	1.1%	0%	0%	0%	1.1%	0%	2.2%
Army brigades of the Arab coalition	0%	0%	2.1%	0%	0%	0%	2.1%
Total	10.5%	5.3%	24.2%	23.1%	26.4%	10.5%	100.0%

Table 25 shows the type of people used by different warring parties to recruit children. It can be noticed that some parents, relatives and friends volunteered to recruit new child soldiers for their own reasons without being tasked by recruiting parties. Some of these reasons include wanting to demonstrate loyalty and to earn the trust of recruitment parties. In other cases, people appeared motivated by anger and resentment towards opposing forces. This type of voluntary recruitment is seen as an indication of the pervasiveness and destructive impact of the acceptance of child recruitment in society.

Ansar Allah (Houthis) employed "supervisors" for mobilizing and recruitment more than other warring parties. The study found that recruitment into Houthi forces is a pivotal function performed by an administrative body within Ansar Allah. The body conducts recruitment through a highly complicated 'recruitment network'. That is, recruitment is not directly conducted by supervisors but rather other contractors working for the group known as 'mobilizers'. These mobilizers often operate in small districts, such as in villages and localities, and are paid for each person recruited.

The careful arrangement for mobilizing and recruiting into Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces reflects the group's critical need for fighters. They cannot find sufficient fighters through people joining the forces spontaneously out of loyalty to them. Moreover, Ansar Allah (Houthis) are considered the party that concentrates the most on child recruitment, as they believe that such an age group is more amenable and mobilizable. Having asked one of the people in charge of recruiting children into Ansar Allah (Houthis) on the required specifications of children targeted for recruitment, he replied that "there are not certain specifications but it would be preferable if the target is young so that it can be easily mobilized and educated; we are being instructed, in some cases, to recruit children who have not been enlisted before and those who have not taken part in educational sessions."^[34]

It seems that Ansar Allah (Houthis) practice recruitment of children even for a short period of time as a way of spreading the culture of fighting and exposing children to experiences that might motivate them to get further associated with Ansar Allah in the future. Thus, the Ansar Allah group does concern much about tracking fugitives as we can see later in the study.

Recruitment in the army of the internationally recognized government and other warring parties is often carried out by relatives and friends, more than by recruitment supervisors. This indicates that there is a little organized push for child recruitment for these parties and that many relatives and friends are actually the locus of recruitment.

Recruitment Methods

Table 26. Child recruitment methods

Recruitment methods	
Financial inducement	51.6%
gnidaelsiM	42.1%
Immediate threat	6.3%
Total	100.0%

Table 26 shows that financial inducement is the highest method used in child recruitment, with a percentage of 51.6% of the sample. This is consistent with the central role of economic determinants in recruitment. This method often entices children and their families by offering a salary, a position in the military, a gun or regular in-kind assistance. Of course, the child and his family do not often receive all of this in reality, but the promises help to incentivize recruitment for the child.

Misleading children by promoting ideas of jihad or national defense accounted for

[34] An interview conducted with a recruitment supervisor in Houthis group in 07/10/2019

42.1% of the sample. This method is used to incite children's religious, national and tribal sensitivities. It also demonizes other parties by focusing on violations they have committed, with the result that children accept recruitment and exhibit feelings of anger, resentment and a desire for vengeance towards opposing parties. Moreover, recruiting parties utilizing this method often exaggerate the benefits of recruitment and minimize its risks when discussing with children or answering their questions. They also portray engagement in fighting as a pleasurable experience where children can get what they want, even play and entertainment. For those children who prefer to pursue their studies, recruiting parties promise them to grant paid leaves to take exams. As for children who are closely attached to their parents, parties preach that obeying parents is a religious obligation prescribed by Allah, while 'jihad' is another obligation done for the sake of Allah.

Immediate threats only accounted for 6.3% of the sample. This method often involves punishment or deprivation from a vital interest. The low percentage of this method suggests that the other recruiting methods are seen as more acceptable and recruiting parties only resort to this method in case the other methods are not available.

Table 27. Distribution of child recruitment methods among recruiting parties

Recruiting parties	Recruitment Methods			Total
	Financial inducement	Misleading	Immediate threat	
Ansar Allah (Houthis)	21.1%	29.5%	5.2%	55.8%
The army of Int. recognized government	16.8%	6.3%	1.1%	24.2%
The forces loyal to Int. recognized government	2.1%	1.1%	0%	3.2%
Southern Transitional Council	8.4%	2.1%	0%	10.5%
Ansar Al-Sharia	0%	2.1%	0%	2.1%
Joint forces led by Tariq Saleh	1.1%	1.0%	0%	2.1%
Army brigades of the Arab coalition	2.1%	0%	0%	2.1%
Total	51.6%	42.1%	6.3%	100.0%

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group depended on misleading children by promoting the idea of jihad to a large extent, with a percentage of 29.5% of the children recruited in its forces. This is consistent with the influential role of the social environment as the most important determinant in recruitment into Ansar Allah forces. The second most used method by Ansar Allah (Houthis) is financial inducement, with a percentage of

21.1%. The least used method by the Houthis was immediate threat (5.3%), but this was the highest percentage of this type of recruitment compared to other recruiting parties.

By contrast, the most common method employed by the army of the internationally recognized government was financial inducement with a high percentage (16.8%), whereas misleading children based on national defense only accounted for (6.3%), indicating the army of the internationally recognized government relied on convincing children through promises of financial benefits.

The primary purpose of recruitment

Table 28. The primary purpose of Child recruitment

The primary purpose of recruitment	
Fighting purpose	34.7%
Non-fighting purpose	63.2%
Vague	2.1%
Total	100.0%

Table 28 shows that the majority of children (63.7%) accepted recruitment on the promise that they will not engage in hostilities, whereas 34.7% of the sample knew that they would engage in fighting. However, 2.1% of the sample did not clearly know the purpose of recruitment.

Table 29. Patterns of children's actual engagement in fighting

Patterns of children's actual engagement in fighting	
Combat tasks	42.1%
Guarding sites and military institutions	8.3%
Other security tasks	49.6%
Total	100.0%

Comparing table 28 with children's actual engagement in the conflict (Table 29), we can clearly see the extent to which warring parties mislead children and their families during mobilization. Children who were told at the time of enlistment that they would engage in combat activities accounted for 34.7%, but after enlistment, the percentage of those who actually practiced combat and military operations reached 50.4% (including combat tasks—42.1%—and guarding military sites and institutions—8.3%—from the chart above). In other words, 15.7% more children actually participated in dangerous tasks and hostilities than those who believed they would at the outset of recruitment.

Children’s placement methods in security and combat missions

Table 30. Methods of placing recruited children into recruitment units

Methods of placing children into recruiting units	
Direct placement	11.6%
Indirect placement	88.4%
Total	100.0%

Direct placement refers to placement of recruited children immediately into warfronts and assigning them immediately to security tasks. This method is often made without taking into account that children have not dealt with weapons before. The children are often taken immediately to warfronts especially when there is a military attack against a certain recruiting party. The children who were immediately placed into warfronts reached 11.6%. This suggests that the larger percentage of children often go through educational and combat training.

Training courses for recruited children vary from one recruiting party to another. Training courses conducted by Ansar Allah (Houthis) ranges from two to three months and focus on educational and combat training. The training often takes specific steps and, in the end, supervisors assign child recruits to their roles. However, the training provided to recruits in other recruiting parties are comparatively short; they do not exceed one week. Unlike Ansar Allah, recruits in the forces of other parties only receive training on basic combat skills and they do not normally receive educational training. Overall, recruitment mechanisms for almost all parties except Ansar Allah are not sufficiently clear. They do not seem to follow systematic and coherent steps, and sometimes are cloaked in secrecy, as in Ansar Al-Sharia (the researcher could not identify recruitment mechanisms in this armed group).

Figure 11. Training steps in forces of Ansar Allah (Houthis)

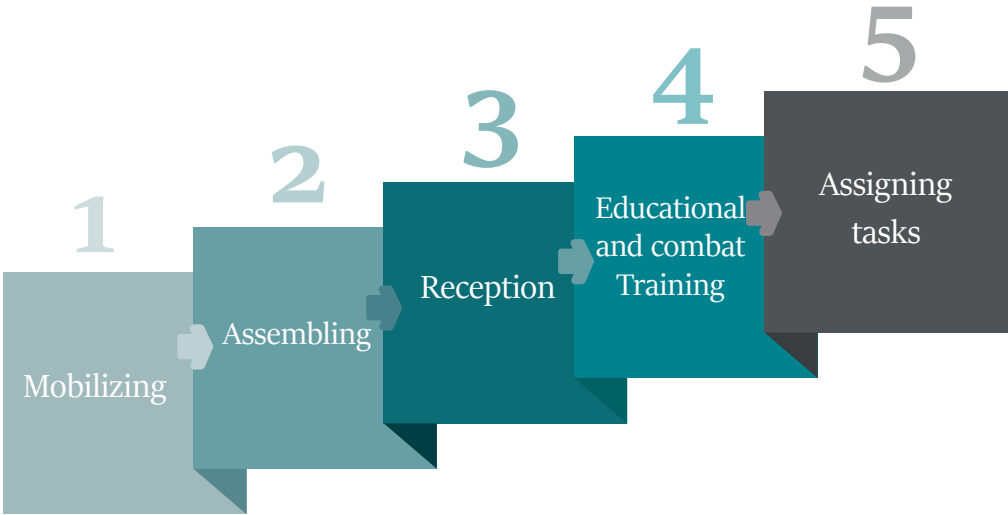


Figure 11 illustrates recruitment into Ansar Allah (Houthis), which tends to take five steps as follows:

Step One: Mobilizing

Mobilizing includes individual and collective mobilizing which is carried out in various methods as stated above. Mobilizers often specify a secret place for the children to meet. The mobilizer then contacts the supervisor to receive them.

