

*In 2017, Lebanon made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Labor released a Practitioners' Guide on child labor in agriculture to raise awareness among stakeholders and signed an agreement with the Farmers' Union to prevent foreign children, mainly Syrian refugees, under age 16 from working in agriculture. Concurrently, the government helped enroll more than 110,000 children in schools and prevented a possible dropout of more than 18,000 other children, including non-Lebanese children, in the 2016–2017 academic year. However, children in Lebanon engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation. The Ministry of Labor's operations budget was unable to cover equipment, personnel, and transport costs to conduct inspections. The Ministry of Labor does not have the authority to assess penalties. In addition, programs targeting child labor remained insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.*



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Lebanon engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Lebanon. 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	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		71.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (6)  
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2018. (7)

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 picking potatoes, cucumbers, almonds, plums, olives, citrus fruit, beans, figs, and grapes (1; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12)
	Production of tobacco† (13; 14; 15; 16)
	Fishing, activities unknown (3; 16)
Industry	Construction,† including carpentry, tiling, and welding† (11; 14; 17; 18; 16)
	Working in cement factories† (17; 19)
	Making handicrafts (3; 16)
	Working in aluminum factories (11; 20)
Services	Working in textile factories (21; 22)
	Street work,† including begging, street vending, portering, washing cars, scavenging garbage,† and shining shoes (1; 8; 11; 23; 24; 25)
	Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles,† and painting† (11; 22; 26; 25)
	Domestic work† (11; 27; 28)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Cleaning sewage† (1; 16)
	Food service† (11; 15; 23)
	Working in cemeteries, including covering bodies in shrouds, cleaning graves, and assisting with rituals (29; 30)
	Cleaning marketplaces (1; 14)
	Working in slaughterhouses† and butcheries (13; 16)
	Working in small shops (23; 16; 25)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking or production, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and arms dealing (3; 18; 24; 30; 31; 32; 25)
	Forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (32; 5; 25)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1; 2; 3; 22; 31; 33; 5; 34; 35)
	Forced labor in agriculture, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3; 4; 5)
	Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (16; 36; 37)

† 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 has increased, and its conditions have worsened since the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, affecting Lebanese and Syrian children. (38; 39; 16) As of January 2018, just under one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon were registered with UNHCR, and more than half of them were children. (40) Child labor is also prevalent in other refugee communities in Lebanon, including the Palestinian and Iraqi communities. (41; 16)

There are instances of children being subjected to forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (5) In particular, Syrian girls are trafficked into Lebanon for commercial sexual exploitation under the guise of marriage. (18; 5) Some boys are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly Kurdish boys from Syria and boys who work. (18; 42) Working on the streets is especially common among refugee children from Syria, including Palestinians from Syria. (24)

Syrian children are also subjected to forced labor in agriculture. (4; 41; 16) Some Syrian refugee children, with their families, are kept in bonded labor in agriculture in the Bekaa Valley to pay for makeshift dwellings provided by landowners. (3; 4; 38; 5) In 2017, the Lebanese army evicted approximately 10,000 Syrian refugees from their informal dwellings in Bekaa, interrupting children’s schooling and making them more vulnerable to child labor. (43; 44; 45)




UNICEF reported that ISIS and Al Nusra recruited and used boys and girls in Lebanon, including in Palestinian refugee camps. (16) Media reported that Hizballah also recruited children to engage in combat in Syria. (36) Children participated in combat, armed patrols, military parades, and logistical support of armed leaders within Lebanon or were trafficked to Syria for the same purposes. (16)

The government waived fees for public primary schools and opened second shifts in about 240 schools. (14) But the public school system in Lebanon lacks the capacity to accommodate the large number of school-age Syrian refugee children. (46) Some schools refuse to enroll students who lack documentation, contradicting the official policy. (16; 47) Whereas UNHCR states that 70 percent of Syrian refugee children were enrolled at school in 2017, other observers estimated that more than 50 percent of Syrian refugee children as well as 35 percent of Palestinian refugee children were out of school. (25; 16; 48) Children in Lebanon, particularly Syrian refugee children, face barriers to accessing education, including the cost of transportation and supplies, use of schools by armed groups or as shelters, fear of passing checkpoints or of violence, lack of private sanitation facilities for girls, discrimination, bullying, corporal punishment, and different curriculum in Lebanon than in their country of origin. (14; 15; 49; 50; 51; 52; 53; 48; 16; 54) Children with disabilities, particularly Syrians, either are denied access to schools or do not receive additional tailored services. (53) In addition, some refugee children from Iraq and Syria do not attend school because many classes are taught in French or English in Lebanese schools, but refugee children do not speak these languages. (50; 54) Children who work in agriculture, including Lebanese children, often do not attend school during harvesting and planting seasons. (55; 56) One local organization observed a direct correlation between school dropout rates and increase in child labor. (25)

