

Lebanon

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Lebanon has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 2000.²⁰⁷⁹ In 1994, the Ministry of Social Affairs established the Higher Council for Childhood to coordinate efforts of governmental agencies and NGOs involved in supporting the rights of children.²⁰⁸⁰ In 2000, with the support of UNICEF, the government's Central Administration of Statistics conducted a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) on the Situation of Children, of which child labor and education were essential components. In conjunction with the Ministries of Health, Education, and Labor and Social Affairs, as well as with UNICEF, the Director General of Statistics chaired a national committee to draft the report based on the results of the MICS survey.²⁰⁸¹

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 45.3 percent of children ages 6 to 14 years were working in Lebanon.²⁰⁸² Just under half of working children are employed in industry, while 31 percent work in commerce, repairs and maintenance.²⁰⁸³ Children work in metal works, handicraft and artisan establishments,²⁰⁸⁴ as well as sales, construction work and the operation of machinery.²⁰⁸⁵ Approximately 11 percent work in agriculture.²⁰⁸⁶ The employment of children under the age of 10 is rare.²⁰⁸⁷ Statistics from a 1997 study showed that the overwhelming majority of registered working children are boys. These official figures further indicate a decline in economically active

²⁰⁷⁹ ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, [online] [cited August 13, 2002]; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/about/countries/t_country.htm.

²⁰⁸⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties due in 1998, CRC/C/70/Add.8*, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Addendum: Lebanon, Geneva, September 2000, 54.

²⁰⁸¹ Government of Lebanon, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2: Lebanon*, UNICEF, 2000, [cited August 14, 2002]; available from <http://www.ucw-project.org/resources/index.html>.

²⁰⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸³ ILO-IPEC, *Lebanon: Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, Geneva, 2002, 9.

²⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, viii.

²⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰⁸⁶ *Ibid.* For a further breakdown on child labor in specified sectors, see UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties, Addendum: Lebanon*, 125-26.

²⁰⁸⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties, Addendum: Lebanon*, 118.

children in the past two decades.²⁰⁸⁸ UNICEF estimates of all child labor, including unregistered labor, however, suggest that over half of the children between the ages of 5 and 14 who are engaged in work are girls.²⁰⁸⁹ In poorer, more remote regions child labor is more prominent, and larger numbers of younger children are economically active.²⁰⁹⁰ National reports estimated that 25,000 children ages 7 to 14 are working in tobacco cultivation.²⁰⁹¹ The majority of children working in tobacco cultivation are unpaid, some entering the labor force as early as 3 years old.²⁰⁹²

On March 16, 1998, the Government of Lebanon adopted legislation providing free and compulsory primary school education through the age of 12.²⁰⁹³ Despite this legislation, education is not free. The average annual cost per student in primary education in 1997 was 271,000 Lebanese pounds (USD 176).²⁰⁹⁴ Lebanon enjoys one of the most advanced educational systems in the Arab world in terms of quality and gender equality. Literacy rates are the highest in the Arab

²⁰⁸⁸ Central Administration of Statistics, *Living Conditions in 1997*, 1997 quoted in ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, viii and 7. Child workers who have been registered with the government constitute the official figures of “registered” children. These official figures suggest 2.8 percent of children aged 10 to 14 were economically active (5 percent of boys and 0.4 percent of girls in this age group), while 21.6 percent of children aged 15 to 19 were active (36.6 percent of boys and 5.8 percent of girls in this age group). Unofficial numbers of economically active children are almost certainly higher, see ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, 8.

²⁰⁸⁹ Government of Lebanon, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2: Lebanon*. More specific figures on gender disparities in paid and unpaid child labor can be found at UNICEF, *Preliminary Report on the Multiple Cluster Survey on the Situation of Children in Lebanon*, February 2001, 10-11 [cited August 14, 2002]; available from <http://childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/lebanon/lebanon.pdf>. Illegal and unregistered child labor overlap and are not included in official figures. The MICS2 survey included a broader study to include these sectors. Child labor below the legal age limit is, for instance, included in the MICS2 survey. Domestic labor is a sector that involves illegal and unregistered labor. See UNICEF, *Preliminary Report on the Multiple Cluster Survey*, 3, 10-11.

²⁰⁹⁰ ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, 8.

²⁰⁹¹ The most widely cited reason for children engaging in child labor was economic need. *Ibid.*, viii, 7 and 8.

²⁰⁹² *Ibid.*, viii.

²⁰⁹³ Government of Lebanon, *Decree No. 686*, New Article 49, as cited in UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties, Addendum: Lebanon*, 60.