Step Two: Assembling

The supervisor provides accommodation for the children who meet with many other children from different places and they all get transferred to another place.

Step Three: Reception

The children are received and welcomed by the reception supervisor and his team and they are served food and Qat. After that, the children are sent to the places where they receive educational courses. The reception is a pivotal step since it serves as the gate to the next stages. It should be noted that children need to pass through the reception supervisors in order to pay visits to their families, where they need to register their names, determine the return date and get paid some money known as visit allowance.

Step Four: Educational courses

Educational courses are often held in top-secret closed places and they last from two to three months. However, these courses may only last for two weeks if there is a need for fighters in warfronts. The course includes speeches, lectures, videos showing “brave” fighters from Ansar Allah in the battlefield. Other videos display brutality of other warring parties and they often focus on violations of these parties using huge TV screens. During the course, some people are assigned to observe children’s conversations and their comments. After a few weeks, the children are trained on how to use different types of weapons, avoid airstrikes, and drive military vehicles.

Step Five: Assessment

At the end of educational and combat training courses, the skills of the participants are assessed. Those children who are deemed to be ready, or seen as “brave,” are often sent to the battlefield whereas the others are dispersed on logistic and security tasks based on the assessment of the course supervisors.

Section IV

Dynamics of Recruitment and Conflict

Continued conflict – more recruitment

Figure 12. Recruitment commencement date

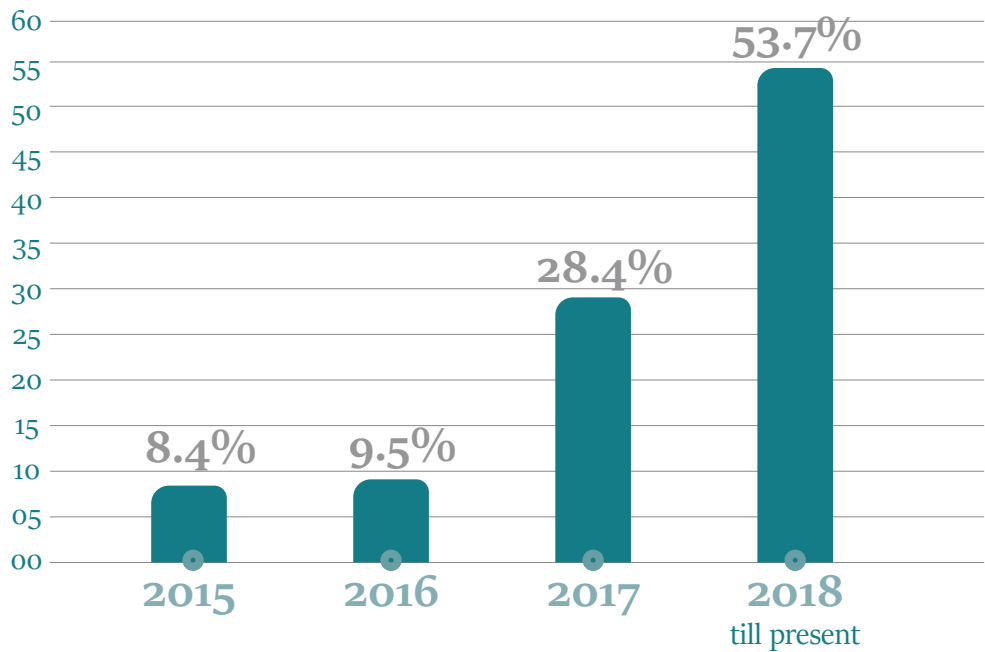


Figure 12 shows that child recruitment is steadily rising due to the continuation of the conflict. It can be noticed that only 8.4% of the sample were recruited in 2015, when the conflict escalated. This is a low percentage of recruitment when compared to those who were recruited in 2017, which reached 28.4% of the sample. Surprisingly, recruitment from 2018 until the middle of 2019 increased considerably, as it reached 53.7% of the sample.

Unfortunately, the dangerous upward slope of child recruitment over the years of conflict is accompanied by the limited ability of society to address the phenomenon. The community’s capacity to condemn recruitment has been undermined by the poor conditions caused by the continuing conflict, which has expanded the cycle of poverty, undermined families’ capacity to act as guardians to their children, and spoiled social relations by creating tensions among traditional players (i.e. tribes, political parties). The conflict also caused an unabated race for child recruitment, as a reflection of the political and ideological loyalties in environments marked by a lack of social awareness. Overall, the conflict seems to have acted as a catalyst for recruitment in a poor society witnessing critical tears in its social fabric, exploited by warring parties.

Roles Played By Recruited Children and its Significance in Persistence of the Conflict

Table 31. Actual participation of recruited children

Actual participation of recruited children	
Combat tasks	42.1%
Guarding sites and military institutions	8.3%
Conducting inspection at checkpoints	12.8%
Logistic supplies	11.3%
Escorting officials	6.8%
Guarding civil institutions	6.0%
Services	6.0%
Mobilizing	4.5%
Security raids	2.3%
Total	100.0%

Table 31 shows a high rate of active participation of recruited children in hostilities. 42.1% of the sample participated actively and directly in hostilities, mostly in frontlines where they engaged in direct clashes, including driving military vehicles like tanks, with only a few reporting they were participating in the fighting in the background (For example; reload ammunition). 47.9% of the sample were not engaged in fighting directly, and were used in other tasks like security, logistics, and other services. The high rate of active participation in combat tasks indicates warring parties depend on children to carry out these tasks.

The high rate at which all warring parties--despite some variations among them--depend on recruited children to carry out combat roles confirms the close connection between the phenomenon of child recruitment and the conflict. The conflict seems to fuel the phenomenon of child recruitment, playing an important role in its evolution and manifested by the active participation of children in fighting, thereby furthering a continuation of the conflict. That said, it is difficult to determine the specific combat roles recruited children played, and to then identify their impact on the course of fighting. However, their active participation in fighting, as the study shows, constitutes a sufficient indicator to claim that child recruitment is an essential component in military calculations for at least some of the warring parties. This makes more difficult addressing the problem of child recruitment during the continuing conflict.

Family stance towards child recruitment: significance of stability and change in view of the continuing conflict

Table 32. Family stance towards child recruitment

Family stance		
Refusal	Consent	44.2%
	Positive	13.7%
	Negative	42.1%
Total		100.0%

While 44.2% of children's families in the sample consent to their children's recruitment, 55.8% did not consent to recruitment. However, families taking a principled stance against child recruitment was not always their final position, as there are often ongoing debates between families and warring parties in the context of the conflict, which has positively and negatively influenced the families' stance on recruitment. Some families who rejected recruitment at the beginning eventually consented to it, whereas others continued to refuse recruitment. The percentage of those who rejected recruitment was stabilized at 52.7% whereas those who consented to it increased to 47.3% of the sample. As shown in the table below.

Statement	The percentage	Change in stance from refusal to consent	Change in stance from consent to refusal	Total refusal (final stance)	Total consent (final stance)
refusal (positive and negative)	55.80%	14.70%	11.60%	52.7%	
consent	44.20%	14.70%	11.60%	-	47.30%

Significance of a change in the family's stance from refusal to consent

The Yemeni family has experienced a significant struggle with the phenomenon of child recruitment given the conditions of the conflict. Despite the poor living conditions in which many Yemeni families live, and the pressures exercised on them, the Yemeni family remains an effective bulwark in the difficult struggle against child recruitment. Table 32 shows that the Yemeni family's refusal to recruitment took two forms, namely, "positive" and "negative" refusal.^[35] Some families' resistance to recruitment eroded following changes due to the continuation of the conflict, with the families eventually giving in to recruitment. Most of these families negatively refused child recruitment. That is, they

[35] Negative refusal means that the family refuses to enlist the child without making efforts to restore the child or pressure the recruiting party. Rather, the negative refusal in some families reaches the recognition of the fait accompli. As for the positive refusal, it is intended to oppose the recruitment of the child and work to restore it from the grasp of the recruiting party, with the possible means available to the family.

tried to refuse their child be recruited, but relented without making any effort to bring the child back or put pressure on the warring party, as did families which had a “positive refusal” towards recruitment.

