

In 2011, Lebanon made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In addition to the adoption of a Trafficking in Persons law over the reporting period, the Government launched a National Social Protection Strategy that addresses child labor. However, the Government has yet to approve a list of hazardous labor activities prohibited for children, and enforcement agencies lack training and resources and do not maintain enforcement data. Children continue to be involved in the worst forms of child labor in dangerous activities in agriculture and small workshops.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate		87.3

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Lebanon are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and small workshops.(3) Children, predominantly girls, are involved in planting and picking tobacco.(4-8) Common hazards in this sector include the risk of cuts and puncture wounds from threading tobacco leaves; the risk of exposure to toxins and pesticides; and the danger of musculoskeletal problems caused by the process of planting tobacco seedlings.(5-7) Children are also found picking olives and citrus fruit. Children in agriculture often work long hours and may use potentially dangerous machinery and tools, carry heavy loads and apply harmful pesticides.(3) Child labor among boys is prominent in small workshops, such as mechanics and carpentry workshops, as well as in construction, manufacturing, and industry.(6-11) Children working in these sectors risk exhaustion from long working hours, injuries from heavy equipment and sharp tools, and body discomfort or deformation from assuming awkward positions.(8)

Children also work in street and market vending, washing car windshields, trash picking, and begging on the



streets.(10, 12, 13) There is increasing evidence that some children involved in street work are trafficking victims, forced into commercial sexual exploitation and illicit work by criminal gangs, family, and acquaintances.(14, 15) A recent study found that boys working on the street are at a high risk of sexual exploitation by peers and other men.(13, 15) Other hazards for children working on the streets include severe weather, vehicle accidents, harassment and arrest.(16) Foreign-born children, including Palestinian, Iraqi, Egyptian, Kurdish, and increasingly, Syrian children, form the majority of child street workers. Dom children, an ethnic minority, are also prevalent among the children working in the street.(7, 12, 15-18)

Children, especially adolescent girls, are engaged in domestic work in Lebanon. According to a study conducted in Northern Lebanon, child domestic workers are exposed to hazards such as carrying and moving very heavy objects, injury from sharp knives, and falling-off unstable or unsafe chairs or ladders.(8, 19)

Lebanon is a source country for children, especially girls, trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and criminal activity.(14, 15) In addition, Lebanon is a destination country for child commercial sexual exploitation, through the guise of fake or temporary marriages.(15, 18) A 2011 report highlights cases of girls tricked into fake marriages, who are then forced into prostitution and other illegal activities.(15)

Reportedly, in most Palestinian refugee camps children were not involved in local militia groups. However, in some camps where the security situation is more tenuous, such as Ain El Helwe and Bedawwi, there may be instances of children ages

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15 to 17 employed as guards at internal checkpoints or at building entrances.(20)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14.(4, 21, 22) The Labor Code provides basic protections, such as limiting the work day to a maximum of 7 hours per day with 1 hour of rest after every 4 hours worked, for most children of legal working age. These protections, however, do not extend to child domestic workers or children working with their families.(8, 21)

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	16
	Compulsory Education Age	13
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Labor Code includes a list of industrial, arduous and unhealthy work prohibited for children below the age of 16.(4, 21, 22) New Labor Code provisions on child labor and a list of hazardous occupations and activities for children under the age of 18 have been pending cabinet approval and parliamentary ratification since 2008.(7, 8, 23) Until these provisions are finalized, children ages 16 and 17 may be legally exposed to the hazards the draft list seeks to prohibit.

The Penal Code and Law 422 protect children from commercial sexual exploitation and prohibit financial gain from the prostitution of others, child pornography, involvement of a child in illegal activity, forced labor and involuntary servitude.(6, 7, 24)

Lebanese law is not consistent in its treatment of children working as beggars. In the Penal Code, child begging is criminalized. Conversely, Law 422 stipulates that child begging

endangers a child and that child beggars should be admitted to juvenile protection facilities.(16) However, due to an insufficient number of juvenile protection facilities (especially for non-Lebanese children), child beggars often end up confined to adult jail cells.(15, 16, 18)

The Parliament ratified Law 164 on the trafficking in persons on August 24, 2011. The Law criminalizes the trafficking and use of persons for commercial sexual exploitation, begging, and forced involvement in terrorist acts. It also bans the recruitment of children for armed conflict.(7, 25, 26)

The minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the Armed Forces is 18 for soldiers, noncommissioned personnel and officers. Military service is not compulsory in Lebanon.(27)

Education in Lebanon, until the age of 13, is free and compulsory by law for most residents of the country.(7) However, the law denies free education to children born to foreign national fathers, regardless of the mother's nationality. Further, children age 13 are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work. A bill to raise the age of compulsory education to 15 is pending, but has not yet been approved.(12)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Child Labor Unit (CLU), under the Ministry of Labor (MOL), serves as the Government's focal point on national child labor issues.(6, 7) The CLU's chief functions include raising awareness on the dangers of child labor, drafting legislation on child labor, and coordinating with other governmental agencies, civil society, and international organizations to gradually eliminate child labor.(7, 14, 28) The CLU also coordinates with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) in the referral of children to protective institutions such as shelters.(14) The Higher Council for Childhood (HCC), which is led by MOSA, oversees the implementation of child rights policies, including combating child labor.(12) No information was available on how the CLU and the HCC coordinate efforts on this issue.

