

In 2011, Tunisia made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Following the country's revolution and democratization, Government officials acknowledged that child labor occurs in Tunisia and established a Delegates Group for the Protection of Children to coordinate government action on the issue. Children in Tunisia are reportedly engaged in the worst forms of child labor, but there remains a need for adequate data on the worst forms of child labor to determine the prevalence and nature of the problem.

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		91.2

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.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Tunisia are reportedly engaged in the worst forms of child labor. However, the lack of official data and other information does not allow for an accurate assessment of the full nature and extent of the worst forms of child labor.

Evidence indicates that children work in agriculture.(3, 4) According to a recent World Bank report, rural children in Tunisia are less likely than urban children to attend school past age 10.(5) Such children may be working instead of attending school. Children working in agriculture may be exposed to chemicals, injured by dangerous machinery or tools and suffer physical harm from performing repetitive motions and carrying excessively heavy loads.(6)

There are reports that Tunisian children, mostly girls, work as domestic servants.(7, 8) Children employed as domestics may work long hours and are isolated in private homes, where they are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(9) There have been reports of girls trafficked internally to work as domestic servants.(4, 8, 10)

Children reportedly work in factories and as street vendors selling candy, cigarettes and other small items.(3, 11) Children



working on the streets may be exposed to multiple dangers including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements.(12)

The 2010-2011 Tunisian Revolution resulted in the creation of a new constitution and improvements in governmental transparency, but the political turmoil exacerbated the country's poverty and unemployment.(5) NGOs have reported anecdotally that child labor has become more pervasive and visible in Tunisia since the revolution, referencing a greater presence of street children and citing increased economic pressure on rural families that may push children into child labor.(3, 13)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Tunisia's Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 16, with some exceptions such as work in family-run businesses. Children can also participate in light agricultural work from age 13 and in light industrial work from age 14, provided the work is not hazardous and does not interfere with schooling.(14) The Labor Code and the Child Protection Code both bar children under age 18 from hazardous work. After an

inspection of the workplace, the Government can authorize some children to engage in hazardous work from age 16 as long as the child's health is monitored and the work is paired with specific education and training. (15) The Labor Code gives the Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Tunisians Abroad the authority to determine the hazardous jobs and activities in which children cannot engage. (14) However, research found no evidence of such a list. Children under age 16 are not legally permitted to work as domestic servants. (3)

	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	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	17
	Free Public Education	Yes

Education is compulsory until age 16. (16) In addition, the Government of Tunisia provides free schooling beyond the age of compulsory education. (17)

Tunisian law forbids the use of forced or slave labor. (4) The Tunisian Penal Code proscribes capturing, detaining or sequestering a person for forced labor. (10, 18) In 2011, an anti-trafficking bill was drafted, but it has not been passed into law. (17, 19) Child prostitution is forbidden under the Penal Code and the Child Protection Code, and the applicable provisions cover both girls and boys. (15) Tunisian law also criminalizes the production and distribution of child pornography. (15, 16) It offers further protection for children against forced begging and exploitation for illicit activities. (15)

The Child Protection Code outlaws children's participation in wars or armed conflicts, and voluntary military service is set at age 18. (15) All male citizens are subject to compulsory military service at age 20. (20, 21)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Under the previous regime, the Government of Tunisia established a Child Protection Representative in each of the country's governorates to enforce the Child Protection Code. (15, 22) The Code places a special emphasis on situations that threaten a child's health or moral or physical integrity, including the worst forms of child labor. These Representatives are still in place under the auspices of the Ministry of Women. (23) Nevertheless, there have been concerns that having only one delegate per governorate is inadequate. (24) Since the revolution, a new committee has been formed, called the Delegates Group for the Protection of Children. This committee, headed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, is considered to be the coordinating body for government efforts to combat child labor. (23)

The Ministry of Social Affairs is also responsible for enforcing child labor laws through its inspectors, who collaborate with child protection officers and medical inspectors to identify and prevent the economic exploitation of minors. In addition, Tunisia's 380 labor inspectors collaborate with the General Union of Tunisian Labor to ensure that the Labor Code is enforced and that cases of child labor are reported and prosecuted. (14, 19, 22) Labor inspectors occasionally coordinated spot checks with Ministry of Education officials, while National Social Security Fund officials also inspected factories and industries for compliance with labor laws. (4) In 2011, the Ministry of Social Affairs reviewed 485 allegations of child labor, and of this number 24 cases were prosecuted. (4, 19) No information was available on the outcomes of these cases or the level of funding provided for child labor law enforcement.

In 2011 the Ministry of Justice established an interagency anti-trafficking in persons committee, which drafted an anti-trafficking bill that the Constituent Assembly is expected to consider in 2012. (17, 19) There were no known investigations or prosecutions of trafficking offenses or convictions of trafficking offenders during the year. (10)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During the rule of the Ben Ali regime, the Government of Tunisia did not develop any policies to combat child labor. (3) However, the new Government recently acknowledged that child labor exists. (3, 22) The new Government has not conducted research to determine the extent and nature of child labor that may be occurring in the country. (3)

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

Research found no evidence of programs to address child labor in agriculture, domestic service or street vending.

Tunisia, in cooperation with UNICEF, continued its participation in a multi-year plan to promote quality education and achieve universal primary education.⁽²⁵⁾ The Government and UNICEF are also working with IOM to improve assistance for the particularly vulnerable children crossing the border into Tunisia from Libya.⁽²⁶⁾ Among other forms of assistance, UNICEF has played a role in issuing birth certificates to refugees. As proof of age and acknowledgement

of a child's existence, the issuance of birth certificates protects children against child labor, underage military service and trafficking.⁽²⁷⁾

The World Bank-funded Education Quality Improvement Project, designed to facilitate the Government's efforts to promote primary and secondary education, concluded in September 2010. The Project boosted school enrollment and completion rates for children ages 6 to 18.⁽²⁸⁾ Research found no information suggesting that the Government had continued this program after Bank funding ended. The question of whether these programs had an impact on the worst forms 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 Tunisia:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Consider passing the drafted anti-trafficking bill into law.	2011
	Ensure that a list defining hazardous work is established and made publicly available.	2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Increase the number of Child Protection Representatives.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Continue to make data publicly available on enforcement, and in addition, publish information on the resolution of cases and the funding budgeted for enforcement activities.	2009, 2010, 2011
Policies	Conduct research on the worst forms of child labor to inform policy and programs.	2010, 2011
Social Programs	Implement programs to specifically address the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture, domestic service and street vending.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Assess the impact that the education plan and project had on addressing the worst forms of child labor and consider continuing the project under Government auspices.	2010, 2011
	Assess the impact that existing programs may have on addressing child labor.	2011

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