

In 2022, Lebanon made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In June 2022, the United Nations Children's Fund expanded a national grant for children called Haddi. The program provides cash assistance to children at risk of child labor and child marriage, and to children with disabilities, children in non-formal education, and children needing nutrition support. However, children in Lebanon are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced labor in agriculture. Children also engage in child labor in the production of potatoes and tobacco. Furthermore, government officials continued to indicate that governmental funding is insufficient to properly carry out their duties. In addition, Lebanese law prohibits inspectors from inspecting informal workplaces, where the majority of child labor occurs, and social programs targeting child labor remained insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Lebanon. Data on key indicators on children's work and education 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 | Unavailable |
| Attending School (%)          | 5 to 14 | Unavailable |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | Unavailable |
| Primary Completion Rate (%)   |         | Unavailable |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (1)  
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2021. (2)

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 potatoes, olives, beans, figs, eggplants, and cannabis (3-11)     |
|                 | Production of tobacco† (10)  |
|                 | Fishing, activities unknown (4,7,11)   |
| Industry        | Construction,† including carpentry and welding† (3-7,11,12)  |
|                 | Making handicrafts (4,11,13,14)  |
|                 | Working in slaughterhouses† and butcheries (13)  |
| Services        | Street work,† including begging, street vending, portering, and scavenging garbage† (3,4,6,7,11,15-19) |
|                 | Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles† (4,11,13,16,19)  |
|                 | Domestic work† (4,7,11,13)   |
|                 | Collecting waste materials, including scrap metal (11,13)  |
|                 | Food service,† including working as waiters (5)  |
|                 | Working in small shops and groceries (4,5,7,11,13,16,19)   |

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

| Sector/Industry                         | Activity  |
|---|---|
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Use in illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs, and arms dealing (4,6,11,12,16) |
|   | Forced begging (9,12,15,16,20)  |
|   | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,11-13,21)                       |
|   | Forced labor in agriculture (3,5,6,12,13)   |

† 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.

Child labor in Lebanon is largely concentrated in agriculture, wholesale and retail, and street vending. (11) Children working in agriculture are exposed to harmful chemicals and long hours in the sun as they work mostly as farmhands. (10) Children also work in collecting garbage and scrap metal. (11,13) Child labor is prevalent among refugee communities in Lebanon. (14) An estimated 75 percent of Syrian refugee children working in the Bekaa Valley do so in agriculture. (22)







NGO reporting indicates that children are used in smuggling illicit fuel across the border with Syria. (11) Children, particularly Syrian refugee children, are forced to beg throughout the country. (4,20) Children involved in street begging are at increased vulnerability for further exploitation and abuse. (11) Syrian refugee children are also subjected to forced labor in agriculture. (3,5,13) In addition, some Syrian refugee children and their families in the Bekaa Valley are kept in bonded labor in agriculture to pay for makeshift dwellings. (23)

Both Lebanese and Syrian refugee children face barriers to accessing education because of public sector strikes, which include teachers. Additionally, Syrian refugee children face other difficulties, such as the cost of transportation and supplies, fear of passing checkpoints or of violence, lack of private sanitation facilities for girls, discrimination, bullying, corporal punishment, and a different curriculum in Lebanon than in their country of origin. (5-7,11,24) In 2022, the government continued its policy of admitting all refugee children regardless of whether they have the required documentation for school enrollment. (11) However, the public school system in Lebanon lacks the capacity to accommodate the large number of school-age Syrian refugee children. (14) Despite the official policy of schools being open to all, in practice, a small number of refugees have been denied access to schools. (6) In addition, children with two Lebanese parents are sometimes prioritized in school enrollment over children with a non-Lebanese father. (25) Students without transcripts are only eligible to receive a certificate, rather than a diploma, causing some undocumented students to drop out. (6) Children with disabilities, including refugee children, were unable to attend school due to insufficient accessibility or inadequacy of facilities, lack of specialized facilities, or unavailability of tailored services for children with disabilities. (26)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Lebanon has ratified most 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 Lebanon’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