## 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 prohibition of debt bondage.

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

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 22 of the Labor Code (57)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 1 of Decree No. 8987 (58)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (58)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 8 of Decree No. 3855; Article 569 of the Penal Code (59; 60)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 586.1 and 586.5 of the Penal Code (59)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 507–510, 523–527, 586.1, and 586.5 of the Penal Code (59)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 586.1, 586.5, and 618 of the Penal Code (59)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 30 of the National Defense Law (61)
Non-state	Yes	18	Article 586.1 of the Penal Code; Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (58; 59)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 49 of the Education Law (62)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 49 of the Education Law (62)

\* No conscription (63)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (41)

Laws related to forced labor are insufficient because there is no legislative provision that provides criminal penalties for the exaction of forced labor, and debt bondage is not criminally prohibited. (59; 64)

Government officials clarified that although Article 610 of the Penal Code criminalizes begging, Article 26 of the Delinquent Juveniles Law, which takes precedence over the Penal Code, stipulates that in cases of begging, the child is considered in danger and entitled to receive protective measures. (59; 65; 66) However, children engaged in begging have been arrested in a limited number of cases. (24)

## 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 authority of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor	Enforce child labor laws through desk review and workplace inspections. Act as government focal point for child labor issues and host the National Steering Committee on Child Labor. (16) The Ministry's Child Labor Unit raises public awareness about child labor and the right to education, and receives complaints on child labor violations on its hotline. (67; 41)
Internal Security Forces	Enforce laws regarding the worst forms of child labor through the Anti-Human Trafficking and Morals Protection Bureau. (16)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecute violations of the Penal Code in coordination with the Internal Security Forces. Maintain general data and statistics on criminal violations involving the worst forms of child labor. (16) Refer at-risk children to shelters and protection services. The Ministry has signed agreements with civil society organizations to provide social workers to the Ministry to oversee court proceedings involving juveniles and deliver services to them, including children engaged in begging. (16)
Ministry of Social Affairs	Refer children identified by the Internal Security Forces and the Ministry of Justice to protective institutions, such as health centers. Refer children to shelters through its Higher Council for Childhood. (16)

According to local observers, the Ministry of Labor'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. (25)

### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including penalty assessment authorization.

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	45 (38)	45 (25)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (68)	No (68)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (69)	Yes (69)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (16)

In 2017, the Ministry of Labor did not cover the costs of equipment and transportation for labor inspectors to carry out their duties. (16) Inspections of child labor are generally a result of a complaint, particularly in the formal sector. However, based on available information, child labor is nearly non-existent in the formal sector. (16; 70) The number of labor inspectors is insufficient for the size of Lebanon's workforce, which includes over 2.1 million workers. (71) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Lebanon would employ about 144 inspectors. (72; 73)

The Ministry of Labor signed an agreement with the Farmers' Union so that farmers do not hire Syrian children under age 16 to work in agriculture. In 2017, the Ministry's Child Labor Unit provided training to farmers and General Security officers in the Bekaa Valley. (16)

**Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including investigation planning.

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (74; 16)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	10 (3)	5 (74; 75)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	5 (3)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	3 (76)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (16)

In 2017, judges and officials of the Internal Security Forces participated in trainings on human trafficking. The government provided an airline company with training to help cabin crew members recognize indicators of human trafficking among passengers. (74) In addition, staff of the Lebanese Armed Forces participated in training sessions on human trafficking. (77)

The Ministry of Justice stated that a lack of sufficient human resources hindered the government's ability to address child labor. (16) The Ministry of Justice does not have a centralized record system, but it reported prosecuting some cases of forced child begging. (77)

