

Uzbekistan

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

UNICEF estimated that 22.6 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Uzbekistan were working in 2000.⁴¹⁵² Children work in agriculture in rural areas, where the large-scale, compulsory mobilization of children to help with cotton harvests has been reported.⁴¹⁵³ Schools close in some rural areas to allow children to work during the harvest.⁴¹⁵⁴ Popular media report that children help cultivate rice and raise silk worms in rural areas,⁴¹⁵⁵ and work in street vending,⁴¹⁵⁶ construction, building materials manufacturing, and transportation.⁴¹⁵⁷ Children frequently work as temporary hired workers, or *mardikors*, without access to the social insurance system.⁴¹⁵⁸ UNICEF reports that approximately 34,500 children are living and working on the streets in Uzbekistan and are vulnerable to hazards associated with such an environment.⁴¹⁵⁹ Children are engaged in prostitution in Uzbekistan.⁴¹⁶⁰ Young women and possibly adolescent girls are reportedly

⁴¹⁵² Children who are working in some capacity include children who have performed any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, who have performed more than four hours of housekeeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. See Government of Uzbekistan, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*, UNICEF, December 5, 2000, Table 42, 7; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/uzbekistan/uzbekistan.PDF>.

⁴¹⁵³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Sections 5, 6c and 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27873.htm>. Rural children are said to lag behind their urban peers in schooling, due to participation in the cotton harvest that takes children away from their studies. See UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Uzbekistan: Focus on Rural Schools*, [online] August 10, 2004 [cited August 31, 2004]; available from http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=38047&SelectRegion=Central_Asia&SelectCountry=UZBEKISTAN.

⁴¹⁵⁴ Children as young as 10 years old can be found working in cotton fields in conditions hazardous to their health. Legal Aid Society, STATUS, Center for Social and Humanitarian Researches, Business Women Association (Kokand), Mekhri, Beguborlik, SABO, PIASC, KRIDI, Mekhr Tayanchi, UNESCO Youth Club, Kokand Children's Club, Shygiz Children's Club Kukus, Mothers and Daughters, Bolalar va Kattalar Children's Club, Save the Children (UK), and UNICEF, *Supplementary NGO Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Uzbekistan*, 2001 [cited May 11, 2004], 10, 33; available from <http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/crc.28/Uzbekistan.doc>. See also U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 2056*, August 11, 2004.

⁴¹⁵⁵ Cango.net, *Initiative Newsletter: The Situation with Child Labour is Unlikely to Change in the Foreseeable Future*, cango.net, [online] 2002 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from <http://www.cango.net/news/archive/spring-2002/a0002.asp>.

⁴¹⁵⁶ Farangis Najibullah, *Central Asia: For Many Young Uzbeks and Tajiks, Working is a Way of Life*, [online] May 27, 2003 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2003/05/27052003154228.asp>. Children work in markets selling various products such as alcohol, tobacco and food. See Legal Aid Society, STATUS, Center for Social and Humanitarian Researches, Business Women Association (Kokand), Mekhri, Beguborlik, SABO, PIASC, KRIDI, Mekhr Tayanchi, UNESCO Youth Club, Kokand Children's Club, Shygiz Children's Club Kukus, Mothers and Daughters, Bolalar va Kattalar Children's Club, Save the Children (UK), and UNICEF, *Supplementary NGO Report*, 33.

⁴¹⁵⁷ Cango.net, *The Situation with Child Labour is Unlikely to Change in the Foreseeable Future*.

⁴¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵⁹ UNICEF, *At a Glance: Uzbekistan - the Big Picture*, [online] 2004 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uzbekistan.html>.

⁴¹⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Section 6f. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Uzbekistan*, CRC/C/15/Add.167, November 7, 2001, para. 68; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CRC.C.15.Add.167.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.15.Add.167.En?OpenDocument).

trafficked to destinations in the Persian Gulf, Asia, and Europe for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.⁴¹⁶¹

Basic education is compulsory for 9 years under the Education Law of 1992⁴¹⁶² and free according to Article 41 of the Constitution.⁴¹⁶³ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 102.6 percent.⁴¹⁶⁴ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. In 2000, approximately 73.4 percent of primary school age children attended school, and 88.7 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.⁴¹⁶⁵ While school enrollment rates for boys and girls are high, UNICEF reports that children from poor rural households have less access to education.⁴¹⁶⁶ Early marriages of girls also pose challenges to continuing their education.⁴¹⁶⁷ Parents and students are often asked to cover the costs of school repairs and supplementing teachers' incomes due to low salaries.⁴¹⁶⁸

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.⁴¹⁶⁹ The Labor Code prohibits children less than 18 years of age from working in unfavorable labor conditions and establishes limited work hours for minors.⁴¹⁷⁰ Children between the ages of 14 and 16 may only work 10 hours per week while school is in

⁴¹⁶¹ Traffickers most often target women between 17 and 30 years of age. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Section 6f.

