

In 2012, Egypt made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government released results of the 2010 national survey on child labor, prosecuted the first cases of child trafficking under the 2010 Combating Human Trafficking law, established a referral mechanism for trafficking victims, and provided trainings on child labor and trafficking to officials. However, the Government has not addressed the gaps in its legal and enforcement framework to protect children, especially children working in hazardous agriculture and domestic service. Children continue to be engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in these sectors.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	6.7 (993,417)
Attending School	6-14 yrs.	88.1
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	6.3
Primary Completion Rate		98.5

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2009, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics, from DHS Survey, 2005.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Egypt are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in hazardous agriculture and domestic service.(3, 4) The majority of working children are in the agriculture sector, some in hazardous activities.(3, 5, 6) Such children may work seasonally or year-round, often working with various crops throughout the year.(3, 5) In particular, seasonal child labor is found in cotton fields, where children remove pests and harvest the crops.(5, 7-9) There is limited evidence that children also work harvesting onions and radishes.(7) Some children working in agriculture are reported to work long hours in extreme temperatures. These children may not receive their wages and may be threatened or physically abused by their employers.(5, 7, 8, 10-12) Children's work in agriculture sometimes involves using dangerous machinery and tools, spraying hazardous pesticides or inhaling gas fumes or dust. Their work in agriculture often involves bending down over for long periods of time or carrying heavy loads.(3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13) Children also work tending livestock,



and may suffer injuries such as being bitten, butted, gored, or trampled by animals.(5, 14, 15)

Children are exploited in domestic service, some in conditions of forced labor.(12, 16-18) Although reliable data are not available on the number of child domestic workers across Egypt, qualitative studies in Egypt suggest that it is a common practice and has the potential to expose children to long hours of work; restrictions on movement, nonpayment of wages, dangerous activities; and physical, psychological, and sexual exploitation by their employers.(16-23)

Although information is limited, there are reports that children are also found working in dangerous occupations such as fishing; they may work long hours, perform physically demanding tasks, and face dangers such as drowning.(24, 25) In addition, limited evidence indicates that children work in limestone quarrying, which exposes them the risk of serious injury or death from rock-cutting machines and respiratory ailments from limestone dust.(4, 9) Some evidence suggests that children perform hazardous work in brick production and construction.(3, 4, 6, 9, 18, 26-28)

Limited reports indicate an increase in the number of children working on the streets since the 2011 revolution.(6) Street children are at particular risk of forced begging, commercial sexual exploitation, and trafficking for sexual exploitation.(4, 6, 12, 29-32) They survive by peddling on the streets, begging, shoe-shining, collecting garbage, and carrying goods for a fee, but information regarding specific hazards associated with these activities is unknown.(26, 28, 29) In addition, reports indicate that children, particularly those

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working on the streets, may be exploited as paid fighters during the violent clashes since the 2011 revolution began.(33) During the politically motivated battles, children risk injury or death.(33)

Children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Child sex tourism exists in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor.(12, 20, 34) In return for payments, some parents sell girls into temporary (or “summer”) marriages to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Gulf countries.(12, 29, 31, 34-37) However, reliable data are not available on the number of children exploited through such temporary marriages.

Although most Egyptian child workers are not victims of trafficking, some are trafficked internally, usually to urban centers and tourist destinations for domestic service, agricultural labor, temporary marriages, and sex tourism.(12, 17, 29, 31, 32, 34) Street children are especially vulnerable to internal trafficking for forced begging or forced commercial sexual exploitation.(12, 37)

The ongoing political transition and changes in leadership, heightened by an economic crisis and frequent violence and uprisings, has contributed to a difficult operating environment for efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor.(6, 34)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In December 2012, Egypt’s new Constitution was approved through a referendum vote and was signed into law.(34, 38) Similarly to the previous Constitution, the 2012 Constitution upholds existing laws and prohibits forced labor, child labor under the age of compulsory education (15 years), and work that interferes with a child’s education.(39)

The Child Law sets the minimum age for regular employment at 15, and at 12 for seasonal employment.(30, 40, 41) The Labor Law allows children as young as age 12 to work as apprentices.(42, 43) It protects working children by limiting their working hours and mandating that they be allowed shift breaks. However, the Labor Law explicitly excludes domestic work, work in family businesses, and work in agriculture from legal restrictions and protections for children, including protections establishing a minimum work age and limiting work hours.(10, 12, 19, 22, 30, 31, 34, 42, 44)

