

# Egypt

*In 2011, Egypt made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government participated in donor-funded programs to address trafficking and child labor, conducted trainings for government and civil society officials and opened shelters in Cairo for child victims of trafficking and for street children. However, Egypt has not addressed the gaps in the legal and enforcement framework to protect children, especially in agriculture and domestic service and children continue to be engaged in the worst forms of child labor 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, 2012.(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 dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service.(2) The majority of working children are in the agriculture sector, many in dangerous activities.(4, 5) Such children may work seasonally or year-round and often rotate between various crops throughout the year. In particular, seasonal child labor is common in cotton fields, where children remove pests and harvest the crops.(6-8) There is limited evidence that children work in harvesting onions and radishes.(6, 7, 9) Children working in agriculture are reported to work long hours in extreme temperatures, may not receive their wages and may be threatened or physically abused by their employers.(6-10) Children's work in agriculture commonly involves using dangerous machinery and tools, spraying hazardous pesticides, inhaling gas fumes or dust, bending for long periods of time or carrying heavy loads.(7-9)

Children are also exploited in domestic service.(11-13) Although reliable data is 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, dangerous activities and physical, psychological and sexual exploitation by their employers.(11-14)

Limited evidence suggests that the worst forms of child labor are used in the production of bricks, glass and leather.(13, 15-17) Children are also engaged in dangerous occupations such as fishing, blacksmithing, construction, carpentry, mechanical repair and mining.(4, 15) In addition, limited evidence indicates that children work in limestone quarrying, where they risk serious injury or death from rock cutting machines and respiratory ailments from limestone dust.(18)

Many children work on the streets and are exposed to a variety of hazards that may include severe weather, criminal elements or traffic accidents.(19) Limited reports indicate an increase in the number of children on the streets since the 2011 revolution.(4) Street children are at particular risk of forced begging, prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation.(4, 10, 20-25) They survive by peddling on the streets, begging, shoe-shining, collecting garbage and carrying goods for a fee.(15, 17, 20)

Children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Child sex tourism exists in Cairo, Alexandria and Luxor.(10) In return for payments, some parents sell girls into temporary "summer" marriages to wealthy foreign men.(10, 20, 22, 25-27)

Egyptian children are trafficked internally, often to urban centers and tourist destinations. Street children are especially vulnerable to internal trafficking for forced begging or

prostitution.(25) Internal child trafficking also occurs for domestic service, agricultural labor, temporary marriages and sex tourism.(10, 12, 20, 22, 23)

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Child Law sets the minimum age for regular employment at 15, and at 12 for seasonal employment.(21, 28, 29) The Labor Law allows children as young as age 12 to work as apprentices.(30, 31) It protects working children by limiting working hours and mandating shift breaks. However, the law explicitly excludes domestic work, work in family businesses, and children working in agriculture from legal restrictions and protections, including minimum age and limited work hours.(9, 11, 14, 21, 22, 30, 32)

	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

Children under age 18 are barred from 44 specific hazardous occupations under the Ministry of Manpower and Migration's (MOMM) Decree 118.(33) 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 missing from this legislation, particularly in the sectors of agriculture and domestic service. For instance, while children are prohibited from preparing or spraying pesticides, they are not prohibited from working in the crops just after pesticides have been applied.(6, 7, 9) Decree 118 also prohibits children under age 16 from work that exposes them to physical, psychological or sexual exploitation, or to chemical, biological or mechanical

dangers, but it does not define these terms.(33) Children between the ages of 16 through 18 are not protected from these forms of danger and exploitation.

The Child Law and Penal Code criminalize some worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, sexual exploitation and pornography.(23, 28, 29) An amendment to the Civil Status Law sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 to prevent young girls from the sexual exploitation of temporary marriages.(23, 28, 29)

The Law Regarding Combating Human Trafficking criminalizes trafficking and mandates more severe penalties for those convicted of trafficking children than in previous legislation. The Trafficking Law broadly defines trafficking to cover all forms of exploitation, including child 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.(23, 34)

Military conscription is mandatory for men in Egypt at age 18, according to the 1980 Military and National Service Act, and upheld in the 2011 Provisional Constitution.(35, 36)