Table 33. Change in family stance from refusal to approval recruitment

	From refusal to consent	Remained refusing	Total
Negative refusal	12.6%	29.5%	42.1%
Positive refusal	2.1%	11.6%	13.7%
Total	14.7%	41.1%	55.8%

Table 33 shows how some families’ stance changed from refusal to approval when their children had engaged in recruitment. These families constituted 12.6% of the families that negatively opposed recruitment in the beginning, which was 42.1% of the sample. However, very little change took place in the stance of those families (2.1% of the families that had positive refused in the beginning, which was 13.7% of the sample) that positively rejected child recruitment. These families fought very hard to bring back their children. Some of these families clashed with recruiting supervisors whereas others managed to put pressure on the recruiting party using social relations or paying ransoms.

Table 34. factors of change in family stance from refusal to consent

Factors of change in family stance from refusal to consent	
Child recruitment yielded returns	42.9%
Understanding the child’s insistence to get recruited	42.9%
Recruiting party’s reassurance to the family	14.3%
Total	100.0%

Table 34 shows the reasons for the collapse of families’ resistance to child recruitment. Some families changed their stance as they experienced concrete financial benefits from recruitment (42.9%), either by getting a portion of the recruited child’s salary or gaining food supplies due to the child’s engagement in recruitment. Other families (42.9%) changed their stance due to the child’s continued persistence to get recruited. In addition, recruited children often convey positive impressions about recruitment. They often state that they receive proper treatment and good nutrition and make new friends. These impressions have an impact on the family, regardless of their accuracy, as they relieve concerns and make it easier for the family to along with child’s position. The family’s stance also changed after reassurances by the recruiting party (14.3% of the sample), like that the child does not carry out risky tasks. In all of the above, a child is used as a tool by warring parties to undermine families’ resistance to recruitment. It should be noted that recruited children do not only convey positive impressions of recruitment to their families, but also more enthusiastically to their friends. In other words, recruited children’s influence extends to the family and society as a whole.

Significance of change in family's stance from consent to refusal

Table 35. Change in family stance from consent to refusal

	From consent to refusal	Remained consenting	Total
Approval	11.6%	32.6%	44.2%

Table 35 shows a different aspect of the dynamics of the relationship between recruitment and families in the context of the conflict. The number of families that consented to recruit their children in the beginning (with a percentage of 44.2%) declined; 11.6% of these families changed their position from consent to refusal. They positively rejected their child's recruitment i.e. they managed to bring their children away from recruitment units, ending their recruitment.

Table 36. Factors changing family stance towards recruitment from consent to refusal

Factors changing family stance from consent to refusal	
Fearing for the child's life	90.9%
Improvement in family's income	9.1%
Total	100.0%

The most significant factor which motivated families to change their position from consent to refusal was fearing for the child's life, with a percentage of 90.9% of the sample. During escalation in the battlefronts, some families who knew their children were actively engaged in fighting hastened to bring their children back home, though it was not an easy task. The change in the family's position is associated with exposure to misleading information given by warring parties to families, who then realize their children are engaged directly in fighting. As they felt danger approaching, these families' delusions that recruitment was 'safe' vanished.

The child's parents interventions and pleas were crucial to persuading the child to leave recruitment, and sometimes to influence the recruiting party itself to bring back their children from the battlefield. For example, one mother succeeded to bring back her child from the battlefield where his father was killed by entreating one of the Houthi supervisors. As another example, one of the officers in the army of the internationally recognized government was able to bring his child back home after he realized that his child was preparing to participate in the Western Coast confrontations.

The economic factor has a very limited impact (i.e. 9.1% of the sample) on the families' decision to change their position from consent to refusal. It was only limited to those families whose income has improved, for example when one of its members got a new job opportunity and thus felt able to bring their child back home. In this context, one family from Mahweet governorate succeeded to bring back their child after it received regular

financial assistance from a humanitarian agency. It can be suggested that the limited impact of the economic factor on the family's decision to change its stance from consent to refusal is associated with the fact that for only a few families have living conditions improved. Thus, it can also be said that families' improved income could make children end their engagement in the recruitment.

Children's abandonment of recruitment

Table 37. Reasons for children's abandoning recruitment

Reasons for leaving recruitment units	
Recruiting party practices	52.6%
Family pressure	31.6%
Fearing and feeling dangers	15.8%
Total	100.0%

The percentage of children who left their recruitment, after having actively participated, reached 17.9%, as shown in the table below. The main reason children left recruitment was the practices of recruiting parties, including mistreatment, beating, insulting, the rigors of training and other burdens that go beyond a child's physical capabilities. In addition, some children felt they were not being treated in the same way as their peers, while others came to realize the vast difference between the behavior of the recruited party in reality and the image the child have of them prior to recruitment. Another reason why children left recruitment was the feeling of fear and danger, which accounted for 15.8% of the children who left recruitment, particular when the danger of confrontations approached or when children heard other children were killed.

The current status of the child soldier	
current situation	The percentage %
Current recruit	50.5
Former recruit	31.6
left recruit	17.9
Total	100

The third reason for leaving recruitment was the pressure exercised by families on their children, with a percentage of 31.6% of the children who left recruitment. The success of family pressure to make children leave recruitment does not necessarily lead to the definitive end of recruitment. The study found that some children who left recruitment due to family pressure remain interested to re-enlist and are likely to go back to their recruitment units in the future. The children's continuing interest in recruitment complicates the family's efforts to reintegrate them into society and compounds its suffering in a way not likely felt by the local community.

On the contrary, it was found that the children who left recruitment for reasons other than family pressure took a firm position against reengagement. Some of them have resumed their normal life by going back to school or other jobs. Generally, the children who left recruitment did not fear pursuit or other pressure by recruiting parties, as these parties apparently do not care much about these young “rebels” and leave them alone; perhaps the task of attracting others is easier than chasing children who have experienced recruitment and failed to adapt to it.

Recruited children’s association with conflict

Among the dubious interaction between recruitment and conflict is the association of children with benefits and recruitment. Children keep engaging in recruitment in order to preserve these benefits.

Table 38. Benefits that recruited children believe to be achievable

Benefits	
Getting money	48.3%
Enjoying prestige in society	16.7%
Satisfaction of performing ‘Jihad’	8.3%
Receiving combat training	6.7%
No benefits	20.0%
Total	100.0%

Table 38 shows that children pursue recruitment for different reasons. 48.3% of the recruited children continue their recruitment (their percentage is 50.5% in the sample) for the sake of money, which is a means of livelihood. 16.7% of the sample stated that they continue their recruitment for gaining respect and prestige in society. Some people in the local community make recruited children feel respected, and this may contribute indirectly to fueling children’s interest to continue recruitment. Moreover, the prestige that children aspire to achieve is closely connected with carrying arms as well as nicknames given by recruiting parties which create a feeling of self-fulfillment and confidence in children. Another group of recruited children (8.3%) stated that the feeling of satisfaction of their combat and security roles serves as their motivation to continue recruitment; indicating these children were recruited for ideological causes. 6.7% of the children were motivated to continue recruitment for the combat skills they learn out of recruitment and they continued to keep up these skills. 20% of the recruited children felt that recruitment does not provide any benefits, indicating that these children were likely recruited for economic and social causes. Given that recruitment involves high risks and provides no benefits to this group of children, they are likely to abandon it in the future.

Section V

Violations and reactions of families

Types of violations

Table 39. Types of violations faced by recruited children

Violations against recruited children	
Killing	31.6%
Exposure to harsh conditions	17.9%
Serious injuries	8.4%
Mistreatment	6.3%
Rape and sexual violence	2.1%
Abduction	2.1%
No violations	31.6%
Total	100.0%

Recruitment itself is a grave violation against children. Table 39 shows types of violations suffered by recruited children including grave violations such as killing, abduction and sexual violence. 31.6% of the sample lost their lives in different ways during their engagement in the conflict. The large number of children killed confirms that there is a high rate of recruited children who are actively engaged in fighting. Moreover, it demonstrates that the warring parties depend on the participation of children in the conflict and thus their participation is an influential component in the continuation of the conflict, as we saw in Section Two.

Table 40. Death circumstance of children killed as result of engagement in conflict

Death or injury circumstance	
Mine explosion	3.1%
Air strike	7.4%
Fighting	15.8%
Security clashes	5.3%
Total	31.6%

The means of children's death included engagement in fighting, airstrikes on military and security sites, clashes with other fighters at checkpoints and security raids as well as exposure to anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines.

In the context of grave violations, 2.1% of the sample were abducted and forcedly recruited without taking the family's or the child's consent. The same percentage—2.1% of the sample—were exposed to rape and sexual violence. For example, a 14-year-old girl was brutally raped by the recruiting party during the period where the party was using her for spying services, and was threatened that all her family members would

be killed if she disclosed the information. Other violations included exposure to harsh recruitment conditions (17.9%) such as withholding food and water from children, forcing children to eat contaminated food, waking children up by means of cold water or shootings, and exposure to extremely cold temperatures and physical beatings. In addition, 6.3% of the recruited children suffered from mistreatment which included insulting scolding, offensive, verbal abuse and attacks on personal dignity. The children who had non-mortal injuries accounted for 8.4%. Surprisingly, 31.6% of the recruited children stated that they were not exposed to any violations. It is possible most of these children were recruited for ideological and political causes and would refuse to talk about any violations committed to them by the recruiting party, even where they occurred.

