

In 2021, Egypt made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Prosecutor General's Office announced the opening of eight specialized prosecution offices to combat human trafficking and illegal migration crimes nationwide. Additionally, 121 new human trafficking investigations involving forced child begging were opened as a result of Ministry of Interior campaigns to combat child exploitation. The Egyptian Senate's Manpower Committee also submitted a draft labor law to the Speaker of the Senate for review. A separate proposed amendment would also allow the government to fine business owners 1,000 to 2,000 Egyptian pounds (64 to 128 USD) for violating the minimum age provisions, with double the fine for repeat offenses, and subject the business to the possibility of forced closure for up to 6 months. However, children in Egypt are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in quarrying limestone. The government did not publish data on the enforcement of child labor laws, and programs to address child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Egypt are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in quarrying limestone. (1,2,3,4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Egypt. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.9 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	80.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	5.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		104.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (5)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2014. (6)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of cotton (2,7-10)
	Tending livestock (10,12-15)
	Fishing, activities unknown (13,16)
Industry	Quarrying† limestone (1,2,7,15)
	Making bricks (1,2,7,17)
	Working in carpentry workshops (13,18)
	Working in marble workshops (19,20)
	Construction, activities unknown (7,10,17,21)
Services	Domestic work (2,7,14,17,22)
	Driving tuktuks (2,7,23)
	Repairing automobiles (2,7,24)
	Street work, including selling goods and collecting garbage (2,21,25)

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced domestic work (2,4,16)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,7,26,27)
	Forced begging (2,4,7)
	Trafficking of drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Egyptian children are exploited in forced labor, domestic work, street begging, drug trafficking, quarrying, and agricultural work in Egypt. (4) Some children are forced by their immediate and extended families into sexual exploitation, begging, and domestic and factory labor. (4,27) In addition, some girls are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation under the pretext of temporary marriage, sometimes called "summer marriage," to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Persian Gulf countries. (2,7,26)

In April 2021, a 14-year-old boy was tortured and killed in a poultry slaughterhouse where he worked after reportedly asking to be paid. (28) Additionally, 8 children were killed when the truck transporting them, along with 15 other surviving child laborers, sank in the Nile River. (15) Reporting indicates that child labor is common among Egypt's thousands of poultry farms. (15)







Children in Egypt face barriers to education, including access to identity documentation and the associated costs of attending school. Enrolling in public school requires a certified birth certificate, which some children born out of wedlock in Egypt lack. (2) Children drop out of school because of school-related costs, such as educational supplies, transportation, clothing, and food. (2,9,13,16) A lack of qualified teachers, poorly maintained schools, sanitation issues, classroom density, lack of infrastructure, and bullying in schools also prevent some children from attending school. (2) In rural communities, children face difficulties due to long commuting distances. Girls face additional barriers to education, especially in rural Egypt, including harassment at on the way to school, as well as cultural barriers. (2,16,29)

The government offers refugee children access to the public education system; however, refugee children are subjected to racism and bullying, and face language barriers. In response, some non-Egyptians residing in the country, such as those from Sudan, have organized independent school systems unaffiliated with the government for their children. (2,30)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Egypt has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Egypt's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of some forms of hazardous work such as brickmaking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 64 of the Child Law (31)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 1 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 118 (32)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1 and 2 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 118 (32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (31,33,34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (31,33,34)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 116-bis(a) of the Child Law; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking; Articles 1-4 and 6 of the Law on the Combating of Prostitution (31,34,35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 34 of the Law on Narcotics; Article 65 of the Child Law; Article 2.2 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 118 (31,32,36)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No	15	Ministry of Defense Guidelines on Youth Volunteers in the Armed Forces (37)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Military and National Service (38)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 7-bis(b) of the Child Law (31)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 59(1) of the Child Law; Articles 80 and 238 of the Constitution (31,33)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 54 of the Child Law (31)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (39,40)

In 2021, the Egyptian Senate's Manpower Committee submitted a draft labor law to the Speaker of the Senate for review. (3) The draft law includes a provision to raise the minimum legal age for apprenticeships from 12 to 14 years. A separate proposed amendment would also allow the government to fine business owners 1,000 to 2,000 Egyptian pounds (64 to 128 USD) for violating the minimum age provisions, with double the fine for repeat offenses, and subject the business to the possibility of forced closure for up to 6 months. (3) However, the draft law does not include protections for domestic workers, who will remain vulnerable to exploitation. Additionally, Article 60 of the draft labor law prohibits employers from "requiring" children to work more than 6 hours a day, rather than outright limiting children's work to 6 hours per day. (41)

Egypt's current laws prohibit hazardous occupations and activities for children, including in quarrying, tanning, welding, spraying pesticides, and carrying heavy loads. (32) However, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not include brick production, in which there is evidence of exposure to hazardous temperatures. (2)

The minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment does not meet international standards as it is below age 16. (37)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Manpower	Enforces child labor laws and regulations through its inspection department, including receiving and investigating child labor complaints. Inspectors conduct labor inspections and report violations to the police, which operates under the Ministry of Interior. (2,7) If police investigations confirm criminal activity, cases are subsequently sent to the Prosecutor General's Office, which operates under the Ministry of Justice. (2,7)
Ministry of Interior	Investigates human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Reports violations to the Public Prosecution Office under the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO). (2,7)
Ministry of Justice, Prosecutor General's Office	Prosecutes violations of laws related to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking. (2,7)
Ministry of Local Development	Provides administrative and logistical support for the enforcement of child labor laws. Administers the Child Protection Committees. (2,7)
Administrative Control Authority	Investigates government corruption and human trafficking, and reports violations to the Ministry of Interior, which refers cases for prosecution. (2,42)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Manpower that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (3)	Yes (3)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (2)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (3)

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts specific to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report.