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

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

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Raise awareness; coordinate efforts among government agencies; establish standard practices; develop, enforce, and recommend changes; and ensure that government agencies comply with the law. Led by the Minister of Labor, includes representatives from six other ministries and other institutions and international organizations. (16) In 2017, the Committee did not meet officially, although its technical subcommittee met twice during the year. (16)
National Steering Committee on Trafficking	Coordinate efforts against human trafficking, including child trafficking. Based at the Ministry of Labor and meets on a monthly basis. (16) In 2017, the Committee met monthly. (77)
UNICEF and UNHCR	Coordinate efforts to address the needs of children affected by the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and maintain interagency standards for child protection. The UN representatives identify crucial concerns, including factors that make children vulnerable to child labor, and make recommendations to the government on the use of resources, including referral services. (16) In 2017, UNICEF held awareness-raising campaigns, carried out Focused Psychosocial Support activities and case management for children engaged in hazardous child labor, provided vocational training for children ages 15 to 17, and worked with agricultural stakeholders to limit working hours for children and improve working conditions. During the reporting period, UNHCR provided cash assistance to families of approximately 320 Syrian children and helped provide educational services to more than 770 children. (16)

**V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR**

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

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

Policy	Description
National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2013–2019)	Establishes strategies for addressing the worst forms of child labor, including improving enforcement of child labor laws and expanding access to education. (78; 3) In 2017, the Ministry of Labor, in cooperation with the ILO, released the Guide for Child Labor in Agriculture Practitioners to raise awareness among stakeholders on child labor in agriculture. The ILO held a training on the Guide in September. (79)
Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon	Provides the framework for the prevention of children involved in armed conflict. (52) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (80)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, 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 adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Tackling Child Labor among Syrian Refugees and Their Host Communities in Jordan and Lebanon (2015–2017)	Government of Denmark–funded, 2-year project, implemented by the ILO to conduct research on the hazards of child labor in certain sectors; build the technical capacity of governments, employers, and workers’ organizations to improve referrals and responses to cases of child labor; and provide training on preventing and removing children from child labor and provide services. (81) In 2017, the ILO supported government agencies to draft a code of conduct and coordination mechanism to help children living and working on the street. The ILO also held a training on that topic for stakeholders, including government officials. (82)
Child Protection Program	Joint program by UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Addresses the worst forms of child labor through interventions, including psychological counseling, raising awareness among employers, and working with employers to decrease working hours for children and to improve working conditions. (27) Research was unable to determine what steps were taken in 2017 in the implementation of this program.
USDOL-Funded Projects for Capacity Building and Research	USDOL projects that aim to build capacity of government law enforcement officials, improve policy implementation, and improve the evidence base on child labor. These projects include the Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues (GAP 11), implemented by the ILO, and the Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor (CLEAR) capacity-building project, implemented by the ILO in at least 11 countries. (83; 84) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Reaching All Children through Education (RACE II) (2017–2021)	Donor-funded 5-year project, implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and partners to ensure quality education opportunities for children ages 3 to 18 regardless of nationality through holistic interventions, including non-formal education. (85) The program supported enrollment of more than 110,000 students in the 2016–2017 academic year as well as retention activities to prevent a possible dropout of more than 18,000 vulnerable children. (16)
National Poverty Alleviation Program†	Funded by the government and foreign donors, this Ministry of Social Affairs program pays school tuition and book costs for 74,000 families living in extreme poverty. (41) Research was unable to determine what steps were taken in 2017 in the implementation of this program.

† Program is funded by the Government of Lebanon.

The scarcity of shelters for child trafficking victims results in some children being placed in juvenile detention centers. (56) The lack of shelters and resources to effectively handle child labor and trafficking cases puts children at a heightened risk of further exploitation. (32) 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 forced child labor in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

## 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 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict, which the government signed in 2002.	2013 – 2017
	Ensure that forced labor and debt bondage are criminally prohibited.	2015 – 2017

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont)**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that there is an adequate mechanism to receive and log child labor complaints and refer them for investigation.	2017
	Track and publish information on labor law enforcement, including the number of labor inspections.	2009 – 2017
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure proper funding for Ministry of Labor inspectors and necessary transportation.	2011 – 2017
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO technical advice.	2016 – 2017
	Publish information on criminal enforcement of child labor laws.	2009 – 2017
Government Policies	Ensure that cases of child trafficking are investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law.	2017
	Ensure that the Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon is implemented.	2017
Social Programs	Build on current efforts to improve access to public education for all children.	2010 – 2017
	Ensure that the Child Protection Program and the National Poverty Alleviation Program are implemented.	2017
	Increase the number of shelters for child victims of human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2017
	Expand programs to fully address the extent of child labor.	2013 – 2017

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