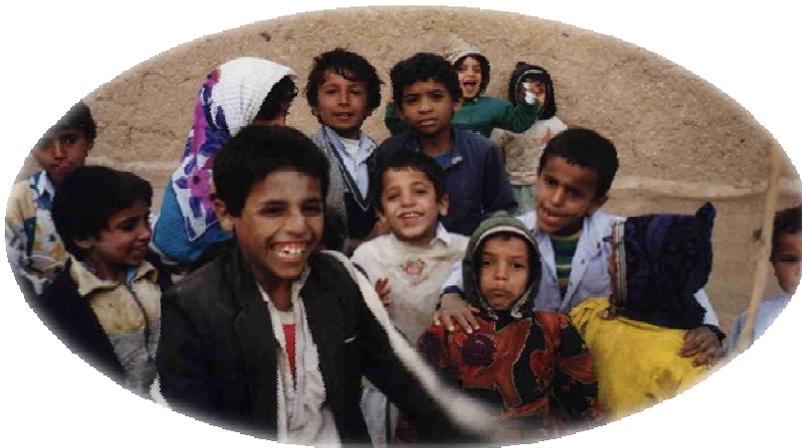


# Report of the Children's Parliament Field Visits to Survey the Children's Conditions in the Republic of Yemen



Following the recommendations put by the Children's Parliament (CP) in their Fourth Session titled "Vacantness of Prisons and Detention Centers from Children", which was conducted in March 2007, the CP Members conducted in all the country's governorates their second field visit to study and survey the conditions and situations of children in the children-related institutes. The field visits that were conducted during the period of 21-26 July 2007, targeted different Children-Related Institutes and included; Central Prisons and Reserve Prison, Orphanages, Hospitals, Juvenile and Guidance Centers, Police Stations, and the Streets of the targeted cities across the country to study the conditions of working children. These field visits were conducted in cooperation with the UNICEF.

The field visits were conducted by forming a team from the CP members and a coordinator from the Democracy School in every governorate. In other governorates, where only one CP member is represented there, other interested children joined these field teams and participated as child activists.

#### **Targeted Governorates:**

The field visits were conducted in the following governorates: Sana'a Municipality, Aden, Taiz, Ibb, Al-Mahweet, Al-Mahara, Amran, Al-Hudeidah, Lahj, Al-Dhala'a, Abyan, Shabwa, Mareb, Al-Jawf, Raimah, Hajjah, and Dhamar.

However, it was not possible to conduct the field visit in the governorates of Sa'ada (due to security instability) and in Hadramout (due to the summer holidays and difficulty to contact the CP members in Hadramout). The field visit in Dhamar has been delayed later than the schedule because of the injury of the CP member there with an accidental gun shot. Also, in Hajjah the field visit was delayed because the CP member in Hajjah was unavailable and unreachable at that time, but the field visit was conducted later.

#### **Objectives Achieved:**

During the period of the field visits (21-26 July, 2007), the children visited in the different governorates; 15 Hospitals, 5 Orphanages, 5 Children Care Centers, 5 Juvenile Centers, 9 Reserve Prisons, 8 Central Juvenile Prisons, and a number of streets and markets that are crowded with working children, across the whole country.

All of the field visit teams were equipped with forms that the CP members have been trained on how to complete them. The CP members have also been trained on doing surveys, and writing reports in the CP fourth session prior to the field visits.

The results of the reports that were prepared by the children themselves during their field visits to the children-related institutes are summarized below.

### **1. Reserve Prisons:**

The juvenile cases in the reserve prisons are various and include (theft, murder, attempt of murder, fights, attacks, illicit sexual activities and sexual assaults, alcohol possession, resistance to authorities, begging...).

Inefficient performance is noticed in all the reserve prisons visited in addition to lack of hygiene, decline in health services, and malnutrition. Rights of the juveniles at the time of arrest and custody are neglected and the use of violence during interrogations as well as violating civil and legal rights of the arrested juvenile. The CP field teams also noticed that in some reserve prisons juveniles mix and interact with adult prisoners which could consequently lead to acquisition of adverse behaviors and result in further delinquency.

It is also noted in Shabwa governorate that in some cases such as vengeance cases, children relatives to outlaws are arrested as special detainees, in order to draw the outlaws relatives out from their hiding.

Also, it was noted that some governorates lack reserve prisons.

### **2. Central Prisons (juvenile specialized cells/prisons)**

The field teams noted that in some governorates there are no "juvenile-specialized" central prisons, therefore these juveniles are being sent to central prisons in nearby governorates like (Lahj, Al-Mahra). The field teams during their visit to central prisons have noted that juveniles are mistreated, in addition to the lack of social and psychology consultants in the prisons who can understand the juvenile's background and assist in their rehabilitation.

Also like the reserve prisons, shortness of food and water supply, poor condition of hygiene and health services, and the use of violence against juveniles is noted.

The lack of sufficient concern towards juvenile cases by the office of the attorney general and courts results in many delays in the processing of these cases especially homicide cases. Some juveniles also mentioned that sometimes they are being prosecuted in the courts with no defense lawyers present.

### **3. Juvenile Care Centers**

The field team reports stated that the conditions in general are poor in most centers, in addition to insufficient care of the juvenile and their rehabilitation, and not enough trained and experienced staff within the center. Some juveniles have mentioned that they have been subjected to violence in the reserve prisons before they have been transferred to the care centers.

Some non-delinquent (innocent) children were found in some care centers, who were admitted for different reasons that include family reasons, and specialized cases centers are not available to admit these special children cases that reach the office of the attorney general, therefore they are sent to the juvenile care centers regardless that they did not commit a felony.