The Child Law provides for compulsory and free education at the primary and preparatory stages.(4, 29) Compulsory education is mandated for a total of 9 years, from approximately ages 6 to 15, depending on when a child starts school.(4) However, in practice, the costs of teacher fees, books, and uniforms are prohibitive for many families; some children, mostly girls, either drop out of school or are not sent to school.(7-9, 21, 37)

In 2011, Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the transitional ruling body following President Mubarak's resignation, suspended the Constitution and enacted an amended Constitutional Declaration.(21, 36, 38-40) This Declaration does not include some of the original provisions of the Constitution, including the right to an education.(41) However, the Declaration maintains the validity of Egypt's laws, therefore upholding the education provisions in the Child Law as well as the Labor Law and Penal Code described earlier.(36)

## Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The MOMM maintains a national committee to coordinate government efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor and to develop a National Action Plan.(14) After the Ministry of State for Family and Population (MSFP) was dissolved following the revolution in 2011, the National Council for

Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), which was part of the MSFP, became the designated focal point to coordinate the National Protection Program. This Program identifies and monitors children at risk of exploitative labor.(14, 24) Child protection committees are organized at the governorate level, with subcommittees at each police station.(14, 28, 42) The child protection committees have not yet been established in all governorates, and research has not shown that established committees remained active throughout the year or received sufficient training and resources.(40, 43)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs leads the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking, which includes representatives from all relevant Ministries.(44) The Committee, activated in 2010, is responsible for implementing the National Action Plan, aligning national legislation, policies, and programs with international conventions and obligations, collecting data and reporting on the trends and efforts to combat trafficking, and coordinating the efforts of the Government and NGO to combat trafficking in persons.(23, 34, 44, 45) In addition, the NCCM leads the Combating Trafficking in Children Unit which collaborates with the National Coordinating Committee to develop policies and programs and to coordinate activities to combat trafficking of children.(46)

The NCCM established a committee made up of various Ministries, international agencies and civil society organizations to address the issue of child domestic workers.(43) However, information on the activities or achievements of this committee was not available for the reporting period.

The MOMM is responsible for enforcing child labor laws and regulations.(14) Labor inspectors from the MOMM have the authority to inspect businesses, industrial facilities and commercial agricultural enterprises for legal compliance with child labor regulations.(4, 14, 32) Research has not identified the number or outcomes of labor inspections in 2011.

The MOMM operates a child labor monitoring system database and continues to mainstream it at the national level.(47)

The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and the Public Prosecutor's Office enforce laws and regulations prohibiting trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.(14) The MOI has established a special unit to combat child trafficking.(14) There is no evidence of publicly available data on Government enforcement of trafficking in persons or commercial sexual exploitation of children, particularly concerning the sale of young girls into temporary marriages.

## **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.(14, 42, 47) A tripartite steering committee was established to translate the Strategy into a national action plan.(14, 42, 47) However, due to the political upheavals in 2011, the national action plan has not been finalized, and research did not confirm whether, or to what degree the Strategy was implemented during the year.(24, 42, 47)

The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the government statistical agency, ILO and the MOMM, conducted a comprehensive survey of child labor in Egypt in 2010.(42, 47) CAPMAS released preliminary results of the prevalence and trends of child labor in Egypt in 2011; however, the completed study has not yet been published.(47)

The National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking lays out prioritized and coordinated activities from 2011 to 2013, and identifies the relevant Ministries responsible for their execution.(45) In addition, the National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Trafficking in Children 2009-2013 coordinates relevant activities between Ministries and NGOs.(48) Research did not indicate the extent to which these plans were implemented since the revolution, and information is not available on the achievements of the plans.

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

With assistance from USAID and in coordination with the NCCM, the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) opened a new children's shelter in Cairo for at-risk children, including street children engaged in worst forms of child labor.(24, 49) The shelter provides housing, medical, psychological, legal, and educational services and vocational training for the children.(49) NCCM manages a 24-hour child help hotline and has implemented awareness-raising campaigns against the worst forms of child labor.(22, 23) Local committees to combat child labor, established through the MOMM to implement the National Strategy to Combat Child Labor, withdrew children from the worst forms of child labor and provided them with health and social services.(42) In previous years, the NCCM and the MOMM have implemented pilot projects to withdraw children from exploitative child labor and increase family income; however, research did not confirm whether these programs continued in 2011.(14, 32)