Children under age 18 are barred from 44 specific hazardous occupations under the Ministry of Manpower and Migration’s (MOMM) Decree 118.(45) These prohibited occupations include working underground in mines and quarries, welding, working in tanneries, and lifting heavy objects. However,

some dangerous tasks that children perform are not explicitly prohibited by this legislation, particularly in the sectors of agriculture and domestic service. For instance, although children are prohibited from preparing or spraying pesticides, they are not prohibited from working in the crops just after the pesticides have been applied.(5, 7, 10) Decree 118 also prohibits children under age 16 to perform work that exposes them to physical, psychological, or sexual exploitation, or to chemical, biological, or mechanical dangers; but it does not define these terms.(45) Because these protections apply only to children under age 16, children between the ages 16 and 18 may not be as well protected from hazardous work.

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	15
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Child Law and Penal Code criminalize some worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, sexual exploitation, and pornography. An amendment to the Civil Status Law sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 to prevent young girls from being sexually exploited through temporary marriages.(32, 40, 41)

The Law Regarding Combating Human Trafficking criminalizes trafficking and mandates severe penalties for those convicted of trafficking children. The Trafficking Law broadly defines trafficking to include the exploitation of children, including prostitution and pornography, begging, and forced labor. It recognizes a trafficked person as a victim and requires the Government to provide protection and assistance to victims of trafficking.(32, 46)

Military conscription is mandatory for men in Egypt at age 18, according to the 1980 Military and National Service Act. Military conscription is voluntary beginning at age 16.(47)

The Child Law provides for compulsory and free education at the primary and secondary (in Egypt known as “preparatory”) stages for a total of 9 years, from approximately ages 6 to 15, depending on when a child starts school.(6, 41) The costs of teacher fees, books, and uniforms are prohibitive for some families; some children either drop out of school or, most often in the case of girls, are not sent to school in the first place.(8, 10, 30, 48)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Government did not have an active mechanism to address the worst forms of child labor during the reporting period.(4) In the past, the MOMM had organized a national committee to coordinate government efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor and to develop a National Action Plan.(19) However, due to the political transition, the committee appears to have been dormant since 2011. The MOMM, in coordination with the ILO, began plans to reactivate the committee in 2013.(49) The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) is the focal point to coordinate the National Protection Program. This Program identifies and monitors children at risk, including those vulnerable to exploitative labor.(19, 50) Child protection committees are organized at the governorate level, with subcommittees at each police station.(19, 40, 51) The child protection committees have not yet been established in all governorates, and research has not shown that established committees have remained active throughout the year or received sufficient training and resources.(49, 52) The NCCM also oversees a committee comprising various Ministries, international agencies, and civil society organizations to address the issue of domestic workers.(52, 53)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs leads the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons, which includes representatives from all relevant Ministries, including MOMM and NCCM.(34, 54) The Committee is responsible for implementing the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking; aligning national legislation, policies, and programs with international conventions and obligations; collecting data; reporting on trends and efforts to combat trafficking; and coordinating the efforts of the Government and NGOs to combat trafficking in persons (TIP).(32, 46, 54, 55) In addition, the NCCM leads the Anti-

Trafficking Unit and the Combating Trafficking in Children Unit, which collaborates with the National Coordinating Committee to develop policies and programs and coordinate activities to combat trafficking of children.(20, 34, 56)

The MOMM is responsible for enforcing child labor laws and regulations.(19) Labor inspectors from the MOMM have the authority to inspect businesses, industrial facilities, and commercial agricultural enterprises for legal compliance with child labor regulations.(6, 19) Information on the number of labor inspectors, the budget, and resources allocated for labor inspections is not made publicly available.(4) Reports indicate that fines, when assessed, for child labor violations were often too low to serve as a deterrent to repeat violations. The MOMM reported conducting approximately 9,000 inspections targeting child labor during the year, although the quality and effectiveness of these inspections in deterring violations is uncertain.(4) During the year, NGOs and MOMM officials provided some trainings to labor inspectors on child labor.(49)

The MOMM operates a child labor monitoring database, originally created through a project funded by USDOL, to track children working or at risk of worst forms of child labor. With NGO support, the MOMM is training regional staff members to use the database to upload data on children at risk, and to refer children and families to available social services.(49)