It was also found that there aren't any juvenile care centers in the governorates of Lahj, Abyan, Al-Dhala'a, Mareb, Amran, and Al-Jawf.

### **4. Orphanages**

The conditions of the orphans in all the visited orphanages are poor in all aspects particularly their health circumstances, types of nutrition and diet they eat, and the social and psychological support and care they receive. This situation was noticeable more in Sana'a Municipality's Orphanage. Nevertheless, the field teams in the governorates of Taiz and Ibb noticed a better quality and an improvement in orphanages facilities and the quality of care and support given to the orphans residing there.

In a small comparison between orphanages administered by charity organizations and societies and between orphanages supervised by the government, it was found that the conditions of the orphans in the governmental orphanages are poor in all aspects, and not as good as the non-governmental organizations.

It was also found that there are no orphanages in the governorates of (Shabwa, Lahj, Al-Dhala'a, Mareb, Amran, Al-Jawf, Abyan).

## **5. Streets**

Child labor is spread in many cities across the country, with the children who work range in age from 6 to 18 years old. Many children labors work in exhausting and dangerous types of works, which are sometimes not suitable with their age, such as carrying rocks, working in carpentry, smithies, garages or bus stations. In addition, a lot of children workers work as hawkers "sellers" on the streets and traffic cross junctions, endangering their selves by jumping between the cars and traffic.

Besides the risks and dangers faced by children workers in streets, they also face physical, sexual and verbal abuse especially when working during the night. The same also applies to children working in rural areas in agriculture, where children workers have stated that they face sexual abuse and molestations during work.

Poverty is considered the primary reason for the spreading of working children, as well as children that are forced by their families to work which consequently leads to an increase in school dropouts.

Even though the latest official study on the statistics of child labor stated that there are nearly 600 thousand working child in the country, children working in rural areas and in farming (who also deal with chemical fertilizers and pesticides which endanger their health and life) were not counted in this official study.

## **6. Hospitals**

In general, the conditions of the hospitals particularly the hospitals in the capital municipality are not satisfying in all aspects of quality of care and sanitary, and quality of treatment. The most common types of diseases and illnesses found in the children in the visited hospitals were (anemia, diarrhea, malnutrition, burns and gun shots).

On the other hand, conditions of hospitals in the other governorates are worse. Children patients and their families complain from the inefficiency and negligence of the doctors, electricity blackouts in the hospitals for a long period of time (especially in the governorates of Shabwa and Al-Mahra), in

addition to the shortage of basic supplies and necessary items in the hospitals, and the absence of banning Qat-Chewing and smoking within the patients' rooms.

Also, it was found that there were no hospitals in the governorate of Al-Jawf.

#### **Difficulties Encountered by the CP during the Field Visits in the Governorates:**

- Previous negative ideologies within some people's minds that act as an obstacle to accept the idea of a children parliament and its significance, and the right of the CP members to follow up on the cases of children and their situations and conditions.
- Refusal of some reserve prisons to allow the field teams to enter inside despite that these teams had an authorization to enter these detention centers. Nevertheless, after making further contacts with the Ministry of Interior officials, the field teams eventually entered these reserve prisons.
- Refusal of officials and doctors in the health facilities (hospitals) to allow the CP members inside (particularly in the emergency rooms) to follow up on the conditions of children there, especially the "Kuwait Hospital" in the Sana'a Municipality.
- Refusal of some Children Care Centers to allow the field teams to enter due to the inability to extract an entrance authorization.

#### **Recommendations by the Children's Parliament Members and Field Teams:**

- Recommend to conduct the third field visits in the first quarter of the next year 2008 to measure the rate of improvement in the children's conditions within the children-related institutions.
- Necessity of lawyers' presence in all police stations and courts to defend the juveniles.
- Essence of training and qualifying Coroner Doctors (medical examiners) in all governorates, and providing them with a faster access to murder scenes upon incidence without delay.
- All legal proceeding and trials regarding juveniles should be conducted in juvenile-specialized courts in all governorates.
- Juvenile care and rehabilitation centers should be created and provided in governorates that lack such centers.
- To charge and prosecute any person who violates the children's rights or commits any illegitimate action against any child residing or being held in a children-related institution,

including but not limited to, the personnel(s) of police stations, prisons (reserve or central), and any children-related institution.

- All organizations and authorities dealing with children should provide assistance, support and facilitation to the Children Parliament in order to facilitate the CP's tasks in surveying the conditions of the children.
- All related ministries and government agencies should coordinate together to provide entrance authorizations for the CP to enter the children-related governmental institutes.
- Every charged or convicted person younger than 18 years old should be treated as a juvenile and be prosecuted in juvenile-specialized courts without exceptions.
- The current juvenile law should be amended in order to comply with the International Children's Rights Convention.
- The Ministry of Health and Population should follow up on the children's conditions and work on improvement strategies in the hospitals' emergency departments and pediatrics departments, and to ensure availability of the basic needs and necessary requirements to treat and take care of the children in all hospitals.
- All related governmental agencies to orphanages and orphan's care should work on improving the orphans' situations and quality of life, as well as qualifying and training the staff working in these orphanages with the children.
- All involved and related organizations, institutes and agencies should maximize their joint cooperation and work together to reduce child labor and protect all children from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

This report is considered the first report produced by the children members of the Yemen's Children's Parliament in partnership with many children from different governorates in the Republic of Yemen.

**Members of the Children's Parliament 2006**

**The Children's Parliament General Secretariat - The Democracy School**