The MOL is responsible for enforcing child labor laws through workplace inspections.(4) The MOL has 130 labor inspectors and assistant inspectors who conduct labor inspections.(6, 7) The MOL maintains that the number of inspectors is inadequate.(6) The ILO has provided training for MOL inspectors on investigating child labor issues. While trainings were scheduled for the reporting period, they were not completed.(7)

Child labor-related inspections at informal work sites are only permitted if a complaint is filed and the accused fails to respond to a summons from the CLU.(19) No mechanism exists to investigate complaints of child domestic labor since social workers—the only officials allowed to enter a private home—may only assess the overall welfare of the family and not the working conditions of domestic laborers.(19) The Government does not track the number of child labor violations, the number of children removed or assisted as a result of inspections, the number of citations issued for child labor, or the penalties applied and fines collected.(7)

The HCC, the Internal Security Forces (ISF), and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) are jointly charged with the enforcement of laws related to forced labor, the commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking and the use of children in illicit activities.(7, 19) The Public Prosecutor, the Juvenile Court Judge, the Police, and a representative from the Union for Protecting Childhood in Lebanon (UPEL), a quasi-governmental organization, cooperate to refer ill-treated and abused children, or children in conflict with the law, to appropriate services; this includes children exploited in the worst forms of child labor.(14) With six locations throughout Lebanon, UPEL is charged with coordinating juvenile justice procedures and advising juvenile judges on referring the child to appropriate social services.(7, 14)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

MOSA's National Social Development Strategy, unveiled in February 2011, includes components on child labor and child protection.(7, 29) The strategy lays out a plan for the establishment of a comprehensive social, health, and educational program, including the protection of working children and the implementation of HCC's strategy to address the needs of street children.(30)

The Education Sector Development Plan focuses on expanding early childhood education, achieving higher rates of retention and achievement, and improving the quality of teachers.(31) The question of whether this plan has an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During 2011, the Government continued to participate in phase 3 of the project, Strengthening National Action to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Lebanon (June 2009 to June 2011). Building on phases 1 and 2, phase 3 aimed to create governmental ownership of the project.(32)

During the reporting period, the project implemented vocational training and remedial education for children at risk of child labor in north Lebanon and the Bekaa region.(7) In addition, the project launched a Child Labor Monitoring System pilot project in Tripoli, designed to effectively gather and share information on the identification, monitoring and referral of withdrawn and rehabilitated child workers.(7) Finally, local Action Committees, composed of various local stakeholders, provided technical guidance and assistance in providing referral decisions for targeted children.(7)

The HCC, with government and UN funding, is leading a project to identify gaps in the child protection legal framework.(7) To date, HCC has drafted amendments to the Penal Code that provide clearer definitions on hazards children face and protective measures needed. These issues are currently under discussion by ministries and relevant parliamentary groups.(7)

NGOs and UN agencies are the main providers of children's social protection services, chiefly for child victims of trafficking.(15) Due to the lack of funding, government bodies, such as the ISF and UPEL, depend on the aforementioned providers when making service referrals of children.(15) In addition, the scarcity of shelters for child trafficking victims causes some children to be placed in juvenile detention centers.(15) The lack of shelters and resources to effectively handle child labor and trafficking cases put children at a heightened risk for continued exploitation.(15)

During the reporting period, the MOSA launched a poverty alleviation program funded by the Government, the Italian Foreign Ministry, the World Bank, and the Canadian Embassy.(7) The program targets 74,000 families living below the poverty line and includes plans to offer their children waivers for government school tuition and book fees. It is too early to determine what impact this poverty alleviation plan will have on child labor.(7)

The Government also worked with the ILO-IPEC on a study of child laborers between ages 5 and 17 in the North and Bekaa regions of Lebanon.(7) In an additional collaboration, the ILO-IPEC and the Government conducted a mapping of policy and initiatives on child labor in Lebanon. Both reports were released in early 2012.(7)

The NGO Caritas has an MOU with General Security, the official state body in charge of the entry and exit of foreigners, enabling the NGO to provide shelter and support to migrant domestic workers who have been identified as potential victims of trafficking regardless of immigration status.(15)

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Lebanon:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Approve into law the 2008 draft legislation to protect all children under age 18 from hazardous work.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Ensure that Labor Code protections extend to child domestic workers and children working with their families.	2011
	Amend Penal Code articles that penalize child beggars rather than ensuring their protection.	2011
	Ensure that children whose mothers are Lebanese nationals have the right to free education.	2010, 2011
	Adopt the pending legislation for raising the compulsory age of education from 13 to 15.	2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors.	2011
	Track and make publicly available the number of inspections carried out, with special attention to the incidence of child labor, the numbers of children assisted, and any sanctions imposed as a result of violations.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Create mechanisms to protect children employed as domestic servants and child trafficking victims.	2010, 2011
Policies	Assess the impact that the Education Sector Development Plan has had on addressing child labor.	2010, 2011
Social Programs	Increase the number of protective shelters for children involved in the worst forms of child labor.	2010, 2011

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