

Egypt

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

The Government of Egypt has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 1996.¹²⁴⁰ The Ministry of Labor and Employment established a national plan to combat child labor in 1995. This plan proposed education and vocational training programs, income-generating activities for families, and training on child labor issues for labor inspectors, government officials, and NGO staff members.¹²⁴¹ ILO-IPEC and the government have collaborated on several initiatives to combat child labor, including a direct action program to contribute to the progressive elimination of child labor in leather tanneries, pottery kilns, and other hazardous industries.¹²⁴² Other ILO-IPEC efforts involve public awareness raising, capacity building, and interventions, including a community project that withdraws children from hazardous work in auto repair workshops, and textile and plastics factories.¹²⁴³ In 2000, the government established a Child Labor Unit (CLU) within the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) to inspect child labor sites.¹²⁴⁴ ILO-IPEC, U.S. Customs Service and the Arab Labor Organization (AOL) provide technical assistance to the CLU.¹²⁴⁵ The National Council for Children and Motherhood is a national coordinating body for agencies promoting the protection of mothers and children, and is working with various research institutions to study and propose specific programs to eliminate child labor.¹²⁴⁶

¹²⁴⁰ ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, [online] [cited August 22, 2002]; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/about/countries/t_country.htm.

¹²⁴¹ UN Convention on the Rights of Children, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties, Addendum: Egypt*, prepared by Government of Egypt, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1999, para. 220 [cited September 3, 2002]; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/TBS/DOC.NSF/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/8f1898b2a712708c802568b200501ed2/\\$FILE/G9945502.doc](http://www.unhchr.ch/TBS/DOC.NSF/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/8f1898b2a712708c802568b200501ed2/$FILE/G9945502.doc).

¹²⁴² ILO-IPEC official, electronic communication to USDOL official, January 7, 2002.

¹²⁴³ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6469*, October 2001.

¹²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* See also U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 8087*, December 2001.

¹²⁴⁶ Under the guidance of First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, the National Council is focusing in particular on the areas of social welfare, health, education, and social protection. The Council includes active participation by the Ministers of Social Affairs, Health, Culture, Education, Manpower and Vocational Training, Planning, and Information; the chairman of the High Council for Youth and Sports; and the First Lady. U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6469*. See also UN Convention on the Rights of Children, *Consideration of Reports: Egypt*, para. 205.

The Ministry of Social Affairs established the Mubarak Program for Social Cooperation in 1996 to provide grants to school children in an effort to offset school fees and indirect costs of schooling and to promote school attendance.¹²⁴⁷ The Ministry of Education has been involved in a number of activities designed to raise school enrollment and attendance in Egypt.¹²⁴⁸ The World Bank's Education Enhancement Program Project was developed to enhance the Ministry's stated goals of ensuring universal access to basic education, with an emphasis on girls, and to improve the quality of education.¹²⁴⁹

Egypt was the first country officially to join the UN Girls' Education Initiative. In 1992, UNICEF launched the Girl Child Initiative with the Community Schools Programme.¹²⁵⁰ Through the construction and renovation of 818 classrooms, USAID has funded a New Schools Program that targets girls between the ages of 6 and 14 years, who have never attended school, or who have dropped out. The Center for Development and Population Activities initiated a number of activities to expand education to girls through scholarships and other incentives for those not enrolled in formal education. In 2002, an initiative for boys was also launched.¹²⁵¹ By building new schools within walking distance of homes, increasing the number of female teachers, and providing grants, uniforms, and meals to children at school, enrollment and attendance has improved.¹²⁵²

¹²⁴⁷ Nadia Ramsis Farah, *Child Labour in Egypt within the Context of CRC*, UNICEF, Cairo, June 1997, 27. School grants are provided through the Ministry of Social Affairs to school children whose families earn less than 100 Egyptian pounds (USD 29.47) per month. During 1996-1997, about 169,000 children received grants, either in-kind or cash, to cover the costs of school uniforms, books, supplies, and school fees. The average annual grant per child was 14.17 Egyptian pounds (USD 4.17). Grants fall well short of the estimated costs of sending children to school, where average primary school fees range from 11.35 to 15.85 pounds (USD 2.50 to 3.40). The Ministry of Education estimates that the average annual cost paid by poor families for primary school education amounts to 348 pounds (USD 102.56 in September 1997) per child. Farah, *Child Labour in Egypt within the Context of CRC*, 26-27. For currency conversion, see FX Converter, [online] [cited August 13, 2002]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

¹²⁴⁸ Among the activities, the Government has promoted one-room schools, encouraged private spending on education, provided meals, upgraded schools with computers, and launched an Adopt-a-School program. See Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Egyptian Minister of Education, interview with USDOL official, May 12, 1998.

¹²⁴⁹ World Bank, *Egypt- Education Enhancement Program Project*, [online] 1996 [cited September 4, 2002]; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDServlet?pcont=details&eid=000009265_3970311113957. See also World Bank, *The Arab Republic of Egypt Education Enhancement Program*, staff appraisal report, 15750-EGT, October 21, 1996, 1 [cited December 17, 2002]; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1996/10/21/000009265_3970311113957/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf.

¹²⁵⁰ UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Egypt*, [online] 2002 [cited September 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/programme/girlseducation/action/cases/egypt.htm>.

¹²⁵¹ USAID, *Education: Improving Basic Education to Meet Market Demand*, USAID: Egypt, [online] 2002 [cited September 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.usaid-eg/detail.asp?id=9>.