The Government participated in a USDOL-funded \$5.5 million project from 2006 to June 2011 in BeniSuif, Sohag, Assuit and Sharqiya, implemented through WFP, UNICEF and the ILO.(50) The project provided educational and other social services to 12,214 children who were withdrawn from or prevented from entering exploitative labor, primarily in the informal sector.(47) Prior to the reporting period, the Government supported the establishment of 97 community schools and developed an innovative apprenticeship program for older youth to safely learn a craft.(47) In addition to take-home food rations as an incentive for school attendance, the project also provided livelihood support to mothers of child laborers such as linkages to available social services and income-generation training for 2,844 beneficiaries.(47, 50) CAPMAS conducted research on child labor in agriculture as a component of the project.(47, 50) The project also developed a system to monitor child labor and a tracking database, both of which were rolled out nationally under MOMM.(32, 47, 50)

In addition, USDOL funded a \$9.5 million project from 2010 to 2014, also implemented by WFP, UNICEF and the ILO, to provide services to 16,000 children engaged in or at-risk of the worst forms of child labor in agriculture in Upper Egypt and the Delta region.(40, 51) Children receive access to education and apprenticeship opportunities and their households receive livelihood support to address the root causes of child labor. Because of the political transition, the Government's participation in the program was limited during the reporting period.(40, 52)

While these programs serve an important demonstration effect, they are 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.

The National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking includes multiple programs which are implemented by Government agencies and international organizations.(45) The National Center for Social and Criminological Research conducted a study on the trends of human trafficking in Egypt.(22, 23, 45) The Government, through the NCCM, the MOI and MOSS, and with UNICEF and IOM, is supporting programs to provide services to street children in urban areas and other children at-risk of trafficking.(20, 22, 45) 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.(45) The Social Fund for Development provides livelihood services to vulnerable families.(45) The Government operates shelters for victims of trafficking, including children.(49)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Health, with the IOM, established a care center for trafficking victims in Cairo, and the NCCM established a 12-bed shelter for women and children trafficking victims.(20, 22, 49) In addition, with the IOM, the Government provided training to 1,500 government and NGO officials on trafficking issues such as forced child labor and forced child prostitution, including temporary summer marriages.(49) However, these programs do not appear to be sufficient to curb the problem of the sexual exploitation of girls, especially through the practice of 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 Ministry of Education 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.(47)

To alleviate poverty, the Government implements the Thousand Villages livelihoods program targeting the poorest villages across Egypt.(47, 53) The first phase, ending in 2011, included development projects in 152 of the villages targeting basic education, adult literacy, job creation, sanitation and health services.(53) Research did not indicate whether the program was renewed during the 2011 political transitions.

The Government provides substantial food subsidies to citizens, including sugar, rice, oil and wheat. Up to 70 percent of the population benefits from subsidized fortified wheat bread through a program with WFP.(47, 54, 55) The Government 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.(56)

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 of work and limited working hours for children involved in family businesses, domestic service and agriculture.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Amend Decree 118 to prohibit all children under age 18 from involvement in work activities that expose them to physical, psychological or sexual exploitation, or to physical, chemical, biological or mechanical dangers; expand the current list of 44 hazardous occupations to include specific dangerous tasks in agriculture and other sectors for which there is evidence of worst forms of child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Ensure that all children have access to free education.	2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Ensure that critical coordination and enforcement mechanisms to protect against child labor continue to operate throughout the ongoing government transition.	2011
	Establish child protection committees in all governorates, and ensure that they receive training and resources.	2011
	Make enforcement data on child labor violations publicly available.	2010, 2011
	Ensure that data on Government enforcement of trafficking in persons and commercial sexual exploitation of children, particularly related to investigations of children sold into temporary marriages, are made publicly available.	2011
Policies	Prioritize 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
	Publish and distribute the results of the CAPMAS national survey on child labor.	2010, 2011
	Publish information on the activities and achievements of the National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking and the National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Trafficking in Children.	2011
Social Programs	Develop or expand programs addressing the worst forms of child labor, with a special focus on children involved in agriculture and domestic service.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Expand programs to prevent and protect girls from sexual exploitation, including those exploited through temporary marriages.	2010, 2011
	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

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