| Standard  | Meets International Standards | Age | Legislation  |
|---|-------------------------------|-----|--|
| Minimum Age for Work  | No                            | 14  | Article 22 of the Labor Code (27)  |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work  | Yes                           | 18  | Articles 1 and 2 and Annex 2 of Decree No. 8987 (28)                                     |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | Yes                           |     | Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (28)  |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor   | Yes                           |     | Article 8 of Decree No. 3855; Articles 569 and 586.1 of the Penal Code (29,30)           |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking  | Yes                           |     | Articles 586.1 and 586.5 of the Penal Code (30)  |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children                     | Yes                           |     | Articles 506, 523, 525–527, 586.1, and 586.5 of the Penal Code; Decree No. 8987 (28,30)  |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities                           | Yes                           |     | Articles 586.1, 586.5, and 618 of the Penal Code; Article 13 of the Law on Drugs (30,31) |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment                          | Yes                           | 18  | Article 30 of the National Defense Law (32)  |
| Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military         | N/A*                          |     |  |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups                 | Yes                           |     | Article 586.1 of the Penal Code; Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (28,30)                      |
| Compulsory Education Age  | Yes                           | 15‡ | Article 49 of the Education Law (33)   |
| Free Public Education   | Yes                           |     | Article 49 of the Education Law (33)   |

\* Country has no conscription (34)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (33)

The Labor Code applies only to workers who perform work in industrial, trading, or agricultural enterprises and excludes domestic work and non-industrial, non-trade agriculture. (27) This does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age for work. In addition, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (33)

### 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.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

| Organization/Agency            | Role & Activities  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Ministry of Labor (MOL)        | Enforces child labor laws through desk review and workplace inspections. (11) MOL’s Child Labor Unit acts as government focal point for child labor issues and raises public awareness about child labor and the right to education. Receives complaints of child labor violations on its Child Labor Unit hotline. (11) According to local observers, MOL’s hotline is not fully functional and works for a limited number of hours on official workdays. It does not have a system to register incoming calls. (16)  |
| Internal Security Forces (ISF) | Enforce laws regarding child labor through the Anti-Human Trafficking and Moral Crimes Unit. (11) The ISF’s anti-trafficking unit is reportedly underfunded and understaffed, and it has no field offices outside Beirut. (3)  |
| Ministry of Justice (MOJ)      | Prosecutes violations of the Penal Code in coordination with ISF. Maintains general data and statistics on criminal violations involving child labor. (11) Refers at-risk children to shelters and protection services. Coordinates, through signed agreements, with civil society organizations to provide social workers who oversee court proceedings involving juveniles and deliver services to them, including children engaged in begging. (11) MOJ has stated that a lack of sufficient human resources hindered the government’s ability to address child labor. (14) |

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### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of a mechanism to assess civil penalties.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement  | 2021        | 2022         |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding   | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors   | 34 (35)     | Unknown (11) |
| Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties  | No (36)     | No (36)      |
| Training for Labor Inspectors Provided   | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite                                  | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found   | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed                  | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected                        | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Routine Inspections Conducted  | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Routine Inspections Targeted   | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted  | Yes (36)    | Yes (36)     |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted  | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists   | Yes (4)     | Yes (11)     |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (4)     | Yes (11)     |

Lebanese law prohibits inspectors from inspecting informal workplaces, where the majority of child labor occurs. (6) In August 2022, Lebanese civil servants went on an open-ended strike over low pay and poor working conditions. (11) Due to the strike, civil servants are only showing up to work once or twice a week, including labor inspectors who had already curtailed the number of inspections they conducted in 2021. (7,11) Reporting continues to indicate that labor inspectorate funding is insufficient for inspectors to properly carry out their duties. (11,24) According to local observers, the MOL's hotline is not fully functional and works for a limited number of hours on official workdays. It does not have a system to register incoming calls. (16) Research also indicates that Lebanon does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (11,37) In addition, the government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement  | 2021        | 2022         |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| Training for Criminal Investigators Provided  | Yes (4)     | Yes (11)     |
| Number of Investigations  | 46 (4)      | 77 (11)      |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated  | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Convictions   | Unknown (4) | Unknown (11) |
| Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor            | Unknown (4) | 0 (11)       |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (4)     | Yes (11)     |

