

In 2012, Lebanon made a moderate advancement in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In addition to approving a list of hazardous labor activities for children over the reporting period, the Government reconvened its National Steering Committee on Child Labor and approved the National Protection Strategy to Combat and Protect Children from Child Abuse. However, the Government has yet to approve labor law provisions that would protect children working in the informal sector, and enforcement agencies lack resources and do not maintain enforcement data. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor including in dangerous activities in agriculture and small workshops.



Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate		87.3

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2013.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Lebanon are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including dangerous activities in agriculture and small workshops.(3) Children, predominantly girls, are involved in planting and picking tobacco.(4-8) Common hazards in this sector include the risk of cuts and puncture wounds from threading tobacco leaves; the risk of exposure to toxins and pesticides; and the danger of musculoskeletal problems caused by the process of planting tobacco seedlings.(5-7) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children are also found picking olives and citrus fruit.(8) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(3) Child labor among boys is prominent in small workshops, such as mechanics and carpentry workshops, as well as in construction, manufacturing, and industry.(6-11) Children working in these sectors risk exhaustion from long working hours, injuries from heavy equipment and sharp tools, and body discomfort or deformation from assuming awkward positions.(8)

Children also vend goods in markets, wash car windshields, pick through trash, and beg on the streets.(10-13) There is increasing evidence that some children involved in street work are trafficking victims, forced into commercial sexual exploitation and illicit work by criminal gangs, family members, and acquaintances.(14, 15) A study found that boys working on the street are at high risk of sexual exploitation by peers and men.(15) Other hazards for children working on the streets include severe weather, vehicle accidents, harassment, and arrest.(16) Foreign-born children, including Palestinian, Iraqi, Egyptian, Kurdish, and increasingly, Syrian children, form the majority of child street workers. Dom children, an ethnic minority, are also prevalent among the children working in the street.(12, 13, 15-19)

Children, especially adolescent girls, are engaged in domestic work in Lebanon. According to a study conducted in Northern Lebanon, child domestic workers are exposed to hazards such as carrying and moving very heavy objects, injury from sharp knives, and falling off unstable or unsafe chairs or ladders.(8, 13)

Lebanon is a source country for children, especially girls, trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and criminal activity.(14, 15) In addition, Lebanon is a destination country for child commercial sexual exploitation, through the guise of fake or temporary marriages.(15, 18) Girls may be tricked into fake marriages and then forced into commercial exploitation and other illegal activities.(15, 20)

There are reports that children have been used in armed conflict, especially in North Lebanon and in Beirut.(21) In most Palestinian refugee camps, children were not reportedly

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involved in local militia groups. However, in some camps, where the security situation is more tenuous, such as Ain El Helwe and Bedawwi, there may be instances of children, ages 15 to 17, employed as guards at internal checkpoints or at building entrances.(22)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14.(4, 23, 24) Children between ages 14 to 18 may work if they receive a medical certificate asserting their fitness to do the type of job for which they have been recruited.(10) The Labor Code provides basic protections to children, such as limiting the work day to a maximum of 6 hours per day with 1 hour of rest after every 4 hours worked.

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	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	16
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Labor Code includes a list of industrial, arduous and unhealthy work prohibited for children under age 16.(4, 10, 23, 24) In 2012, the Cabinet approved a list of hazardous occupations and activities which includes domestic work and hazardous agricultural work on family farms.(13, 25) The list differentiates work prohibited for children under 18 and activities allowable for children under 16 if proper training and protection has occurred.(13, 25) Draft child labor provisions to the Labor Code have been pending cabinet approval and parliamentary ratification since 2008.(13) These provisions

would help protect children working in the informal sector as they would give labor inspectors the authority to inspect the informal sector. Additionally, they would raise the minimum age of work to 15.(7, 8, 13, 26, 27) Until these provisions are finalized, children may continue to be exposed to hazards as labor inspectors lack access to the informal sector.

The Penal Code and Law 422 protect children from commercial sexual exploitation and prohibit financial gain from the prostitution of others, child pornography, involvement of a child in illegal activity, forced labor, and involuntary servitude.(6, 13, 28)

Lebanese law is not consistent in its treatment of children working as beggars. In the Penal Code, child begging is criminalized.(16) Conversely, Law 422 stipulates that child begging endangers a child and that child beggars should be admitted to juvenile protection facilities.(16) However, due to an insufficient number of juvenile protection facilities (especially for non-Lebanese children), child beggars often end up confined to adult jail cells.(15, 16, 18)

Law 164 criminalizes the trafficking and use of persons for commercial sexual exploitation, begging, and forced involvement in terrorist acts. It also bans the recruitment of children for armed conflict.(7, 29, 30)

The minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces is 18 for soldiers, noncommissioned personnel, and officers. Military service is not compulsory in Lebanon.(31)

Education in Lebanon is free and compulsory by law for most residents of the country until age 12, but barriers still exist.(32) Education related costs such as transportation, books, and uniforms have prevented some families from enrolling their children into school.(33, 34) Additionally, the law denies free education to children born to foreign national fathers, regardless of the mother's nationality with an exception made for Syrian refugee children.(13) Further, children older than age 12 are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work. A bill to raise the age of compulsory education to 15 is pending, but has not yet been approved.(13)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Child Labor Unit (CLU), under the Ministry of Labor (MOL), serves as the Government's focal point on national child labor issues.(6, 7) The CLU's chief functions include raising awareness on the dangers of child labor, drafting

legislation on child labor, and coordinating with other governmental agencies, civil society, and international organizations to gradually eliminate child labor.(7, 14, 35) The CLU also coordinates with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) in the referral of children to protective institutions such as shelters.(14) A national steering committee on child labor is an inter-ministerial body responsible for implementing MOL's national strategy to combat child labor and draft child labor-related amendments to the Labor law.(13, 36) During the reporting period, the committee was revitalized and met several times after years of inactivity. They are currently drafting a national action plan to combat the worst forms of child labor by 2016 and are finalizing the national awareness strategy against the worst forms of child labor.(13) Since May 2012, they have revised their terms of reference and have provided three child labor-related trainings.(13) The Higher Council for Childhood (HCC), which is led by MOSA, oversees the implementation of child rights policies, including combating child labor.(12) No information was available on how the CLU, the steering committee, and the HCC coordinate efforts on this issue.