⁴¹⁶² Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" (1992) as cited in the Ministry of Public Education and Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, *National Action Plan on Education for All in the Republic of Uzbekistan*, Tashkent, 2002, 10, 13; available from <http://www.unescobkk.org/EFA/EFAcountry/Uzbekistan.pdf>.

⁴¹⁶³ *Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1992*, (December 8, 1992); available from http://www.ecostan.org/laws/uzb/uzbekistancon_eng.html.

⁴¹⁶⁴ Net primary school enrollment rates are not available. World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004. For a detailed explanation of gross primary enrollment and/or attendance rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definitions of gross primary enrollment rate and gross primary attendance rate in the glossary of this report.

⁴¹⁶⁵ This refers to children ages 7 to 11 years old. Government of Uzbekistan, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey*, 5 and Annex, Table 10, 11.

⁴¹⁶⁶ UNICEF, *At a Glance - the Big Picture*. UNICEF has also been supportive of pre-primary school programs for children ages 3 to 6, through a home-based *Mahallah* nursery school system. The flexibility of the hours of such a system has improved nursery school enrollment and parents are able to participate more freely in paid employment activities. This is particularly beneficial during the cotton-picking season. See UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Uzbekistan: Home-based Preschool Care Taking Off*, [online] November 24, 2003 [cited February 12, 2004]; available from http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=38047&SelectRegion=Central_Asia&SelectCountry=UZBEKISTAN

⁴¹⁶⁷ Ministry of Public Education and Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, *National Action Plan on EFA*.

⁴¹⁶⁸ U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 2056*.

⁴¹⁶⁹ Fourteen year-olds may only work in light labor that does not negatively affect their health and/or development. See U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 3730*, October 15, 2002. See Article 77 of the Labor Code as cited by U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Section 6d.

⁴¹⁷⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties Due in 1996*, CRC/C/41/Add.8, prepared by Government of Uzbekistan, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, December 27, 1999, para. 315 and 18; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/aacfc7e3feaabf2c1256a4d00391fbc/\\$FILE/G0140749.pdf](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/aacfc7e3feaabf2c1256a4d00391fbc/$FILE/G0140749.pdf). This report was submitted by the government to the committee on December 27, 1999.

session and 20 hours per week during school vacation. Children between 16 and 18 years may only work 15 hours per week when school is in session and 30 hours per week during school vacations.⁴¹⁷¹ All working children ages 14 to 18 years are required to obtain written permission from a parent or guardian, and work may not interfere with their studies.⁴¹⁷² The Constitution prohibits forced labor except when fulfilling a court sentence.⁴¹⁷³ The Penal Code establishes punishment for people who profit from prostitution or maintain brothels, with higher penalties when a child is involved.⁴¹⁷⁴ The Penal Code prohibits the recruitment of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation, with higher penalties for taking children out of the country. Trafficking of children outside the country is punishable with 5 to 8 years in prison.⁴¹⁷⁵ The penalty for recruitment for sexual or other exploitation is 6 months to 3 years in prison and up to USD 900 in fines.⁴¹⁷⁶

Enforcement of the law is carried out by the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Interior's criminal investigators. While enforcement appears effective to deter child labor in the formal sector, it is not effective in regulating children's work in family-based employment and the agricultural sectors. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection does not have legal jurisdiction over child labor enforcement.⁴¹⁷⁷

In 2003, the government prosecuted 101 people for trafficking-related crimes; as of February 2004 there had been 80 convictions.⁴¹⁷⁸

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

Representatives from the Government of Uzbekistan participated in an assessment mission where preliminary information was gathered about the child labor situation in Central Asia.⁴¹⁷⁹ As a result, USDOL provided funding to ILO-IPEC for a sub-regional project to enhance the capacity of national institutions to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Uzbekistan and share to information and experiences across the sub-region.⁴¹⁸⁰

⁴¹⁷¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Section 6d.

⁴¹⁷² U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 2056*.

⁴¹⁷³ *Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1992*, Article 37.

⁴¹⁷⁴ Government of Uzbekistan, *Crimes Against Sexual Freedom*, as cited in The Protection Project Legal Library, [database online] [cited May 17, 2004], Article 131; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/UzbekistanF.pdf>.

⁴¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 135.

⁴¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Section 6f.

⁴¹⁷⁷ U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 2056*.

⁴¹⁷⁸ It is not specified if any of these crimes included the trafficking of children under the age of 18 years. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Uzbekistan*, Washington, D.C., June 14, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33192.htm#uzbekistan>.

⁴¹⁷⁹ The mission was led by ILO-IPEC and took place in June 2004. See ILO-IPEC, *CAR Capacity Building Project: Regional Program on the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, project document, RER/04/P54/USA, Geneva, September 2004, 1. The Government of Germany provided funding in 2003 to carry out these activities. ILO-IPEC Official, *Active IPEC Projects as of May 1, 2004*, USDOL Official, 2004.

⁴¹⁸⁰ Countries participating in the sub-regional project are Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. See ILO-IPEC, *CAR Capacity Building Project*, vii.