Correlation between violations and recruiting parties

Table 41. Distribution of violations among recruiting parties

Recruiting parties	Violations							Total
	Killing	Abducting	Rape & sexual	Serious injuries	Mistreatment	Exposure to harsh	No violations	
Ansar Allah (Houthis)	21.1%	2.1%	2.1%	3.2%	4.2%	10.5%	12.6%	55.8%
The army of Int. recognized government	8.4%	0%	0%	0%	1.1%	2.1%	12.6%	24.2%
The forces loyal to Int. recognized government	0%	0%	0%	3.2%	0%	0%	0%	3.2%
Southern Transitional Council	1.1%	0%	0%	1.0%	1.0%	3.2%	4.2%	10.5%
Ansar Al-Sharia	1.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.1%	2.1%
Joint forces led by Tariq Saleh	0%	0%	0%	1.0%	0%	0%	1.1%	2.1%
Army brigades of the Arab coalition	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2.1%	0%	2.1%
Total	31.6%	2.1%	2.1%	8.4%	6.3%	17.9%	31.6%	100.0%

Table 41 shows a high rate of violations suffered by children recruited into Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces. The study shows that Houthis are the only recruiting party that committed the grave violations against children including abduction, rape and sexual violence. Moreover, the highest portion of recruited children were killed in this group. The plausible explanation for the high rate of child deaths in Ansar Allah is that the group does not hesitate to throw young recruits into battlefronts and that they believe as an armed group that they have to exploit all the resources available while facing a complex military alliance. 7.4% of the children who were killed after being recruited into Ansar Allah (Houthis) were killed by airstrikes. The fact that children recruited by other warring parties were not exposed to airstrikes contributed to the smaller rate of deaths among children recruited in those forces.

Reaction of families towards violations against their children

Table 42. The party responsible for the death of children in the view of the family

The party responsible for the death of children	
The recruiting party	56.7%
The party that killed the child in war	30.0%
Both parties	6.7%
I don't know	6.7%
Total	100.0%

The reaction of families whose recruited children were killed was very muted. They merely expressed their sorrow, trauma and continued feelings of pain. As table 42 shows, 56% of the families condemned the recruiting party and held it accountable for the death of the child but took no actions against the recruiting party. It is difficult to take any actions against the recruiting party or the persons who drag their children to the 'incinerator' under the conditions in the continued conflict. Families cannot even express their outrage because they fear the consequences and therefore they remain silent. To condemn the recruiting party is seen as a courageous position demonstrating families' stance towards the continuation of war. By contrast, 30% of the families did not hold the recruiting party responsible for the death of their child but rather poured out their anger on the party that killed the child during confrontations or by airstrikes. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether these families allied themselves with the recruiting party to take revenge. A few families (with a percentage of 6.7%) whose children were killed condemned both parties and they tended to condemn war at large. However, 6.7% of the families did not take a clear stance, possibly due to fear of consequences.

Section VI

Direct Effects of Child Recruitment Phenomenon

School dropout

School dropout can be seen as the most immediate effect of the child recruitment phenomenon in the context of conflict. These effects not only impact Yemenis’ present but also extend to the future. Although there are other factors which impact school dropout, child recruitment is considered the most serious because it targets school-age children and often takes them away from their families, with families losing their educational ties with their children.

The percentage of children who were enrolled in school prior to their recruitment reached 90.5% of the sample. Some dropped out and joined recruitment in their final stages of schooling. Recruitment may eliminate the child’s desire to go back to school. Some children respondents were convinced that continuing recruitment would provide a permanent military position, which they saw as a benefit, and believed could not be achieved through education.

Serious ideological and behavioral changes

Recruitment negatively impacts children’s thoughts and behaviors, as they are exposed to and absorb recruiting party ideologies through continued mobilization efforts and daily lessons to children during the period of recruitment, including children who were ideologically recruited. During recruitment, children do not live a normal life and they do not have proper intellectual development. One behavior that children acquire during recruitment is the traditional strict obedience to orders of their leaders at the expense of the educational values of their families. Child attachment to a group of similarly-aged friends integrates them strongly in the recruitment environment, and makes them more likely to absorb new thoughts and behavior. The study shows that 18.9% of recruited children fell into bad habits such as smoking, Qat chewing and Shammah (narcotic powder placed in the mouth) consumption (see table 43).

Table 43. Changes in behavior and thought of recruited children

segnahc laroivaheb dna lacigoloedI	%
Acquisition of the recruiting party ideologies	41.5%
Develop bad behavioral habits	18.9%
Association with a group of friends at the recruitment units	13.2%
No changes	26.4%
Total	100.0%

Such behavioral and thought process changes caused by recruitment are likely to change children’s views towards several issues, increasing their sense of rebellion against society and changing the way they deal with their families as well as with elderly people. One of the respondents, a relative to a recruited child, indicated there were several changes visible during children’s first visit to their families. For example,

some children had become overconfident, showing disrespect to the opinions of adults and often mocking some ideas at odds with the ones he had acquired during the recruitment process. The children might slide into a false sense of being more important than others, demonstrating certain behaviors and exaggerating the morality of the recruiting party without taking account of family tradition.

Expansion of carrying arms

As mentioned earlier, a high percentage (69.5% of the sample) did not carry arms prior to recruitment. As expected, a high percentage of children began to carry arms, triggered by their engagement in recruitment activities. It is likely the recruited children will continue carrying arms in the future. Carrying arms can change a person, for example, causing them to act more aggressively. Moreover, carrying arms can also cause social problems, especially in environments where it is viewed as alien to the existing culture, undermining community safety and coexistence.

Section VII

Child Recruitment Phenomenon – Future Overlook

Indicators and trends based on currently recruited children’s responses

When asking currently recruited children (50.5% of the sample) about the possibility of abandoning recruitment in the future, the majority of them (43.3%) stated they would abandon recruitment if their living conditions improved, either by getting a job or earning a source of income for their family.

It is possible those whose answer was “I don’t know” would also be likely to abandon recruitment upon the improvement of their living conditions. The high impact of the economic factor on continuing recruitment, in line with the central role of economic determinants in child recruitment at the outset, indicates economic factors are likely to continue influencing the course of child recruitment in the future.

Table 44. Situations where children abandon recruitment

tnemtiurcer gninodnaba fo snoitautiS	%
Improvement of living conditions	43.4 ⁰ %
Victory of the recruiting party	18.9%
End of conflict	12.8%
End of social and family problems	9.8%
I don’t know	15.1 ⁰ %
Total	100.0%

Another group of children, 11.3% of indicated they would abandon recruitment when the conflict ends. Cessation of the conflict, from this perspective, meant there would be no justification for recruitment once hostilities came to an end. Cessation of conflict is also associated with improvement of living conditions, with the understanding that economic conditions improve, to a small extent, upon the end of conflict.

Another group of children (9.8%) stated that they would abandon recruitment if their social and family problems were solved. These children were recruited following family problems or disputes with their relatives. This variable does not seem to constitute significant indication for the development of child recruitment phenomenon ao long as child recruitment is connected with solving their own family and social problems. Another group of children (with a percentage of 18.9%) stated that they would continue their recruitment until the relevant warring party achieved victory. Normally, these children represented those who were recruited for ideological and political reasons, or those who aspire to military careers following the settlement of the conflict.

Overall, most recruited children are inclined to abandon recruitment for different reasons, the most important of which is improvement in economic conditions. Therefore, improvement of living conditions and its positive effect on the living standards of families and individuals is a key factor to stop expansion of child recruitment in the future. Another interesting takeaway associated with the influence of the economic factor is that improvement in economic conditions depends on an end of the conflict. Finally, despite the importance of the economic factor, an end to the conflict is crucial to ending child recruitment.

Indicators and trends based on non-recruited children fact-finding interviews

The study did not only identify the opinions of currently recruited children regarding the possible continuation or abandonment of recruitment in the future. These children are only one aspect of the phenomenon. The other aspect is those children who are not yet, but are likely, to get engaged in recruitment. The future of the phenomenon is associated with this group of children, as well as their families, living in active recruitment environments. Thus, the study explored opinions of a sample of non-recruited children, as well as the people whose children are not enlisted. The survey revealed the following indicators in the course of the phenomenon's evolution.

Disapproving family vs children inclined to recruitment

Table 45. Respondents views on recruitment

Stance towards recruitment	Non-recruited children	Parents with non-recruited children
Agree	57.7%	23.1%
Disagree	42.3%	76.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Parents who categorically rejected recruitment of their children reached 76.9% of those whose children were not currently recruited. However, the percentage of children not currently enlisted who refused to be enlisted did not exceed 42.3%, compared to 57.7% of children who agreed to be recruited. The principal motive for these children's agreement was to get money and weapons. The wide gap between the stance of parents and non-recruited children within the same social environment indicates that the phenomenon will persist in the future if the conflict continues, and it is likely that it will take the compulsory form i.e. without family consent. As stated in Section Three, compulsory recruitment is currently the predominant form of child recruitment. The children who expressed their interest in recruitment reported that what prevents them from recruitment is their fear from their family and that they do not have enough courage to inform their families of their desire to join recruitment. Therefore, it is anticipated that continuation of conflict along with its devastating economic effects is likely to undermine family authority in the eyes of children as well their capacity to determine children's behavior, making them more susceptible to recruitment. Having asked parents whether they fear engagement of one of their children in recruitment, 73.1% expressed serious concerns that their children may engage in recruitment in the future.