There is no enforcement mechanism to protect children working on private, noncommercial farms, in unregistered businesses, or in private homes as domestic workers.(4)

The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and the Public Prosecutor’s Office enforce laws and regulations prohibiting trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The MOI has established a special unit to combat child trafficking.(19) The Public Prosecutor’s Office reported that the first prosecutions were made under the 2010 Combating Human Trafficking Law, including five convictions of trafficking offenders. Four of the traffickers were convicted in July 2012 for operating a criminal network to exploit girls and women for prostitution, after forcing three young women into contractual temporary marriages.(34) Another trafficking offender was convicted and sentenced in November 2012 for kidnapping and selling a child for exploitation purposes, although the details of the case are not clear.(34) The Government does not make information publicly available regarding the investigations and prosecutions of cases involving trafficking in persons or commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the sale of young girls into temporary marriages.(57)

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During the year, the NCCM implemented a new national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking. Trafficking victims identified by police, NGOs, or other entities were referred to the NCCM for service referrals, including medical, psychological, and legal services, and the provision of shelter. Under this new system, the NCCM systematically documented cases of trafficking and tracked information about the victim(s), including their age, the type of exploitation, and the referral mechanism and services provided.(34) The NCCM provided protection and assistance to 77 child victims of trafficking in 2012. However, this data does not include services provided to others not explicitly identified as TIP victims.(34, 57)

Past reports indicated that trafficking victims were often treated as criminals and they documented cases of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse of child victims by enforcement officials.(12, 20) Recent reports indicate that while the criminalization of victims does happen, it is the result of a lack of information by enforcement officials.(34) During the year, the NCCM, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and other agencies conducted trainings for 1,023 officials on trafficking victim identification and awareness of trafficking legislation.(34)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The first National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor aims to identify vulnerable children and remove them from hazardous labor.(19, 51) Little progress has been made to finalize a national action plan to implement the Strategy. However, with support from the ILO, the MOMM made efforts to convene stakeholders to refocus on the initiative in early 2013.(49)

The Government's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the ILO, and the MOMM conducted a comprehensive survey of child labor in Egypt in 2010 and publicly released the complete report in September 2012.(3, 51)

The NCCM's Combating Human Trafficking Unit, with MOMM, implements the Together for a Decent Domestic Work for Domestic Workers, Especially Children and Mothers initiative. Objectives of the initiative include assessing the regulatory framework on domestic work, compiling research on domestic work, addressing enforcement gaps, and raising awareness. Information on the activities carried out during the reporting period is not available.(22)

The National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking lays out prioritized and coordinated activities to be implemented between January 2011 and January 2013, and identifies the

relevant Ministries responsible for their execution.(55) In December 2012, the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons released its annual report and an evaluation of the first National Plan of Action. The updated National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking has been drafted and is scheduled to be made public in 2013, although further information was not available as of the writing of this report.(34) The second Plan addresses gaps and challenges identified during the evaluation of the first Plan, including the creation of a victim assistance fund and a statistical data management system. The second Plan prioritizes combating the trafficking of street children.(34) In addition, the National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Trafficking in Children 2009-2013 calls for coordination of relevant activities between Ministries and NGOs.(58)

The Government also implements the National Plan of Action for Children, led by the NCCM and with support from UNICEF.(20, 53, 59) The Plan includes strategies on child labor, street children, and poverty alleviation.(59)

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government participates in a USDOL-funded, \$9.5 million project, which will last from 2010 to 2014 and aims to provide services to 16,000 children engaged in or at-risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor in agriculture in Upper Egypt and the Delta region.(49, 60) In 2012, the project provided services to 9,451 children.(49) Through the project, children receive access to education and apprenticeship opportunities, and their households receive livelihood support to address the root causes of child labor. The Ministry of Education (MOE) formally approved and agreed to support the community schools and MOMM officials worked to establish apprenticeship services in each project area during the reporting period. In addition, the MOMM continues to pilot the national child labor monitoring system with support from the project.(49) While this project is important for serving vulnerable children in targeted areas, it is not sufficient to meet the needs of the large number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor across Egypt, especially those working in agriculture and domestic service.