²⁰⁹⁴ Lebanon has a unique education system made up of government and private institutions, to which the government pays partial fees. The figure above refers to the average costs of government primary education as cited in the table under paragraph 199. For an overall discussion, see *Ibid.*, Section 5.2. See also William A. Rugh, “Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform,” *Middle East Journal* Vol. 56 No. 3 (2002), 402. See also United Nations Development Programme, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, Arab Fund For Economic and Social Development, New York, 2002, 55 [cited August 14, 2002]; available from <http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/CompleteEnglish.pdf>. For currency conversion see FX Converter, [online] [cited August 13, 2002]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>. The conversion rate was based on August 1997 figures, the same year the estimates of education costs were calculated.

region.²⁰⁹⁵ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 110.3 percent, (112.7 percent for boys and 107.8 percent for girls), and the net primary enrollment rate was 77.9 percent (79.2 percent for boys and 76.6 percent for girls).²⁰⁹⁶ Attendance rates are not available for Lebanon. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.²⁰⁹⁷

The progress in education is due in part to the high number of private schools in Lebanon.²⁰⁹⁸ Notwithstanding this progress, child labor negatively affects the education of working children in Lebanon.²⁰⁹⁹ Although the majority of the children working in tobacco cultivation, for instance, enroll in elementary school, work-related absenteeism negatively affects these children and contributes to the high dropout rate, occurring before they reach the secondary level.²¹⁰⁰ Approximately 38 percent of working children are illiterate or have been forced to abandon primary education entirely.²¹⁰¹

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code of 1996 established the minimum age for employment at 14 years.²¹⁰² It is illegal to employ a child under the age of 15 in industrial enterprises that are harmful or detrimental to their health, or to hire youth below the age of 16 in dangerous environments that threaten their life, health or morals.²¹⁰³ A 1999 amendment to the Code forbids the employment of children under the

²⁰⁹⁵ United Nations Development Programme, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, 55. See also Rugh, "Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform," 402. Although Rugh insists that Lebanon is the only Arab country in which private spending on education is three times government spending, it should be pointed out that the government subsidizes private schools at all levels. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties, Addendum: Lebanon*, 60-61. Rugh is drawing on figures from a World Bank report from 1998 and may, subsequently, overlook this fact. See also World Bank, *Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A Strategy Towards Learning for Development*, 21589, Washington, D.C., 1999, [cited August 14, 2002]; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2001/01/20/000094946_01010905322286/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf.

²⁰⁹⁶ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

²⁰⁹⁷ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

²⁰⁹⁸ United Nations Development Programme, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, 55. See also Rugh, "Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform," 402.

²⁰⁹⁹ It should be pointed out that Syrian and Palestinian children are involved in child labor in Lebanon. See for example, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties, Addendum: Lebanon*, 127.

²¹⁰⁰ ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, viii.

²¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹⁰² Government of Lebanon, *Loi du septembre 1946, Code du Travail, (modified 1996)*, Title 1, Chapter 2, Article 22, [cited August 15, 2002]; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/F93LBN01.htm#t1c2>. The law of 1946 was modified in December of 1993 and again in July of 1996.

²¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2:23 and Annex One. This annex lists the hazardous forms of labor mentioned in articles 22, 23, (referring to children) and 27 (referring to women). These types of work include underground mines and quarries, manufacturing of alcohol, chemicals, explosives, asphalt, work in tanneries or with machinery. For a complete list, see Annex One.

age of 18 for more than six hours per day. The amendment also requires a thirteen-hour period of rest between workdays.²¹⁰⁴ In addition, children must be given an hour break after a four-hour period of labor. An employer may not work children between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. Adolescents ages 14 to 17 must pass a medical examination to ensure that they can undertake the work for which they are to be engaged, and the prospective employer must request the child's identity card to verify his/her age.²¹⁰⁵ The Ministry of Labor is responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws, but lacks adequate resources to be effective.²¹⁰⁶ The ministry has 75 inspectors and assistant inspectors.²¹⁰⁷

The Government of Lebanon has not ratified ILO Convention 138, but ratified ILO Convention 182 on September 11, 2001.²¹⁰⁸

²¹⁰⁴ Government of Lebanon, *Law 91, Code du Travail (1999)*, Article 23, [cited August 15, 2002]; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/scripts/natlexcgi.exe?lang=E>.

²¹⁰⁵ In addition, Article 30 states that employers, parents, and guardians are legally responsible for adherence to these child labor laws. *Code du Travail, (modified 1996)*, 2: 22-24.

²¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Lebanon*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 2190-91, Section 6d [cited January 2, 2003]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8270.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Beirut, *unclassified telegram no. 3532*, September 2000.

²¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State official, electronic communication to USDOL official, February 2003.

²¹⁰⁸ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited December 3, 2002]; available from <http://iloex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.