High exposure indicator

What is striking is that all conflict parties continue recruitment extensively at the community level within the governorates covered in the study. 42.3% of the parents whose children had not yet been recruited stated that their children were extensively exposed to recruitment. Exposure to recruitment reached 53.8% of children who had not yet been recruited; normally, not all children tell their parents that they have been exposed to recruitment.

Table 46. Exposure of non-recruited children to recruitment

Exposure to recruitment	Non-recruited children	Parents with non-recruited children
Not exposed to recruitment	46.2%	57.7%
Exposed to recruitment	53.8%	42.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

The high level of exposure to recruitment reflects warring parties' persistence in recruiting children. Like a seed sown by recruiting supervisors, it is likely to bear some fruit under certain circumstances or through repeating recruitment attempts in the future. It is impossible that exposure would not impact some children, attracting them to engage in recruitment. This is an alarming indicator of potential future recruitment activity if the conflict does not end.

Interest in weapons and its long-term impact

Table 47. Attitudes of non-recruited children towards recruitment

Attitude towards carrying arms	%
No	51.2
Yes	48.8
Total	100.0

The conflict has increased children's interest in carrying weapons, and these interests in turn create more psychological and social space for child recruitment to expand. The study shows that 78.8% of the children surveyed who had not yet been recruited do not carry weapons. However, 48.8% of these children were interested to carry weapons; some consider weapons to be important and believe they can acquire them through recruitment. Interest in carrying weapons and receiving weapons training contributes to positive attitudes of these children towards recruitment. It is also likely that gun culture will spread widely if the conflict continues and interest in carrying guns for supporting warring parties will increase.

The economic factor

Table 48. Attitudes of non-recruited children towards recruitment if their family's living conditions decline

sdnuorg cimonoce no tneitruoc gniptacca fo seitilibissoP	%
Doesn't accept	26.9%
Accept	73.1%
Total	100.0%

As we saw above, non-recruited children who agreed to join recruitment reached 57.7%. However, this percentage increased to 73.1% when we asked them about the possibility to accept recruitment in a situation where they did not have a good source of income. This confirms the importance of the economic factor in the future of the phenomenon.



Findings

Interrelated causes of child recruitment

The study indicates that child recruitment in the context of armed conflict in Yemen is caused by economic, social, ideological, political and psychological causes. The impact of economic causes was found to be the highest (40.7% of the sample) followed by social causes (37.8%), and ideological and political causes (14.1%). Psychological causes had the least impact (7.4%) on child recruitment.

Despite the fact that economic determinants have the highest impact on child recruitment, all economic, social, ideological, political and psychological causes function together, creating a unified coherent system that collectively causes the phenomenon of child recruitment and making it difficult to examine the determinants piecemeal. For example, poverty is not a sufficient justification to prompt poor children to be recruited; there are people in the community who exploit the needs of these children and their families for money. The children who come from poor families can seek survival by other means, for example working or even begging, without falling into recruitment even though these means of making a living can be miserable. There is a clear correlation between economic and social determinants, suggesting that both poverty and lack of social awareness are responsible for child recruitment. The effect of these two factors has become more severe in the context of the armed conflict.

Economic causes

Economic causes of child recruitment included three main variables, namely, family income limits, unavailability of a source of income and children's personal spending. First, children recruited due to limited income of their families made up 70.9% of the children involved in recruitment for economic reasons. A plausible explanation for the high impact income limits has had on child recruitment is that, due to the war, income limits have become a pervasive reality for Yemeni families. A high percentage of medium-income families have become poor due to the suspension of government staff salaries and the decline in revenues of economic activities. The second economic variable, i.e. unavailability of a source of income due to loss of the breadwinner of the family or his/her inability to work, reached 18.2%. This represents families who are extremely poor; it was found that 7.4% of these families rely on the recruited child salary for survival. The third economic variable is the child's needs for personal spending; it accounted for 10.9% of the children involved in recruitment for economic reasons. This indicates immature thinking on the part of the child, with decision-making away from their family, triggered by the child's personal needs that the family is either unable or does not want to fulfill.

Social causes

Social causes of child recruitment included four main variables namely, the influence of the social environment on the child and his family (40.9%), lack of social awareness (37.3%), social and family problems (9.8%) and violations in the social environment by recruiting parties (3.9%). The child does not have a real choice to avoid becoming entrapped in recruitment due to the pressure exercised by warring parties in active recruitment environments. The family can also fall prey to social influence if not educated enough to reject child recruitment.

Ideological and Political Causes

Ideological and political causes contributed to recruitment of 14.1% of children in the sample. They included three main variables namely, ideological allegiance to the recruitment party (57.9%), political affiliation (26.3%), and enthusiastic support of a political cause (15.8%). Ideological allegiance of the child's family to a certain warring party has the largest role to play in child recruitment among these variables, as the ideologically charged atmosphere in Yemen has led some families to urge their children to join recruitment units to express their allegiance to certain warring parties, which they believe embody jihad, Wilayah, application of Shariah law or defending the nation.

Psychological causes

Psychological causes have the least impact on child recruitment. They include two variables namely, interest in carrying weapons and boasting about them (60%) and imitating others (40%). These causes were not sufficient causes for recruitment. Their impact only appeared in combination with economic and social causes. However, children's interest in weapons and their being adversely affected by militarization and other armed children in their environment excite them and make them more likely to embrace the idea of recruitment.

Relationship between causes of recruitment and rural and urban areas

There are remarkable variations in the impact of causes of child recruitment between rural and urban areas. For example, economic causes played a more considerable role in urban than rural areas (in urban 52.3% vs in rural 35.2%). This can be ascribed to a number of factors, the most important of which is the displacement of people to cities. Another important factor is that the agricultural production in rural areas provides a good source of income for families, especially for those involved in Qat agriculture. Therefore, social causes of child recruitment have a more considerable impact in rural than urban areas (i.e. in rural 40.7% vs in urban 31.8%). The possible reason for this is that social relations and norms are often exploited to influence families' position towards child recruitment.

Correlation between causes of child recruitment and warring parties

The study shows that social causes played a larger role in child recruitment than economic ones into Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces (42.0% vs 33.3%). By contrast, economic causes played a larger role than social causes in child recruitment into the army of the internationally recognized government (i.e. 50.0% vs 35.3%). The impact of economic causes of child recruitment into the army of the internationally recognized government is generally associated with higher economic prospects both for recruited children and their families. This is also applicable for recruitment into forces loyal to the internationally recognized government, the Southern Transitional Council, the joint forces led by Tariq Saleh and the army brigades of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition. Conversely, recruitment into Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces does not raise economic prospects like earning a generous salary. Instead, recruitment into Houthi forces is associated with their capacity to exercise influence and pressure in social environments.

Ideological and political causes of recruitment, on the other hand, played varying roles in child recruitment into forces of different warring parties. Recruitment for ideological causes into Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces accounted for 11.6% and Ansar Al-Sharia 50.0% of the sample, however, recruitment for ideological and political causes did not exceed 2.9% of the sample in recruitment into the army of the internationally recognized government, with all cases recorded due to political affiliation to the Islah party.

The higher recruitment rate for ideological reasons into Ansar Allah (Houthis) compared to other parties indicates that children who have been recruited for ideological causes believe in Wilayah, rather than merely repeating logos of Ansar Allah (Houthis). Political motives to recruitment, on the other hand, had a similar impact on child recruitment into the forces of the army of the internationally recognized government, Southern Transitional Council and joint forces led by Tariq Saleh, despite the different nature of these motives.

However, it was found that child recruitment for psychological causes was exclusive to two parties namely, Ansar Allah (Houthis) and the Southern Transitional Council. The plausible explanation for this would be the proliferation of weapons in the social environment under these parties' control and the fact that they encourage children to carry guns because they are in critical need of fighters.

Patterns and Mechanisms of Child Recruitment

Recruitment pattern – its significance

Compulsory recruitment has a high rate in Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces; it reached 36.8% out of the total of compulsory recruitment (which accounted for 55.8% of the sample). This suggests that compulsory recruitment is the prevalent pattern of recruitment in this armed group. However, compulsory recruitment in the army of the internationally recognized government reached almost half of child recruitment cases (11.6% compulsory out of 24.2% overall) in government forces. The lower rate of compulsory recruitment in the army of the internationally recognized government may be associated with families' conviction that recruitment into government forces does not entail risks, especially if children are recruited in areas where there are no armed clashes.

