

In 2014, Egypt made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified a new Constitution, which defines a child as anyone under the age of 18, guarantees children's right to public education, and prohibits children from being employed in dangerous occupations. The Government began to systematically collect data on human trafficking and introduced a compulsory training on human trafficking for new prosecutors. Additionally, the Government reactivated the National Coordinating Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The Government also participated in a program designed to improve school attendance. However, children in Egypt are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work. The Government did not publicly make available data on the enforcement of child labor laws, including its worst forms. In addition, programs to combat child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Egypt are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work.(1-7) Data from the 2010 National Child Labor Survey indicate that 63.5 percent of all child laborers work in agriculture. Boys are three times more likely to engage in child labor.(7) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Egypt.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Working (% and population) | 5-14 yrs. | 6.7 (993,417) |
| Attending School (%) | 6-14 yrs. | 88.1 |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7-14 yrs. | 6.3 |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 107.0 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(8)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2005.(9)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

| Sector/Industry | Activity |
|-----------------|--|
| Agriculture | Production of cotton (1-3) |
| | Caring for livestock* (10) |
| | Fishing,* activities unknown (10, 11) |
| Industry | Quarrying† limestone (1, 12) |
| | Making bricks* (13) |
| | Working in carpentry workshops* (14, 15) |
| | Construction,* activities unknown (16, 17) |
| Services | Domestic work (4-6) |
| | Repairing automobiles* (13) |
| | Street work, including selling goods, collecting garbage, and sweeping (14, 17-19) |

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

| Sector/Industry | Activity |
|---|---|
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor† | Domestic work and agricultural labor, each as a result of human trafficking (3, 20, 21) |
| | Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3, 20-23) |
| | Forced begging sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3, 21, 23, 24) |

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3 (d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3 (a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

The ongoing political transition in Egypt, weak economic performance, and recurring periods of violence in some parts of the country have increased children’s vulnerability to child labor, including hazardous child labor. These factors have also impeded the development of policies to address the worst forms of child labor.(1) Anecdotal reports indicate that the poor economic situation has led to an increase in the number of children working on the streets.(14, 25) Children living and working on the street are sometimes subjected to forced begging or commercial sexual exploitation. Some working children are trafficked internally, primarily in urban centers and tourist destinations.(21, 23)

Cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children have been reported in a number of governorates, including Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor.(21) In return for payments, parents give their young daughters into “temporary marriages” to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Gulf countries.(3, 20, 21, 23, 26, 27) But anecdotal evidence shows that this practice is on the decline with the reduction in tourism.(28)




The cost of school fees, books, and uniforms are prohibitive for lower-income families, resulting in many children dropping out of school. In addition, cultural barriers may prevent some parents from sending their daughters to school.(11)

The number of Syrian refugees has increased significantly in 2014.(25) Although Syrian refugee children have access to education, approximately 8,000 of them do not attend any form of educational institution.(29) Syrian refugees cite overcrowded schools, harassment, and transportation issues as being among the primary reasons for their children not attending school.(30)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Egypt has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

| | Convention | Ratification |
|---|--|--------------|
|  | ILO C. 138, Minimum Age | ✓ |
| | ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor | ✓ |
|  | UN CRC | ✓ |
| | UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict | ✓ |
| | UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography | ✓ |
|  | Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons | ✓ |

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

| Standard | Yes/No | Age | Related Legislation |
|---|--------|-----|--|
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 15 | Article 64 of the Child Law (31) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Article 1 of Ministry of Manpower and Migration's (MOMM) Decree 118 (32) |
| Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children | Yes | | Articles 1 and 2 of MOMM Decree 118 (32) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes | | Article 89 of the Constitution (36); Article 291 of the Penal Code as amended in the Child Law (31); Article 2 of Law on Combating Human Trafficking (33) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Article 89 of the Constitution (36); Article 291 of the Penal Code as amended in the Child Law (31); Articles 2 and 3 of Law on Combating Human Trafficking (33) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes | | Article 291 of the Penal Code as amended in the Child Law (31); Articles 2 and 3 of Law on Combating Human Trafficking (33) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes | | Article 2(2) of MOMM Decree 118 (32) |
| Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment | Yes | 18 | Article 1 of Law on Military and National Service (34) |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service | Yes | 15 | Ministry of Defense Guidelines on Youth Volunteers in the Armed Forces (35) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 15 | Article 59(1) of the Child Law (31); Articles 80 and 238 of the Constitution (36) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 54 of the Child Law (31) |