The government established an inter-agency working group to combat trafficking in persons, and actively cooperates with local NGOs and the OSCE on anti-trafficking training of law enforcement and consular officials.⁴¹⁸¹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Consular Department is developing an assistance and repatriation program to aid trafficked victims, in cooperation with a local NGO that meets returning victims at the airport.⁴¹⁸²

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	
Ratified Convention 182	
ILO-IPEC Associated Member	✓
National Plan for Children	
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan	

The government has a cooperative agreement with UNICEF for 2000-2004 that supports a program that promotes the protection and development of children and the well-being of youth.⁴¹⁸³ The 2000-2005 State Program on Forming a Healthy Generation focuses on improving childhood development in such areas as health and education.⁴¹⁸⁴ To encourage school attendance, the government provides aid to students from low-income families in the form of scholarships, full or partial boarding, textbooks, and clothing.⁴¹⁸⁵ In addition, children from low-income households are provided with free medical services.⁴¹⁸⁶

The government has a National Action Plan on Education for All with the goal of ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to free and compulsory primary education.⁴¹⁸⁷ In February 2004, the President issued a resolution that called for a special commission to prepare a program of development of school education for 2004-2008, and establish working groups to identify technical and fiscal resources needed.⁴¹⁸⁸ Through its education reform program, the government is taking steps to expand compulsory education from 9 to

⁴¹⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Section 6f.

⁴¹⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁸³ Government of Uzbekistan, *Executive Summary of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Implementation of the Resolutions of the World Summit for Children*, UNICEF, 2002, 11; available from http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/how_country/edr_uzbekistan_en.PDF.

⁴¹⁸⁴ Government of Uzbekistan, *Information on Implementation on the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 2001, 14; available from <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/doc/replies/wr-uzbekistan-1.pdf>.

⁴¹⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 2056*. See also Government of Uzbekistan, *Executive Summary*, 10.

⁴¹⁸⁶ Government of Uzbekistan, *Executive Summary*, 19.

⁴¹⁸⁷ The National Program for Personnel Training (NPPT) is the conceptual basis for the EFA action plan. See Ministry of Public Education and Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, *National Action Plan on EFA*, 4-5.

⁴¹⁸⁸ The Presidential Decree "On Measures to Prepare a Program of Development of School Education for 2004-2008" calls for plans to be developed to address issues such as capital reconstruction of schools, equipment supplies, including computers and textbooks, improving school standards and programs, guaranteeing schools, especially in rural areas, with qualified teachers, and developing children's sports programs. See Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, *School – the basis of culture, progress and enlightenment*, [online] May 12, 2004 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from http://www.press-service.uz/eng/novosti_eng/novosti_eng.htm. See also Radio Tashkent International, *President Orders to Prepare Schools Development Program*, [online] February 22, 2004 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from http://ino.uzpak.uz/eng/youth_sport_eng/youth_sport_eng_2202.html.

12 years by 2009.⁴¹⁸⁹ During the second phase of the education reform program (2001-2005), a national program of training educational specialists is underway to prepare a strong and capable teaching corps.⁴¹⁹⁰

To support these reforms, the government has increased budget allocations for educational development to 11.7 percent of the GDP, and additional donor funds have also been provided for this purpose.⁴¹⁹¹ The ADB is the lead agency providing technical input to policy and program development, and funding education reforms in Uzbekistan.⁴¹⁹² The ADB has provided 5 loans totaling USD 206.5 million to support three key projects: Basic Education Textbook Development, Senior Secondary Education Project, and the Education Sector Development Program.⁴¹⁹³ USAID also supports a basic education program with USD 1.2 million for teacher training, strengthening the capacity of school management, increasing parent involvement in the schools, and providing computers to schools throughout the country.⁴¹⁹⁴

⁴¹⁸⁹ Radio Tashkent International, *Through Education to the Country's Progress*, [online] June 24, 2003 [cited May 17, 2004], 3; available from http://ino.uzpak.uz/eng/youth_sport_eng/youth_sport_eng_2406.html. Three years of professional or vocational training in special training institutes or colleges would become mandatory. See U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 2056*.

⁴¹⁹⁰ Radio Tashkent International, *Through Education to the Country's Progress*, 1-2. This is the National Program for Personnel Training (NPPT). See UNESCO, *Uzbekistan - Policy and Programs*, [online] 2002 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from <http://www.unescobbk.org/education/ece/policies/uzbekistan.htm>.

⁴¹⁹¹ Radio Tashkent International, *Through Education to the Country's Progress*, 2. See also Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, *School – the basis of culture, progress and enlightenment*.

⁴¹⁹² Asia Development Bank, *Country Strategy and Program Update (2004-2006): Uzbekistan*, 2003, 19; available from http://www.adb.org/Documents/CSPs/UZB/2003/CSP_UZB_2003.pdf.

⁴¹⁹³ Other development partners supporting activities in the education sector include the EU, Japanese International Cooperation Agency, Japan Bank for International Cooperation, USAID, World Concern, and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). See *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁴¹⁹⁴ USAID, *USAID/Central Asian Republics - Country Report: Uzbekistan*, January 2004 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_urasia/pdfs/uzbprofile.pdf.