Type of recruitment – its significance

Two types of recruitment were found: mass recruitment and individual recruitment. The former consisted of 80% of the sample, whereas the latter only comprised 20%. In mass recruitment, children are often recruited along with other friends or as part of a recruitment process within local villages or neighborhoods. This type of recruitment furthers the prevalence of the phenomenon as it motivates children to engage in recruitment as they feel safe among their friends. The study suggests that most recruiting parties tend to favor mass recruitment over individual recruitment. This indicates that they have recruitment activities which are geared towards targeting the largest possible number of recruits, including children.

Type of people who carry out the recruitment

Various people took part in child recruitment. These people are often from the same local community as the child, such as the father, the brother, relatives or friends of the children. Another group that is active in child recruitment are recruitment supervisors, most active during intense confrontations and school vacations. These supervisors have the largest role to play in child recruitment. They recruited 26.3% of the sample compared to 24.3% recruited by relatives and 23.2% recruited by friends who came from fighting fronts telling exciting stories and prompting children to be recruited.

Ansar Allah (Houthis) mainly depend on 'supervisors' as well as a network of 'mobilizers' who carry out recruitment in villages and localities by working with other people in return for a sum of money for each person they introduce. This indicates that the recruitment in Ansar Allah (Houthis) is a structured process that follows a set of steps. However, recruitment in other parties is mainly carried out by friends and relatives, more than recruitment supervisors, although some recruitment does happen through others who are unknown to children.

Methods used in recruitment

Some recruiting parties employ financial inducement (51.6%) as a means to attract children to recruitment by offering a salary, food supplies or military position. Other recruiting parties mislead children (42.1%) by promoting the idea of jihad. Some families (6.3%) received immediate threats, leading them to allow the recruitment of their children. Ansar Allah (Houthis) mainly misled children by promoting the idea of jihad, as well as using immediate threats. The army of the internationally recognized government, on the other hand, mainly attracts children through financial inducement. The methods used by these parties is commensurate with the role played by the economic and social causes of recruitment into their forces.

The primary purpose of recruitment

The study shows a remarkable variation between the primary purpose of child recruitment and the actual engagement of children in the conflict. This suggests that recruiting parties often mislead and deceive children and their families. The children who already knew that they would engage in direct fighting reached 34.7% of the sample; however, the percentage of actual participation in fighting during recruitment increased to 50.4% of the sample.

Recruitment and dynamics of conflict

The upward slope of child recruitment

Conflict and child recruitment are interconnected; conflict provides a fertile environment for child recruitment and child recruitment feeds the perpetuation of conflict. The study found that the period from 2018 until the middle of 2019 witnessed a high percentage (53.7%) of child recruitment compared to previous years. This suggests that child recruitment rises steadily as the conflict continues.

The actual role of recruited children and its significance in the persistence of the conflict

Based on their actual engagement indicators, the participation of children in the conflict does not only concern the quantitative rise in their number but also indicates that recruiting parties rely on children in security and hostilities. The number of children killed due to their participation in battlefronts reached 31.6% of the sample. The actual participation of children in fighting confirms that warring parties adopt child recruitment as a strategy, greatly complicating efforts at ending child recruitment during the conflict.

Change and stability in family and children's stances towards recruitment

Despite significant indications of an increase in child recruitment and its upward slope during the conflict, the study revealed that there are conflicting trends resulting from the continuing conflict and changes in its dynamics on the ground, as well as the changing perceptions of children and their families towards recruitment. Such trends include the change of some families' stance on recruitment from consent to refusal, whereas others changed their position from refusal to consent. Moreover, there are children who decided to abandon recruitment after they actively engaged, whereas other children's relationship with recruitment remained entrenched as they believe it provides them benefits. Such contradicting trends remain to be fully defined and understood. However, this generally indicates the possibility of an open change in the future of the phenomenon to an increase or decrease according to the developments of the conflict.

The continuing conflict has caused some families to change their stance from refusal to consent. Many factors influenced these families, including financial benefits the family gained out of recruitment, while others relented to the child due to his persistence on continuing to engage in recruitment. Another factor that influenced families to consent to recruitment was the assurance provided by warring parties that their children would not carry out risky tasks. The study shows that 14.7% out of the total families opposed to recruitment which accounted 55.8% of the sample eventually relented and accepted recruitment whereas 11.6% changed their stance from consent to refusal. The latter families exercised pressure on their children to abandon recruitment due to fear for their lives.

It was found that 17.9% of recruited children abandoned recruitment due to family pressure or mistreatment by the recruiting party. However, 48.3% of the children continued recruitment as they believed it offered them financial gains during the conflict.

During periods where the conflict escalated, some families which first consented to their children being recruited changed their position and ordered their children to go back home, after they felt there was a danger to their child's life. By contrast, during periods of relative calm, some families changed their position and then consented to recruitment of their children. However, periods of temporary stability during conflict does not necessarily control child recruitment phenomenon unless these is a genuine transformation for ending the conflict. Deceptive stability helps to flourish child recruitment as a safe way to make a living and thus negatively affects the attitudes of families who reject it.

Violations and family reactions

Violations associated with recruitment

Child recruitment is associated with several violations including killing, abduction, rape and sexual violence, as well exposure to serious injuries, mistreatment and harsh conditions of recruitment. 68.4% of the children in the sample suffered different violations, such as killing (31.6%) and harsh recruitment conditions (17.9%). However, 31.6% of the children indicated they were not exposed to violations; most of whom were recruited for ideological reasons.

Family's reactions to violations

The reactions of families whose children were killed as a result of participation in the conflict were characterized as negative. 56.7% of these families held recruiting parties responsible for the deaths of their children, whereas 30.0% thought responsibility lay with the other party. Only a small number of families said they would like to see revenge for the warring party they held responsible for their child's death.

Immediate Effects of Child Recruitment

School dropout

School dropout is regarded as the most direct effect of child recruitment. The percentage of children enrolled in school prior to their recruitment reached 90.5% of the sample. All these children dropped out after they were recruited.

Negative ideological and behavioral changes

Child recruitment caused ideological and behavioral changes in children, acquiring ideologies of the recruiting party, including children who were initially recruited due to economic determinants. Recruited children often got attached to a group of friends about their age, integrating them strongly in the recruitment environment. Moreover, recruited children fell into bad habits during recruitment including smoking, Qat chewing and the consumption of shammah (i.e. narcotic powder placed in the mouth).

Expanding the scope of carrying arms

Recruitment helped expand gun culture amongst children. Only 31% of the children used to carry guns prior to recruitment. The expansion of carrying weapons is associated with behavioral changes, including violence, and it may lead to children using violence as a means for resolving social problems.

Child Recruitment Phenomenon – Future Overlook

Combined effects of economic determinants

The study shows that a large percentage of children have an inclination towards abandoning recruitment in the future if their living conditions improve. Economic determinants play the largest role in controlling the course of the phenomenon in the future. However, the extent of the impact of economic determinants is associated with the cessation of conflict. Thus, cessation of the conflict is extremely important to effectively reduce child recruitment. Accordingly, if the conflict does not stop, economic determinants are likely to motivate more children to engage in the recruitment incinerator. Many non-recruited children expressed their interest to get recruited in case their living conditions decline.

Expanding recruitment activities

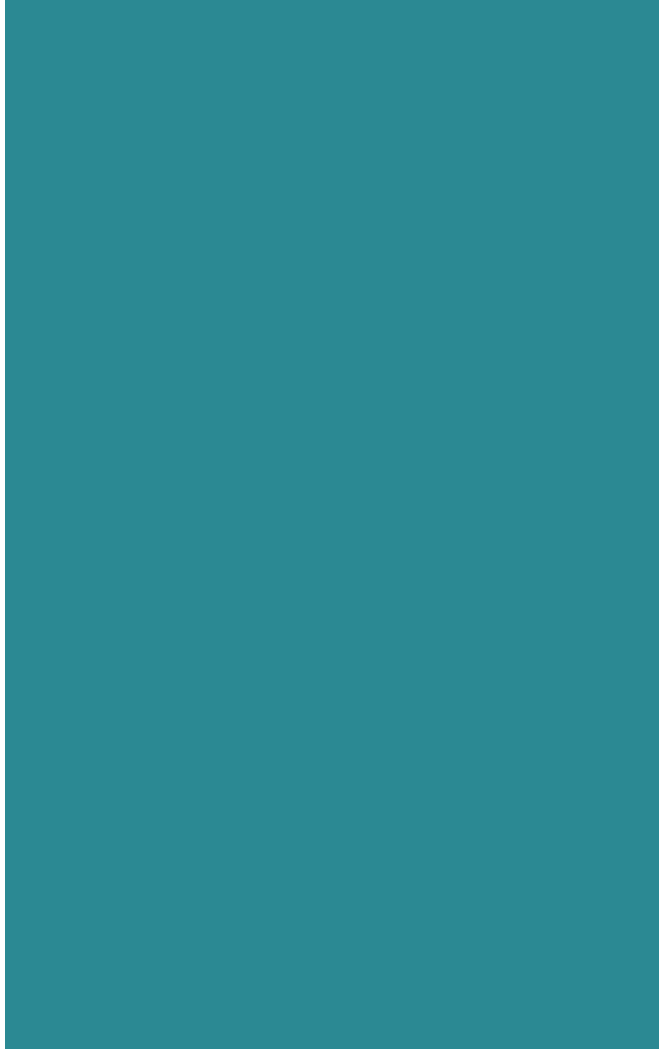
Non-recruited children in Yemeni society are exposed to constant recruitment attempts. This suggests that recruiting parties are persisting in their child recruitment strategies. It likely that extensive and renewed recruitment activities would yield hundreds and maybe thousands of children recruits in the future if the conflict continues.