The new Constitution, approved in a January 2014 referendum, expands child protections and guarantees other protections included in existing legislation. Specifically, Article 80 defines anyone under the age of 18 as a child, affording them the right to basic services, including vaccinations, healthcare, nutrition, and safe shelter.(28) Article 80 also guarantees children access to early public education and prohibits children from working in dangerous occupations. Additionally, Article 89 prohibits trafficking and forced labor.(28)

In accordance with Article 4 of the Labor Law, protections of that Law are not extended to workers in domestic work in third-party homes, including child workers. In addition, under Article 103, protections of Chapter 3 of the Labor Law, which includes a minimum age provision, do not extend to children working in agriculture.(37) Although the Child Law also includes a minimum age provision, given these exclusions in the Labor Law, it is not clear whether the minimum age protections apply to children working in agriculture and domestic work.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

| Organization/Agency | Role |
|--|---|
| Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) | Enforce child labor laws and regulations, including receiving child labor complaints, investigating them, and referring relevant violations to the Prosecutor General's Office.(1, 38) Inspectors conduct routine labor inspections, and when they find instances of illegal child labor, they refer the cases to the ministries of the Interior and Justice.(28) |
| Ministry of the Interior | Enforce laws and regulations prohibiting trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Refer relevant cases to the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.(1, 38) |
| Prosecutor General's Office, Ministry of Justice | Prosecute violation of laws related to child labor and human trafficking.(1) |

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)

| Organization/Agency | Role |
|--|---|
| National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) | Provide technical support and training for MOMM inspectors on child labor. Identify and monitor children at risk, including those vulnerable to exploitative labor.(28) Refer victims to shelters and medical, psychological, and legal services. Manage two 24-hour hotlines, which can be used to report cases of child exploitation, including child victims of human trafficking.(28) Receives the majority of complaints regarding child labor. In 2014, the NCCM began offering simultaneous counseling and legal assistance to victims of human trafficking who call the hotline.(28) The NCCM also added a Facebook chat mechanism for victim referrals, which is staffed by two full-time employees to receive referrals and direct victims to counseling centers. Additionally, it began to systematically collect data on human trafficking victims.(28) |
| Ministry of Local Administration and Development | Provide administrative and logistical support for the enforcement of child labor laws.(39) Administers the Child Protection Committees.(28) |

Law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Government did not provide statistics on the number of Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) labor inspectors, inspections, violations, citations and penalties, training of inspectors, sectors inspected, the quality of inspections, and whether unannounced inspections were carried out in 2014.(28)

MOMM inspectors do not initiate routine or targeted inspections based on the analysis of compliance data or patterns of complaints.(1) The Government did not make publicly available the number of complaints received by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood's (NCCM's) hotlines regarding child exploitation.(28)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Judicial Center for Legal Studies introduced a compulsory training on human trafficking in its curriculum for newly appointed prosecutors. A total of 558 Egyptian judges and law enforcement officials received training related to human trafficking.(25) Research did not find information on the number of investigators.

Twenty-seven cases of human trafficking were investigated and 15 cases were prosecuted in 2014. No verdicts were issued in the cases and one source stated that human trafficking cases were generally settled outside the court system. Fourteen victims of human trafficking identified in 2014 were children.(25) According to government officials, a shortage of funding constrained the Government's efforts to combat human trafficking, particularly outside of Cairo and the major metropolitan areas.(25)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

| Coordinating Body | Role & Description |
|--|---|
| National Coordination Committee on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons | Coordinate efforts to combat human trafficking, including women and children. Led by the Deputy Minister of Justice with committee members from the Ministries of Justice, Interior, the General Intelligence Service, and Councils for Human Rights, Childhood and Motherhood, and Women.(1, 40, 41) |
| Child Protection Committees | Coordinate child protection efforts at the local level. Organized by the Ministry of Local Administration and Development and the NCCM, chaired by the local governors in each governorate, with subcommittees at each police station.(28) Coordinate investigations, prosecutions, and counseling services to address child labor issues. These Committees were dormant in 2014.(28) |
| Educational Working Group | Coordinate efforts to improve access to education for Syrian refugee children. Led by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.(30) |
| National Coordinating Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor | Coordinate efforts among the Ministries of Manpower and Migration, Justice, and the Interior, and the Councils for Human Rights, Childhood, Motherhood, and Women to finalize a draft of the National Strategy to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Led by MOMM.(42) |

In 2014, MOMM issued a decree that revived and reformed the National Coordinating Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor.(28)

During the reporting period, the National Coordination Committee on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons collected data on human trafficking victims from the NCCM, as well as district courts, in order to centrally gather data on investigations and court proceedings related to human trafficking.(25)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Egypt has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

| Policy | Description |
|--|---|
| First National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor | Aims to identify vulnerable children and remove them from child labor.(38, 43) |
| Second National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking | Aims to maintain referral mechanisms, the training of law enforcement officials, and the combating of trafficking of street children.(40) |