The MOL is responsible for enforcing child labor laws through workplace inspections.(4) The MOL has approximately 25 inspectors who conduct child labor inspections.(13) The MOL maintains that the number of inspectors is inadequate to address the scope of the problem.(13) During the reporting period, the ILO trained MOL inspectors on investigating child labor issues.(13)

Child labor-related inspections at informal work sites are only permitted if a complaint is filed and the accused fails to respond to a summons from the CLU.(13, 37) No mechanism exists to investigate complaints of child domestic labor since social workers—the only officials allowed to enter a private home—may only assess the overall welfare of the family and not the working conditions of domestic laborers.(37)

The Government does not track the number of child labor violations, the number of children removed or assisted as a result of inspections, the number of citations issued for child labor, or the penalties applied and fines collected.(13) MOL estimates that approximately 4,000 to 5,000 children were removed from hazardous work by municipalities and local NGOs during the reporting period.(13)

The HCC, the Internal Security Forces (ISF), and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) are jointly charged with the enforcement of laws related to forced labor, the commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking, and the use of children in illicit activities.(7, 13) From January to June 2012, five

investigations concerning commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking were conducted.(13) The Public Prosecutor, the Juvenile Court Judge, the Police, and a representative from the Union for Protecting Childhood in Lebanon (UPEL), a quasi-governmental organization, cooperate to refer ill-treated and abused children, or children in conflict with the law, to appropriate services. This includes children exploited in the worst forms of child labor.(13, 14) With six locations throughout Lebanon, UPEL is charged with coordinating juvenile justice procedures and advising juvenile judges on referring the child to appropriate social services.(7, 14) During the reporting period, UPEL provided training to ISF officials on how to deal with cases of child trafficking.(13) An additional 1,926 ISF officials received training on human trafficking prevention during the reporting period.(38)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2012, MOSA continued to implement its National Social Development Strategy, which lays out a plan for the establishment of a comprehensive social, health, and educational program.(13, 39) The strategy, includes the protection of working children and the implementation of HCC's strategy to address the needs of street children.(40)

During the reporting period, the National Protection Strategy to Combat and Protect Children from Child Abuse was approved by the Government. The strategy includes protections for child laborers and street children.(13)

In 2012, the Government launched a draft National Action Plan for Human Rights. The plan consists of proposed legislative and executive procedures in 21 human rights topics, including children's rights.(13) The Action Plan recommends cooperation between all relevant authorities to ban child labor.(41) The Action Plan must be approved by Parliament before it can be implemented.(41)

The Education Sector Development Plan focuses on expanding early childhood education, achieving higher rates of retention and achievement, and improving the quality of teachers.(42) The question of whether this plan has an impact on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

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

During 2012, the Government began to participate in a European Union funded program that supports the implementation of the Education Sector Development

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Plan.(13) The program focuses on improving retention and educational achievement in areas with high drop-out rates.(13)

The HCC, with government and UN funding, is leading a project to identify gaps in the child protection legal framework.(13) To date, HCC has drafted amendments to the Penal Code that provide clearer definitions on hazards children face and protective measures needed. These issues are currently under discussion by ministries and relevant parliamentary groups.(13)

NGOs and UN agencies are the main providers of children's social protection services, chiefly for child victims of trafficking.(15, 43) Due to the lack of funding, government bodies, such as the ISF and UPEL, depend on the aforementioned providers when making service referrals of children.(15) In addition, the scarcity of shelters for child trafficking victims results in some children being placed in juvenile detention centers.(15) The lack of shelters and

resources to effectively handle child labor and trafficking cases puts children at a heightened risk for further exploitation.(15)

During the reporting period, MOSA continued to implement a national poverty alleviation program funded by the Government, the Italian Foreign Ministry, the World Bank, and the Canadian Embassy.(13) The program targets 74,000 families living below the poverty line and provides them with a variety of services including school waivers for children that preclude them from having to pay government school tuition and book fees. It is too early to determine what impact this poverty alleviation plan will have on child labor.(13)

The Government also worked with the ILO-IPEC on a study of child laborers between ages 5 and 17 in the North and Bekaa regions of Lebanon.(7, 13) In an additional collaboration, the ILO-IPEC and the Government conducted a mapping of policy and initiatives on child labor in Lebanon. Both reports were released in early 2012.(7)

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Approve into law the 2008 draft provisions to give labor inspectors the authority to inspect the informal sector and raise the minimum age of work to 15.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Amend Penal Code articles that criminalize child beggars to ensure their protection.	2011, 2012
	Ensure that children whose mothers are Lebanese nationals have the right to free education.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Adopt the pending legislation for raising the compulsory age of education from 12 to 15.	2010, 2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors.	2011, 2012
	Track and make publicly available the number of inspections carried out, with special attention to the incidence of child labor, the numbers of children assisted, and any sanctions imposed as a result of violations.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Policies	Assess the impact that the Education Sector Development Plan has had on addressing child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Approve the draft National Action Plan for Human Rights.	2012
Social Programs	Increase the number of shelters for children involved in the worst forms of child labor and child trafficking victims.	2010, 2011, 2012

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