¹²⁵² The successes are a result of programs that address barriers to children's education. See, for example, UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Egypt*. Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, interview, May 12, 1998. See also Kristin Moehlmann, *Girl-Friendly Schools Improve Egypt's Report Card*, UNICEF, [online] [cited September 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/information/mdg/mdg07.htm>.

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 9.3 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Egypt were working.¹²⁵³ A 1997 national survey conducted by the Population Council showed a gender disparity between working children. Approximately 29 percent of 10-year-old boys were working compared to 13 percent of girls the same age. The percentage of economically active boys increases sharply through age 18 while the increase in girls is considerably less.¹²⁵⁴ Children are largely found working in the agricultural sector.¹²⁵⁵ Children also work in leather tanneries, pottery kilns,¹²⁵⁶ glassworks,¹²⁵⁷ auto repair workshops, and textile and plastics factories.¹²⁵⁸ Girls from poor families are reported to work as domestic servants in the homes of other families.¹²⁵⁹

Although the Constitution guarantees free and compulsory basic education for children between the ages of 6 and 15,¹²⁶⁰ the Ministry of Education imposes school fees for primary education.¹²⁶¹ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 100.2 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 92.4 percent.¹²⁶² Girls' enrollment still lags behind that of boys.¹²⁶³ In 1996, the net primary school attendance was 83.3 percent.¹²⁶⁴

¹²⁵³ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

¹²⁵⁴ These findings were based on a random national sample of adolescents. Philip L. Graitcer and Leonard B. Lerer, *The Impact of Child Labor on Health: Report of a Field Investigation in Egypt*, Atlanta, July 2000, 35 [cited December 17, 2002]; available from <http://www.worldbank.org/children/The%20Impact%20of%20Child%20Labor%20on%20Health%20with%20append..pdf>.

¹²⁵⁵ UN Convention on the Rights of Children, *Consideration of Reports: Egypt*, para. 208. Unfortunately, most reports of national child labor statistics are based on a study conducted by the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in 1988. The paucity of findings from recent surveys renders statistics on the current situation of child labor highly suspect. For information on the CAPMAS survey, see Graitcer and Lerer, *The Impact of Child Labor on Health*, 33.

¹²⁵⁶ ILO-IPEC official, electronic communication, January 7.

¹²⁵⁷ UN Convention on the Rights of Children, *Consideration of Reports: Egypt*, para. 221.

¹²⁵⁸ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6469*.

¹²⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Egypt*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 2037-39, Section 6c and 6d [cited September 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8248.htm>.

¹²⁶⁰ *The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1980*, (May 22, 1980), Articles 18 and 20 [cited October 1, 2002]; available from <http://www.sis.gov.eg/egyptinf/politics/parlament/html/constit.htm>. See also UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Reports - Egypt*, prepared by National Center for Educational Research and Development, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, October 1999, [cited September 4, 2002]; available from http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/egypt/rapport_1.htm.

¹²⁶¹ Farah, *Child Labour in Egypt within the Context of CRC*, 26-27.

¹²⁶² World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*.

¹²⁶³ Girls' gross primary enrollment is 95.9 compared to 104.3 for boys while girls' net primary enrollment is 89.2 compared to 95.4 for boys in 1998. Ibid.

¹²⁶⁴ Ibid.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Children's Code establishes 14 years as the minimum age for employment. At 12 years old, children may participate in training for seasonal employment provided the work does not interfere with their health, growth, and school attendance.¹²⁶⁵ In April 2001, the government issued a decree making it illegal to employ children below the age of 14 in cotton fields.¹²⁶⁶ The Labor Law of 1996 also prohibits children from working over six hours per day or for more than four consecutive hours, at night, overtime hours, or during their weekly day off.¹²⁶⁷ In 1997, the MOM issued two decrees restricting the employment of youths in hazardous work.¹²⁶⁸

The MOM is the government agency responsible for enforcing child labor laws.¹²⁶⁹ Despite the development of the CLU and technical assistance from the ILO, U.S. Customs Service, and AOL, a number of obstacles prevent effective enforcement of child labor laws.¹²⁷⁰ In September 2000, the CLU carried out a raid that removed 112 children from work in 17 workshops in Cairo.¹²⁷¹ In previous years, the Ministry of Interior had conducted similar raids.¹²⁷²

Egypt ratified ILO Convention 138 on June 9, 1999, and ratified ILO Convention 182 on May 6, 2002.¹²⁷³

¹²⁶⁵ UN Convention on the Rights of Children, *Consideration of Reports: Egypt*, para. 48.

¹²⁶⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Egypt*, 2037-39, Section 6d.

¹²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶⁸ According to these decrees, children under age 15 are prohibited from work involving furnaces or ovens in bakeries, freezing and refrigeration units, fertilizers, acids, or chemicals; work in cement factories, petroleum and distillation labs, or pressurized gas industries; cotton bailing; work involving bleaching, dyeing, and textile printing; or jobs requiring heavy lifting. Children under age 17 are prohibited from employment in a number of areas, including mining, smelting metals, working with explosives, welding, tanneries, fertilizer industries, or butchering animals. See U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6469*.

¹²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁰ The number of inspectors is too small, the training is less than adequate, visits are often too rare, logistical and administrative support is lacking. *Ibid.*

¹²⁷¹ Although the children were returned to their parents under the condition that they would not return to work, no action was taken against the employers. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Egypt*, 2037-39, Section 6d.

¹²⁷² *Ibid.*

¹²⁷³ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited September 15, 2002]; available from <http://www.iloex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.