The government did not provide information on the number of prosecutions initiated or number of convictions. In 2022, an NGO provided additional training to the Internal Security Forces (ISF), local police, and municipalities to help authorities address the needs of street children. (11)

### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism 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 lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

**Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

| Coordinating Body                          | Role & Activities  |
|--|--|
| National Steering Committee on Child Labor | Raises awareness; coordinates efforts among government agencies; establishes standard practices; develops, enforces, and recommends changes; and ensures that government agencies comply with the law. Led by the MOL, includes representatives from six other ministries and other institutions and international organizations. (14) Research was unable to determine whether the National Steering Committee on Child Labor was active during the reporting period. |

### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including lack of a comprehensive policy on eliminating child labor.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

| Policy   | Description & Activities   |
|--|--|
| National Action Plan to End Street Begging by Children   | Seeks to end child begging by ensuring legal protection for street children, building capacity to protect street children, rehabilitating and reintegrating street children, and conducting outreach regarding the problem. (11)   |
| Policy for the Protection of Students in the School Environment                                | Protects children's right to education and promotes non-violence in schools by establishing mechanisms to receive complaints of violence, mistreatment, and bullying, and addresses those cases while safeguarding children's privacy. Conducts training for school staff and officials on identifying risk factors. (39,40) |
| Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon | Provides the policy framework for the prevention of children's involvement in armed conflict. (41)   |

Although Lebanon has adopted policies to address children's participation in street begging and armed conflict, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, as the National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor expired in 2019. In addition, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Lebanon during the reporting period.

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating 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 & Activities   |
|-----------------|--|
| UNICEF Programs | UNICEF implements several programs with the Ministry of Social Affairs to address child labor through interventions. (11) In June 2022, UNICEF expanded a national grant for children called <i>Haddi</i> . The program provides cash assistance to children at risk of child labor and child marriage, and to children with disabilities, children in non-formal education, and children needing nutrition support. (11) The program pays between \$40 and \$80 to Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian families. Since <i>Haddi's</i> inception as an emergency program in 2021, it has paid out over \$43 million to vulnerable families and reached over 130,000 children. (42) Additionally, UNICEF continued to implement a 2019 program to reduce child labor in Tripoli. (11) |

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

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Although Lebanon has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in construction and forced child labor in agriculture. Moreover, some officials are reluctant to remove children trafficked by their families due to a lack of adequate social services. (9)

## 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 Lebanon (Table I I).

**Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

| Area                | Suggested Action  | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|
| Legal Framework     | Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.   | 2013 – 2022       |
|                     | Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.  | 2018 – 2022       |
|                     | Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including informal workers, domestic workers, and all agricultural workers.   | 2019 – 2022       |
| Enforcement         | Ensure that there is an adequate mechanism to receive and log child labor complaints and refer them for investigation.  | 2017 – 2022       |
|                     | Track and publish information on labor law enforcement on an annual basis.  | 2009 – 2022       |
|                     | Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties and allow inspections of informal workplaces.   | 2015 – 2022       |
|                     | Provide Ministry of Labor inspectors with proper funding and resources.   | 2011 – 2022       |
|                     | Employ at least 120 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 1.8 million people.  | 2016 – 2022       |
|                     | Publish information on the number of prosecutions initiated and number of convictions for violations of criminal laws.  | 2009 – 2022       |
|                     | Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Internal Security Forces' anti-human trafficking unit, have the necessary funding and staff to investigate and prosecute criminal cases of child labor in accordance with the law and establish field offices outside of Beirut.                       | 2017 – 2022       |
| Coordination        | Ensure that the National Steering Committee on Child Labor meets on a regular basis and coordinates activities to address child labor.  | 2019 – 2022       |
| Government Policies | Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor during the reporting period and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis.  | 2021 – 2022       |
|                     | Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as a new National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.   | 2020 – 2022       |
| Social Programs     | Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.   | 2020 – 2022       |
|                     | Ensure access to public education for all children, including refugees, by improving transportation, addressing bullying and harassment, accommodating students with disabilities, ending corporal punishment, improving facilities, and accommodating students coming from a different curriculum than in Lebanon. | 2010 – 2022       |
|                     | Expand programs, including social services for human trafficking survivors, to fully address the extent of child labor, including in construction and forced labor in agriculture.  | 2013 – 2022       |

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