Manageable environments and impoverished families

The Yemeni family stands alone in a disproportionate ‘fight’ with recruiting parties amidst a social environment that welcomes recruitment activities, using various means of influence and threats, without real protection for children. It is likely that families’ resistance to recruitment will collapse and their ability to influence their children become weaker if the conflict with its devastating economic conditions continues.

Overwhelming tendencies towards carrying guns

Interest to acquire weapons grew significantly amongst non-recruited children and further motivates them to engage in recruitment. It is likely that recruitment would flourish as a means to satisfy this desire if the conflict continues.



Recommendations

Despite that child recruitment occurred in Yemen prior to the current conflict, connected to factors such as the political and social structure, political instability, lack of resources, proliferation of conflict and widespread negative values, child recruitment as it currently exists cannot be understood nor adequately addressed outside the context of the current conflict, which has fed its existence as a phenomenon and determined its specific characteristics.

We must first recognize that child recruitment has been a central element of this war, rather than a minor factor. To address child recruitment, the international community should adopt a comprehensive vision that combines remedies and solutions to put an end to the phenomenon. The vision should also include strategies for ending the conflict entirely, and achieving a comprehensive and fair political settlement. This would lay the groundwork for rearranging political structures in Yemen and restoring peace for the whole nation.

In addition, the following specific recommendation are made:

Special measures for ending child recruitment in the course of ending the conflict

1. Ensuring the collective release of children recruited by all warring parties as a step towards paving the way to reach a political settlement, rather than making it a deferred fruit of the desired settlement.
2. Considering collective release of recruited children and a commitment to stop child recruitment as confidence building measures between warring parties.
3. Warring parties should collectively release all children who have been recruited, with a priority on those currently detained, and disclose information related to child soldiers, including informing families of the identities of children killed.
4. Incorporate special steps towards protecting children, including releasing child recruits and ensuring they have the required humanitarian assistance, in any agreements between the internationally recognized government and Ansar Allah, any agreements between the internationally recognized government and Southern Transitional Council, and any other agreements between and amongst warring parties.
5. Beginning negotiations between the major warring parties with an aim for them to commit to not use starvation as a method of warfare, and to reach an agreement for paying salaries of civil servants, facilitating the flow of basic food commodities, humanitarian aid and oil derivatives.
6. Stating clearly that all child recruitment practices are rejected for all warring parties and their regional allies, and assessing the extent to which the warring parties cease recruiting children, reduce child recruitment and support reintegration.

7. Committing to criminalize child recruitment and their use in conflict in any prospective political settlement, incorporate substantial guarantees to ensure release of recruited children, end recruitment and participate actively in reengagement efforts within a specific time frame supervised by the United Nations.
8. Prohibiting warring parties from reengaging their forces in the official state military as part of any political settlement if these forces have recruited children.

Strengthening the legal and institutional framework

1. Operationalizing the action plan signed by the government and the United Nations regarding the release of recruited child soldiers, stopping re-recruitment, seriously following up on its implementation, and creating mechanisms for a supervisory role of the United Nations.
2. Exerting pressure on other parties to develop similar action plans and follow up on their implementation.
3. Operationalizing United Nations supervisory mechanisms for monitoring violations related to children and reporting such violations based on Security Council resolution 1612/2015.
4. Work to increase international legal protections for children, including clearly prohibiting the recruitment of children, in any form or capacity, under 18, in both international and non-international armed conflicts.
5. Despite the significance of the annual report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and its consequences, there exists widespread child recruitment and use in the armed conflict, the involvement of more parties to the conflict in recruitment, difficulties in monitoring and documentation, and inadequate mechanisms to press the parties to end these practices. Organizations working on child's rights should produce regular reports which keep pace with the development of the conflict and the increase in child recruitment to pressure warring parties, making clear violations against children are being documented.

Strengthening local and international partnership for children

1. Increase participation between non-governmental organizations working on child rights, other organizations operating in Yemen and civil society organizations monitoring and documenting recruitment and use of children in the conflict as well as abuses resulting from recruitment. Collaborate in conducting in-depth studies of the phenomenon in governorates with higher rates of recruitment.
2. Move towards comprehensive programs that include education concerning the risks of child recruitment and their use in conflict; clarify mechanisms and methods of recruitment; warn against recruitment activities and focus on the

implications of child recruitment on family and society, all in partnership with civil society organizations. One example would be conducting educational broadcasts via popular Arab satellite channels in Yemen.

3. Conduct proactive workshops aimed at designing reintegration and rehabilitation programs for children recruited and used in the conflict, including with a focus on psychological and social care, and incorporating lessons learned from countries that witnessed similar civil conflict, with broad participation from civil society organizations.

Strengthening the child and family's ability to resist recruitment

The fact that many children decided to abandon recruitment and go back home is seen as a sign of hope, enhancing confidence that well-conceived education programs can have reasonable and positive effects in the context of the conflict. Based on this, the following measures can be taken:

1. Undertake an immediate program to assist families whose children have left fighting forces, aimed at reintegrating these former child recruits into society, including by accommodating them in schools and paying special attention to girls who have been recruited and may be at risk of social stigma.
2. Consider a program to support children's return to school and adopt effective mechanisms to monitor school dropout and support conflict sensitive education.
3. Intensify humanitarian aid within mass displacement environments to overcome difficulties of integration within host communities.
4. Resume work via a cash-for-work program to include a large number of beneficiaries.
5. Consider a program devoted to injured, formerly recruited children, provided they do not go back to fighting.
6. Consider the establishment of assistance programs for poor families who have had their children recruited and examine whether assistance can be tied to families' committing not to facilitate their children's recruitment in the future.
7. Provide legal assistance to families whose children have been abducted, killed and those who suffered grave violations due to child recruitment and use in the conflict.



Annex

Interview forms

Direct Individual Structured interviews

Interviewees: recruit children

Field visit information

Day and date of visit _____

Place _____

Governorate _____ District _____ Village _____ Street _____

Member of field research team: _____

Phone No: _____

Interviewee information (the recruited child)

Age at recruitment: _____

Sex: ☐ male ☐ female

District: _____

Educational level ☐ Primary ☐ Preparatory ☐ Did not attend school

Job prior to recruitment: _____

Type of work: ☐ Carries a gun ☐ Does not carry a gun

Carrying weapons _____

Head of family: _____

Head of family's source of income: _____

Family size: _____

Child's status in the family ☐ The eldest brother ☐ The middle brother

☐ The smallest brother

Recruiting party: _____

Duration spent in recruitment unit: _____

Interview questions

Notes

- The underlined phrases are instructions given by the researcher whereas the words and phrases between brackets are used by the researcher to explain the question as needed.
- The blank lines under questions are provided so that the interviewees can answer the questions; however, they can also write overleaf as needed.

-
1. Have you volunteered or you have been forced to join recruitment?
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.....
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.....
 2. Have you been recruited by people whom you know well (**like your relatives**)?
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 3. How did you come to know them? And where? This question is being asked in cases when the child does not know the people who recruited him
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.....
 4. How did these people attempted to convince you to join recruitment; what did they say?
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.....
 5. Have you been recruited individually or along with some children at your age from the family, locality or district?
 6. Did you know the place to which you have been taken?
 7. Did you know that you might engage in risky combat roles?
 8. Can you explain the process through which you have been recruited?
.....
.....
.....
.....
 9. Have you been threatened or pressured to accept recruitment?
 10. Has your family been subject to threatening and pressure to accept your recruitment?

- 11. Have you been offered an amount of money or have you been financially induced to accept recruitment?
- 12. Have you accepted recruitment due to your need or your family need of money?
- 13. Have you been convinced that the party to which you have been recruited was right?
- 14. If yes, how did you become convinced **(through friends, lectures, social gathering, school activities)**?
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.....
.....
.....
- 15. Was there an immediate reason that motivated you to join recruitment **(such as the killing of your relatives, friends, a particular incident that has influenced your decision)**?
- 16. Have you been encouraged by your community to join recruitment?
- 17. Do you think that your local community pays respect to you as a recruiter?
- 18. Has you family known of your recruitment or they only knew later?
- 19. If your family only knew later, what was its reaction?
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- 20. Has your family accepted or opposed your recruitment in the beginning?
- 21. Has your family changed its stance towards your recruitment?
- 22. If yes, what was the change and what were the reasons?
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.....
- 23. Have you ever fought in front lines?
- 24. Do you think that you are a well-trained fighter?
- 25. What are the other tasks you have done?
- 26. Do the recruited children at your age take part in direct fighting or non-combat roles?
- 27. Do you often listen to compelling lectures?
- 28. Do you implement your leaders' commands on a free will?
- 29. Have you joined parties other than the one you have joined in the beginning?