In addition, the MOMM reported implementing awareness-raising campaigns to prevent child labor during the year; however, specific details on these campaigns is not available.(4)

The National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking includes multiple programs that are implemented by government agencies and international organizations.(55) The

Government is participating in programs to provide services to street children in urban areas and to other child victims of trafficking.(12, 29, 31, 55) The Government provides the space and operates shelters in Cairo for victims of trafficking, including children.(12, 34, 61) With assistance from USAID and in coordination with the NCCM, the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs operates a shelter in Cairo for at-risk children, including street children engaged in worst forms of child labor.(12, 50, 61) The shelter provides housing, medical, psychological, legal, and educational services as well as vocational training for children.(61) The Ministry of Health helps operate a care center for trafficking victims, and the NCCM operates a 12-bed shelter for women and children who are victims of trafficking.(29, 31, 34, 61) These programs appear to be focused on urban areas and may not be of sufficient geographic scope to reach many child victims.

The NCCM works closely with NGO-run shelters for street children and girls who are trafficking victims. The NCCM's anti-trafficking unit is mandated to increase awareness about trafficking in Egypt and to provide services to victims of forced labor and trafficking, including children.(55) During the year, the NCCM developed and disseminated a guide for identifying and providing services to victims of trafficking.(34) The NCCM and the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons conducted teacher trainings to raise awareness among children about the risks of human trafficking.(34) In addition, the NCCM

manages a 24-hour child help hotline, which can be used in cases of child exploitation.(31, 32, 59) Research found no evidence of programs to address child trafficking through temporary marriages.

The Government of Egypt is implementing social, educational, and poverty reduction programs. Through the Education Strategic Plan 2007-2012 School Improvement Program, the MOE is improving access to education by establishing rural community schools, improving learning environments, reducing violence, eliminating corporal punishment in the classroom, and establishing standards for teachers.(62) Information on outcomes of the Plan is not available. It is not known whether the Plan will be extended beyond 2012, even though many children continue to remain out of school.

The Government provides substantial food subsidies to citizens, including for sugar, rice, oil, and wheat. Up to 70 percent of the population benefits from subsidized fortified wheat bread through a program with the WFP.(62-64) The Government also provides other social protection programs, including a conditional cash transfer to provide cash incentives for mothers to ensure that children receive necessary medical care and attend school.(59, 65)

The question of whether each of these programs has had an impact on the reduction of child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Egypt:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Establish legal restrictions and protections such as a minimum age for work and limited working hours for children involved in family businesses, domestic service, and agriculture.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Ensure that laws to prohibit children's involvement in hazardous work and work activities that expose them to physical, psychological, or sexual exploitation, or to physical, chemical, biological, or mechanical dangers are comprehensive to protect children from these potential dangers.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Ensure that critical coordination and enforcement mechanisms to protect against child labor are reactivated and continue to operate during this period of government transition.	2011, 2012
	Establish child protection committees in all governorates, and ensure that they receive training and resources.	2011, 2012

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Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Coordination and Enforcement	Make enforcement data on labor inspections and child labor violations publicly available.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Increase child labor inspection capacity to effectively investigate child labor violations.	2012
	Develop monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to protect children working as domestic servants, in agriculture on private farms, or in unregistered businesses outside the purview of the labor inspectorate.	2012
	Ensure that victims of trafficking, particularly children, are not treated as criminals and do not experience abuse by enforcement officials.	2012
	Ensure that data on government enforcement of trafficking in persons and commercial sexual exploitation of children, including data related to investigations of children sold into temporary marriages, are made publicly available.	2011, 2012
Policies	Implement the objectives of the First National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor, including convening the steering committee to finalize, publish, and implement the national action plan to eliminate child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Expand policies to guarantee access to free public education for all children, including by addressing prohibitive costs of school fees and supplies that prevent many students from completing their education, particularly girls.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Conduct research on the prevalence of children engaged in domestic labor.	2012
Social Programs	Develop or expand programs addressing the worst forms of child labor, with a special focus on children involved in dangerous agriculture and domestic service.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Expand programs to prevent and protect children from trafficking and sexual exploitation, including girls exploited through temporary marriages.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Extend the Education Strategic Plan beyond 2012 and expand activities to provide access to free education for all children.	2012
	Assess the impact that existing social, education, and poverty reduction programs may have on child labor, in the interest of expanding effective programs to further reduce the worst forms of child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012

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