

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

The Government of Jordan has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 2000.²²⁹⁸ Queen Noor established the National Task Force for Children (NTFC) in 1995. The NTFC conducted its first national study on child labor in 1997.²²⁹⁹ The Ministry of Labor (MOL) initiated an ILO-IPEC Action Program in January 2001. As a result, the Child Labor Unit (CLU) was established. The CLU developed a database on child labor issues and is in the process of establishing a National Policy and Program Framework, which will provide policy makers with a country-wide strategy for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.²³⁰⁰ In 2000, Queen Rania²³⁰¹ opened Dar al-Aman, a child protection center designed to shelter children ages 6 to 12 who have suffered from neglect and abuse, including children who have been forced to drop out of school and enter the workforce.²³⁰² The Ministry of Social Development established a committee to address the problem of child vendors. This government body is empowered to withdraw children from the streets, return them to their families or juvenile centers, and provide families with stipends.²³⁰³ The MOL has also implemented a policy whereby the adult relatives of any child laborer withdrawn from work may be offered vocational training.²³⁰⁴ With support from UNESCO and the ILO, the government is also implementing a project intended to inform government officials and educators of children's rights.²³⁰⁵ In 2002, USDOL funded an ILO-IPEC national program in Jordan.²³⁰⁶ The Jordanian Women's Federation (JWF) and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) launched a pilot project in the Baqa refugee camp to reach street children who had abandoned their education by engaging them in educational games and computer-generated activities.²³⁰⁷ In October 2003, the Information Research Centre (IRC) sponsored a 3-day conference for regional experts to collaborate on action plans to combat child labor.²³⁰⁸

The government has placed a strong emphasis on providing education for all. A 10-year education reform program was initiated in 1987. Two subsequent Human Resources Development Sector Investment programs were financed by the government, World Bank, Government of Japan, and other technical agencies. An Education

²²⁹⁸ ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, ILO-IPEC, [online] [cited June 13, 2003]; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/about/countries/t_country.htm.

²²⁹⁹ ILO-IPEC, *National Programme for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in Jordan*, project document, Geneva, September 2002, 7. See also H.M. Queen Noor, *National Task Force for Children*, [online] 2002 [cited June 19, 2003]; available from <http://www.noor.gov.jo/main/ntfc.htm>.

²³⁰⁰ Implementation of the national strategy is scheduled for 2004. See ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan—project document*, 24–25. See also U.S. Embassy– Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 5763*, September 9, 2003.

²³⁰¹ Queen Rania is the wife of King Abdullah II, who ascended to the throne at the death of his father, King Hussein, in 1999. Queen Noor was King Hussein's wife and still carries the title of Queen. See Jeffrey Goldberg, "Learning How To Be King," *New York Times* (New York), February 6, 2000, Section 6; available from <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/mjihad/abdulart.html>.

²³⁰² The center works closely with the Ministry of Social Development and the Public Security Directorate. H.M. Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, *Dar Al-Aman Center*, Queen Rania website, [online] [cited June 19, 2003]; available from <http://209.41.172.238/initiatives/daralaman.cfm>.

²³⁰³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Jordan*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18279.htm>.

²³⁰⁴ U.S. Embassy– Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 5763*.

²³⁰⁵ Ibid.

²³⁰⁶ The program aims to withdraw child workers from the worst forms of child labor; mainstream them into non-formal and formal education programs; provide them with pre-vocational and vocational training; and support them with counseling, health care, and recreational activities. See ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan—project document*, 26–27.

²³⁰⁷ Mahmoud Al Abed, "Child-to-Child Working to End School Dropouts", [online], March 2, 2003 [cited May 20, 2003]; available from http://www.amanjordan.org/english/daily_news/wmprint.php?ArtID=1049.

²³⁰⁸ Child labor experts from Morocco, Sudan, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan were in attendance. See Dalya Dajani, "Experts Begin Deliberations on Action Plans to Combat Child Labour," *The Jordan Times* (Amman), October 6, 2003; available from <http://www.jordantimes.com>.

Plan of Jordan was implemented from 1988 to 1995 and was funded by the government, World Bank, Government of Japan, USAID, and the Department for International Development.²³⁰⁹ The second Education Development Plan ran from 1996 to 1999, and the third ran from 1999 through 2003. Progress in literacy, enrollment, and numbers of students and teachers has been made throughout the course of these three plans.²³¹⁰ More recently, the government has recognized the link between the lack of education and child labor. The Ministry of Education has taken steps to address child labor issues in its 2003–2015 Educational Development Plan.²³¹¹ The government also provides school fee reductions and supplements transportation costs for disadvantaged families.²³¹²

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, the ILO estimated that less than one percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Jordan were working.²³¹³ In 1997, the Department of Statistics estimated that approximately 13 percent of boys ages 15 to 16 years and 1.1 percent of girls of that age were working.²³¹⁴ An MOL study, published in 2002, stated that children are employed in automobile repair, carpentry, sales, blacksmith shops, tailoring, construction, and food services.²³¹⁵ Child vendors on the streets of Amman work selling newspapers, food, and gum. Other children provide an important source of income for their families by rummaging through trash dumpsters to find recyclable items.²³¹⁶ A 2001 study by the MOL found that working children are primarily concentrated in Amman, Zarqa, Balqa and Irbid.²³¹⁷ Another study of working children in Irbid found that children who work often grow up shorter and leaner than others in the same age group and remain smaller through adulthood. The study also found that many working children had been victims of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse in the workplace and had been exposed to hazardous chemicals and dangerous working conditions.²³¹⁸

Education in Jordan is free and compulsory for children ages 6 to 17 years.²³¹⁹ The Ministry of Education is required to open a school in every community where there are at least 10 students for grades 1 through 4.²³²⁰ In 1999, the gross primary enrollment rate was 100.8 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 93.6 percent.²³²¹ Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Jordan. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.²³²² Drop-out rates are

²³⁰⁹ ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan—project document*, 3.