30. What are these parties? Why did you join them?

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31. Do you think you are doing the right job as a recruited soldier?

32. Do you think recruitment offers you benefits?

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33. What makes you continue recruitment?

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.....

34. Would you agree to take part in non-combat operations if you have been asked to do so?

35. Have you ever thought to abandon recruitment?

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.....
.....

36. In which cases you might abandon recruitment?

37. What injuries have you have you had during recruitment?

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.....

38. Have you been subjected to violations during recruitment? What are they?

.....
.....
.....

Indirect individual structured interviews

Interviewees: Guardians having recruit children killed or seriously injured

Field visit information

Day and date of visit _____

Place _____

Governorate _____ District _____ Village _____ Street _____

Member of field research team: _____

Phone No: _____

Guardian's information

Line of kinship _____ Job _____

Information of recruited child

Age at recruitment: _____

Sex: ☐ male ☐ female

District: _____

Educational level ☐ Primary ☐ Preparatory ☐ Did not attend school

Job prior to recruitment: _____

Type of work: ☐ Carries a gun ☐ Does not carry a gun

Carrying weapons _____

Head of family: _____

Head of family's source of income: _____

Family size: _____

Child's status in the family ☐ The eldest brother ☐ The middle brother

☐ The smallest brother

Recruiting party: _____

Duration spent in recruitment unit: _____

Interview questions

Notes

- The underlined phrases are instructions given by the researcher whereas the words and phrases between brackets are used by the researcher to explain the question as needed.
- The name of the child is used during interviewing
- The blank lines under questions are provided so that the interviewees can answer the questions; however, they can also write overleaf as needed.

-
1. Has the child been asked to join recruitment by people whom he knows well (**relatives like father, brother, uncle or relatives**)?
 2. If he did not use to know them, how did he come to know them and where?
.....
.....
.....
 3. Was your child recruited individually or along with others at his age from the same family, locality or village?
 4. Did he know the place he was taken to?
 5. Did he know that he would take part in risky combat roles?
 6. Can you explain the process by which he was recruited?
.....
.....
.....
 7. Has he volunteered to recruitment or he has been forced to get recruited?
 8. If yes, how did he become convinced, through friends, listening to lectures and sermons, social gathering or school activities?
.....
.....
.....
 9. Has he been pressured or threatened to accept recruitment?
 10. Has his family been pressured or threatened to accept recruitment?
 11. Do you think that he has accepted recruitment due to his need or his family need of money?

- 12. Has the child been encouraged by the local community to engage in recruitment?
- 13. Did his family know about his recruitment or they only knew later?
- 14. What was his family’s reaction towards recruitment?
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.....
.....
- 15. Did the family oppose or accept one’s child recruitment?
- 16. Did the family change their stance towards recruitment?
- 17. If yes, what kind of change and what was the reasons?
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.....
.....
- 18. Do you know whether your child has taken part in combat roles in front lines?
- 19. What are the other tasks that he has done?
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.....
.....
- 20. Has he attempted to escape recruitment units and go back home?
- 21. Has he attempted to recruit anyone in his family?
- 22. Has he been treated well by his recruiting party?
- 23. Has he been subjected to violations? What are they?
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.....
.....
- 24. Please explain how the child has lost his life or has been seriously injured?
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.....
- 25. What was his family’s reaction?
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.....
.....
- 26. Who do you think bear the responsibility of his killing?
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.....

Structured interview

Interviewee: a person who participated in recruiting children

Field visit information

Day and date of visit _____

Place _____

Governorate _____ District _____ Village _____ Street _____

Member of field research team: _____

Phone No: _____

Interview questions

1. How many children have you recruited?
2. What is their age?
3. Have you recruited them directly through their families?
4. Did you convince them or pressured them to get recruited?
5. Have you got money in return for recruiting children?
6. Have you recruited children from your relatives?
7. What reasons that caused you to accept recruiting children below 18?

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8. Where did recruitment often take place at first?

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9. Are there any characteristics of children to be accepted for recruitment?

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- 10. Were there any children whom you recruited dropped out school?
 - 11. Have any of the children whom you recruited killed or injured? If yes, how did you feel?
 - 12. Do you think child recruitment is an easy task?
 - 13. Did you face any resistance from families?
 - 14. What difficulties have you faced in recruiting children?
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 - 15. What party requested you to recruit children?
 - 16. Did the recruiting party specify the purpose for recruiting children (**tasks that they are supposed to do**)?
 - 17. Did you know that the children whom you recruited would participate in fighting roles?
 - 18. Do you often take the recruited child to the recruiting party by yourself?
 - 19. How did the coordination between the recruited children take place?
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Exploratory individual structured interviews

Interviewees: non-recruited children over 14 living in active recruitment environment

Field visit information

Day and date of visit _____

Place _____

Governorate _____ District _____ Village _____ Street _____

Member of field research team: _____

Phone No: _____

Interview questions

Notes

- The underlined phrases are instructions given by the researcher whereas the words and phrases between brackets are used by the researcher to explain the question as needed.
- The blank lines under questions are provided so that the interviewees can answer the questions; however, they can also write overleaf as needed.

1. Do you agree or disagree with child recruitment?
2. Why? This question is being asked in either cases consent or refusal

3. Do you agree with recruiting children at your age for non-combat operations **(such as security at checkpoints, guarding installations, personal escorting, providing food supplies to fighters)?**
4. How do you view recruited children at your age in your area **(with respect, indifference, pity)?**
5. Do you think that they are doing a good job as recruiters?
6. Do you think they are forced to accept recruitment due to poor living conditions?
7. Why? This question is being asked in either responses positive or negative

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- [illegible]

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Exploratory individual structured interviews

Interviewees: people living in active recruitment environment and have no recruited children

Field visit information _____

Day and date of visit _____

Place _____

Governorate _____ District _____ Village _____ Street _____

Member of field research team: _____

Phone No: _____

Interview questions

Notes

- The underlined phrases are instructions given by the researcher whereas the words and phrases between brackets are used by the researcher to explain the question as needed.
- The blank lines under questions are provided so that the interviewees can answer the questions; however, they can also write overleaf as needed.

1. Do you agree or disagree with child recruitment?

2. Why? This question is being asked in either cases consent or refusal

.....

3. Do you agree with child recruitment for non-combat operations (**such as security at checkpoints, guarding installations, personal escorting, providing food supplies to fighters**)?

4. Do you agree with recruiting children aged between 15-18 years ?

5. A large portion of airstrike victims are children; do you think that the families retain the rights to urge their children to take part in fighting those who target them?

6. How do you perceive the recruited child? (**with respect and proud, no deference, with pity**)?

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7. What makes families in your district agree to recruiting their children?

8. Were recruited children from your district killed?

9. If Yes, do you know the story of one of them and how did his family react to his killing?

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10. Have you heard of families in your district who opposed recruiting their children?

11. Were any of your children exposed to recruitment attempt? Have you ever been asked to recruit one of your children?

12. If yes, how did you react to this request?

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13. Do you fear that any of your children be recruited without your knowledge?

14. How is recruitment process is conducted in your area?

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The painting on the cover page
was painted by the artist:
Ryan Alshibany

Colored Coffins

RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN
THE ARMED CONFLICT IN YEMEN
APRIL 2013 - DECEMBER 2018

Mwatana for Human Rights conducted a study on child recruitment and the use of child soldiers in the armed conflict in Yemen. The study is the first of its kind devoted to the phenomena of child recruitment, examining its causes, mechanisms, direct effects and possible future directions. The study was based on information collected by a trained team of Mwatana field research assistants. The study used systematic, individual interviews as the data collection tool. The study sample consists of 50 interviews with recruited children, and 45 interviews with guardians of recruited children. To gain additional indicators on the possible future outlook of the phenomenon, Mwatana also conducted fact-finding interviews with 90 children who had not been recruited and guardians of children who had not been recruited but who live in an active recruiting environment. Moreover, interviews were conducted with three people involved in child recruitment in order to gain a better understanding of recruitment mechanisms.

The study covered 19 governorates in Yemen: Sanaa (the city), Sanaa governorate, Amran, Sa'adah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Al-Mahweet, Raimah, Al-Jawf, Hodeidah, Taiz, Aden, Ibb, Lahj, Abyan, Marib, Shabwah, Al-Baidha and Hadramout. The sample cases were selected from these governorates taking into account the characteristics of child recruitment, its dimensions and to ensure that the cases included all the parties involved in child recruitment, namely: Ansar Allah (the Houthi armed group), the Yemeni army forces affiliated with the internationally recognized government, forces loyal to the internationally recognized government, forces affiliated with the UAE-Backed Southern Transitional Council, the Joint Forces lead by Tariq Saleh (the nephew of the former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh), Yemeni army brigades affiliated with the Saudi/UAE-led coalition stationed in the southern Saudi borders, and Ansar Al-Sharia.

The current study serves as one of the pioneer studies that Mwatana aims to carry out in the future, which are conducted to achieve the desired goals and contribute to developing new and comprehensive approaches to promote the status of human rights in Yemen. The study is based on interpretation and in-depth realistic analysis of the phenomenon of child recruitment which involves grave violations of human rights



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