Although the number of labor inspectors is unknown, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Egypt's workforce, which includes more than 28.4 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Egypt would need to employ roughly 1,896 labor inspectors. (43,44)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including in financial resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (2)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (3)

In 2021, Egypt increased its efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and child sexual exploitation. (45) In January, 121 new human trafficking investigations involving forced child begging were opened as a result of Ministry of Interior campaigns to combat child exploitation. (45) Additionally, several prosecutions began for defendants charged with child sexual exploitation and forcing children to beg. (45) Moreover, the Prosecutor General's Office announced the opening of eight specialized prosecution offices to combat human trafficking and illegal migration crimes nationwide. (45)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts specific to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM)	Coordinates enforcement of laws related to child labor, including its worst forms. Provides technical support and training about child labor for the Ministry of Manpower's inspectors. (46) Identifies and monitors at-risk children. Manages two 24-hour hotlines and receives reports of child labor and child trafficking. (16) Active in 2021. (3)
National Steering Committee for the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Families	Coordinates efforts to implement the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Families. Membership includes the Ministries of Manpower, Social Solidarity, Education, Agriculture, Interior, Planning, Finance, Investment and International Cooperation, Trade, Justice, Health, Local Development, and Awqaf, in addition to NCCM, the National Council of Women, the Central Agency for Population and Statistics, the National Media Agency, and Al Azhar University. (2,7) The committee met for the third time in 2021 and reviewed the draft update to the hazardous work list. (3)
National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons (NCCPIM and TIP)	Coordinates efforts to address human trafficking. (47) Led by an ambassador appointed by the Prime Minister, comprises 29 government entities, including the Ministries of Interior and Manpower. (16) Active in 2021. (45)
Child Protection Committees	Coordinate child protection efforts at the local level in partnership with community organizations. Led by the Ministry of Social Solidarity and chaired by local governors in each governorate, with subcommittees at each police station. (16) Active in 2021. (45)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Family (2018–2025)	Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and identify roles of government agencies responsible for assisting child laborers. (2,16) Developed in 2017 and formally adopted in 2018, the strategic objectives of the National Action Plan include expansion of the child labor knowledge base; capacity building of agencies providing support; social protection, with links to existing programs; enhanced education, including vocational education for children; and advocacy and awareness raising. (17) Active in 2021. (3)
National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (2016–2021)	Aimed to maintain referral mechanisms, train law enforcement officials, and address trafficking of street children. (2,16) In 2021, NCCPIM and TIP worked on drafting an updated anti-trafficking strategy. (45)
National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood (2018–2030)	Includes a child labor chapter that aims to promote dialogue on child labor legislation, including updating the hazardous work list; building the capacity of relevant government agencies, such as the Ministry of Manpower and NCCM; developing programs to address child labor; and expanding educational and vocational training opportunities. (2,13) Active in 2021. (3)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Expanding Access to Education and Protection for At-Risk Children in Egypt (2016–2021)	\$32 million, EU-funded project implemented by UNICEF in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and NCCM to expand access to education for 36,000 children, including 6,000 children with disabilities, and to support 15 Child Protection Committees in 15 governorates. (48) Active in 2021. (49)
Solidarity and Dignity Program (<i>Takaful and Karama</i>)†	Funded by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, promotes school attendance and health monitoring for children by providing income supplements to poor families. (2,13) This partnership between the government and WFP, UNDP, UNICEF, and the World Bank offers income supplements to poor families under the conditions that household children maintain at least an 80 percent attendance record in school and that mothers and children under age 6 provide demonstrable evidence of having been seen at health clinics four times per year. (2) Active in 2021. (50)
Children without Shelter†	Ministry of Social Solidarity-operated shelters for survivors of human trafficking, child survivors of trafficking and forced labor, and other vulnerable individuals. The Dar as-Salam shelter, operated by NCCM and the NGO Face, provides social services, including psychological counseling and health services. (51) Mobile units in 10 governorates work to reintegrate children with their families or place them in foster care. (52)
ACCEL Africa (2018–2022)	Aims to eliminate child labor in the cotton, textiles, and ready-made-garments sectors; implemented by ILO and funded by the Dutch government. ACCEL Africa-Egypt partners with the Ministries of Manpower, Education, Social Solidarity, and Agriculture, as well as NCCM, to improve policy, legal, and institutional frameworks. (53) In 2021, the government cooperated with the ACCEL project to train labor inspectors on the inspection checklist. (3)

† Program is funded by the Government of Egypt.

Although Egypt has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly for children involved in commercial sexual exploitation and quarrying limestone.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Egypt (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the types of work that children perform in Egypt that expose them to hazardous temperatures, such as brick production, are prohibited for children under age 18.	2017 – 2021
	Ensure that the law establishes age 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.	2019 – 2021
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts.	2011 – 2021
	Ensure the number of labor inspectors in Egypt meets the ILO's technical guidance.	2018 – 2021
	Increase the number of inspectors receiving training on child labor policies.	2019 – 2021
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts.	2011 – 2021
Social Programs	Ensure universal access to free public education, especially for girls and refugee children, by addressing the cost of school fees, supplies, violence in schools, lack of documentation, and other barriers to education.	2010 – 2021
	Expand programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation and in quarrying limestone.	2010 – 2021
	Expand the <i>Takaful and Karama</i> program to ensure that children are able to stay in school.	2020 – 2021

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