²³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

²³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²³¹² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Jordan*, Section 5.

²³¹³ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

²³¹⁴ Mohammed Shahateet and Nihaya Issa Dabdub, *A Report on the Status of Child Labour in Jordan-2001*, The Jordanian Ministry of Labor, Amman, July 2002, 10.

²³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

²³¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Jordan*, Section 5.

²³¹⁷ Dr. Mohammed Shahateet and Nihaya Issa Dabdub, *Estimating Child Labour in Jordan: 1991-2005*, The Jordanian Ministry of Labor, Amman, October 2002, 11.

²³¹⁸ Dr. Muntaha Gharaibeh and Dr. Shirley Hoeman, "Health Hazards and Risks for Abuse among Child Labor in Jordan," *Journal of Pediatric Nursing* 18 no. 2 (April 2003), 140–47.

²³¹⁹ Article 10 of the Education Act No. 3 of 1994 states that basic education is free and compulsory for Jordanian children. Basic education extends from first through the end of tenth grade. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Periodic Reports of States Parties due in 1998 (Addendum)*, CRC/C/70/Add.4, prepared by Government of Jordan, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, September 17, 1999, Articles 28 and 29, para. 91; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/a06f687951c4fc1080256846003b7763?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/a06f687951c4fc1080256846003b7763?Opendocument).

²³²⁰ ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan—project document*, 5.

²³²¹ In 1999, the gross primary enrollment rate was 101 percent for girls and 100.6 percent for boys, while the net primary enrollment rate was 93.9 for girls and 93.2 for boys. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003*.

²³²² For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

relatively high, particularly in rural areas after children reach the age of 13 years.²³²³ The primary reasons for dropping out of school are financial pressures, poverty, disability, poor performance, teaching styles, parental attitudes, and lack of adequate transportation.²³²⁴ The 2001 MOL study indicated that most of the child workers interviewed had completed at least nine years of education or more.²³²⁵

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

In 1996, the Labor Code was amended to raise the minimum legal working age from 13 to 16 years.²³²⁶ In February 2003, the government raised the minimum age for employment of children in dangerous and hazardous work from 17 to 18 years.²³²⁷ Minors must be given a break after four hours work, are not allowed to work more than six hours per day, and may not work during weekends and holidays, or at night.²³²⁸ Before hiring a minor, a prospective employer must obtain a guardian's written approval, the minor's birth certificate, and a health certificate.²³²⁹ An employer found in violation of these provisions will face a fine ranging from 100 to 500 dinars (USD 142 to 710). The fine will double with each subsequent infraction.²³³⁰ Compulsory labor is prohibited by the Constitution of Jordan.²³³¹ While the law does not specifically prohibit forced or bonded labor by children, such practices are not known to occur.²³³² A 1926 law specifically prohibits trafficking in children, and there is no indication that children were trafficked, to, from, or within the country.²³³³

The CLU of the MOL is primarily responsible for monitoring child labor, collecting and analyzing data, and reviewing and ensuring the enforcement of existing legislation.²³³⁴ There are over 80 labor inspectors in the country, many of whom have received training on issues of child labor. In 2002, approximately 3,000 child labor allegations were investigated by MOL inspectors and none of these cases resulted in sanctions against the employers.²³³⁵

The Government of Jordan ratified ILO Convention 138 on March 23, 1998 and ILO Convention 182 on April 20, 2000.²³³⁶

²³²³ For the 1999–2000 school year, the primary school (Grades 1–5) completion rate was 87 percent. Completion rates worsen at subsequent grade levels, decreasing to 79 percent at Grade 10, 75 percent at Grade 11, and 62 percent at Grade 12. See ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan—project document*, 6.

²³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6, 12 and 13. These reasons are based on two studies. One was conducted in 1995 and the other in 2001.

²³²⁵ This study was based on 2,539 working children. See Mohammed Shahateet and Nihaya Issa Dabdub, *Child Labour Report-2001*, 9 and 23.

²³²⁶ *Labour Code, Law No. 8 of 1996*, Section 73; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/E96JOR01.htm>.

See also U.S. Embassy– Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 3340*, June 2000.

²³²⁷ U.S. Embassy– Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 5763*.

²³²⁸ *Labour Code of 1996*, Section 75. The Code does not specify the age of a minor. Young people are defined as individuals of either sex who have not yet reached 18 years of age. In other cases, the use of the term “minor” is qualified as to specify an age. For example, see Section 73 “no minor under sixteen” or Section 74 “no minor under seventeen.” Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the term “young person” is synonymous with “minor,” meaning any person under 18 years of age. Definitions may be found in Section 2 of the code.

²³²⁹ *Ibid.*, Section 76.

²³³⁰ *Ibid.*, section 77. For currency conversion, see FXConverter, in Oanda.com, [online] [cited September 15, 2003]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

²³³¹ *Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, (1952), Chapter 2, Article 13; available from <http://www.parliament.gov.jo/english/legislative/constit.htm>.

²³³² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Jordan*, Section 6d.

²³³³ *Ibid.*, Section 6f.

²³³⁴ ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan—project document*, 20.

²³³⁵ *Ibid.* See also U.S. Embassy– Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 5763*.

²³³⁶ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [online database] [cited June 16, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.