In June 2014, members of the National Coordinating Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor drafted a National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor, which was not finalized during the reporting period.(28)

In 2014, the NCCM launched a consultation process in cooperation with the Egyptian Public Opinion Center to receive inputs and suggestions concerning the development of a national strategy for childhood and motherhood to protect basic rights of children.(44)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Egypt funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms. The Government has other programs that may have an impact on child labor, including its worst forms.(Table 8)

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

| Program | Description |
|--|---|
| Socio-Economic Development and Civil Society Support Program (2014-2018)† | \$75 million EU-funded, 4-year project implemented by the WFP provides food security for up to 100,000 children at risk of engaging in child labor, and financial assistance to 400,000 family members to compensate for wages that child labor would have otherwise generated, enabling children to attend school. Supports 50,000 households in income-generating activities to help keep their children in school.(45) |
| Combating Worst Forms of Child Labor through Education and Livelihood Interventions in Egypt (2010-2014) | \$9.5 million USDOL-funded, 4-year project implemented by the WFP that combats child labor, particularly the worst forms of child labor in agriculture in the key governorates of Sohag, Assiut, Fayoum, Minya, and Sharqiyah, through improved child labor policy and legislation and the promotion of educational opportunities for children. Targets 8,000 children for withdrawal and 8,000 children for prevention of the worst forms of child labor in agriculture. Provides 5,000 households with livelihood support.(46) From April to September 2014, provided educational services to 43 children at risk of or engaged in the worst forms of child labor, as well as economic strengthening services to 1,072 mothers.(44) |
| Combating Worst forms of Child Labor by Reinforcing Policy Response and Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods and Educational Opportunities in Egypt (2011-2015) | \$2.07 million WFP-funded, 4-year project implemented by ILO-IPEC that provides direct educational services and promotes sustainable livelihoods to targeted households. Supports the review and revision of legislation on child labor. Promotes the capacity of national institutions to combat child labor, and conducts research to collect reliable data on child labor through baseline surveys.(47, 48) |
| Shelters for Street Children‡ | NCCM program that, in cooperation with NGOs, operates shelters and provides support services to street children. A center for male street children is operated by a Belgian NGO and the NCCM.(40) |
| Child Rights Program (2013-2017)* | UNICEF program, in cooperation with the Government, that aims to improve the quality and coverage of child protection services and programs to prevent violence against children.(49) |
| Awareness-Raising Campaigns‡ | NCCM program that generates awareness of human trafficking and victim services among students and educators, the public, NGOs, and government officials.(25) |

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)

| Program | Description |
|---|--|
| Care Centers and Shelters for Victims of Trafficking† | Three facilities providing assistance and services to Egyptian and foreign victims of human trafficking.(25) |
| National School Feeding Program*‡ | Improves food security by reaching 5.3 million school children with a budget of \$60 million per year.(50) |

*The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Egypt.

Research found no evidence of programs to address the worst forms of child labor in domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, and begging, each as a result of human trafficking.(40)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Egypt (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Ensure that law's minimum age provisions apply to children working in agriculture and domestic work. | 2012 – 2014 |
| Enforcement | Make publicly available data on the number of child labor inspectors, inspections, violations, citations and penalties, training of inspectors, sectors inspected, the quality of inspections, and whether unannounced inspections were carried out, as well as information on the number of investigators in cases of the worst forms of child labor. | 2011 – 2014 |
| | Strengthen the inspection system by initiating routine or targeted inspections, rather than performing inspections solely based on complaints received. | 2014 |
| | Make publicly available information on the number of complaints, including the number that involved children exploited in child labor, to the NCCM's hotlines. | 2013 – 2014 |
| | Increase funding for enforcement agencies to ensure effective enforcement of laws, particularly in rural areas. | 2014 |
| Coordination | Ensure coordination of the Government's efforts to investigate, prosecute, and provide services to children engaged in child labor, for example, through the reactivation of the Child Protection Committees at the governorate level. | 2014 |
| Government Policies | Finalize and implement the National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor. | 2010 – 2014 |
| Social Programs | Ensure universal access to free public education, including for girls and Syrian refugee children, by addressing the cost of school fees and supplies, overcrowding, and other barriers to education. | 2010 – 2014 |
| | Assess the impact that the National School Feeding Program may have on child labor. | 2010 – 2014 |
| | Institute programs to address the worst forms of child labor in domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, and begging, each as a result of human trafficking. | 2010 – 2014 |

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