

Egypt

The Government of Egypt has enhanced its enforcement mechanisms by establishing a special unit to combat child trafficking. However, significant gaps exist in the legal framework to protect children from the worst forms of child labor and children continue to work in agriculture and domestic service.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	6.7%
Attending School	6-14 yrs.	88.1%
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	6.3%



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children work in the worst forms of child labor,¹⁶²² many in agriculture, where an estimated two-thirds of working children in Egypt are engaged.¹⁶²³ Children working in agriculture may work seasonally or year-round, and often rotate between various crops throughout the year.¹⁶²⁴ In particular, seasonal child labor is common in the pest control and harvesting of cotton crops.¹⁶²⁵ Children employed in agriculture are vulnerable to exposure to pesticides, long work hours in extreme temperatures, non-payment of wages, threats, and physical abuse.¹⁶²⁶

Egyptian girls are exploited as domestic servants. Young girls, usually from rural areas, are sent to work for families, often in more urban areas. While data is not available on the number of child domestic workers across Egypt, qualitative studies find that it is common and has the potential to expose girls to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.¹⁶²⁷

Although evidence is limited, there is reason to believe that the worst forms of child labor are used in the production of bricks, glass and leather.¹⁶²⁸ Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor in dangerous industrial occupations such as fishing, blacksmithing, construction, carpentry, mechanical repair, and mining.¹⁶²⁹ In addition, children work in limestone quarrying where they risk serious injury or

death from rock cutting machines, respiratory ailments from limestone dust, and intense heat.¹⁶³⁰

Street children, estimated at between 200,000 and 1 million, are vulnerable to forced begging, prostitution, violence, and drug abuse.¹⁶³¹ They survive by peddling, begging and working at temporary jobs in shops and workshops.¹⁶³²

Children face commercial sexual exploitation in Egypt. One pervasive form of child prostitution is the practice of temporary or “summer” marriage. Under this practice, Egyptian girls are briefly “married,” in exchange for payment to their parents and a marriage broker.¹⁶³³ Child sex tourism has been reported in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor.¹⁶³⁴

Egyptian children are trafficked internally, often to urban centers and tourism destinations. Street children are especially vulnerable to trafficking for forced begging or prostitution. Internal child trafficking also occurs for child temporary marriages, child sex tourism, domestic service, and agricultural labor.¹⁶³⁵

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor






The amended child protection law, Law No. 126 of the Year 2008, sets the minimum age at 15 for regular employment, and at 13 for seasonal employment.¹⁶³⁶ However, the labor law, Law No. 12 of the Year 2003, allows children as young as 12 to work as apprentices.¹⁶³⁷ The labor law provides protections to working children including limitations on the number of hours and times of day a child can work, and mandates shift breaks. The lower minimum ages for seasonal employment and apprenticeship programs may put children at a higher risk for labor exploitation.

The labor law explicitly excludes domestic work and work in family businesses.¹⁶³⁸ The labor law also excludes children working in agriculture.¹⁶³⁹

Children under the age of 18 are barred from 44 hazardous occupations under the Ministry of Manpower and Migration's Decree 118.¹⁶⁴⁰ These occupations include underground work in mines and quarries, welding, work in tanneries, work with pesticides, and lifting heavy objects.¹⁶⁴¹ However, many hazardous tasks that children perform are missing from this legislation. 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. Decree 118 prohibits work for children younger than 17 that exposes them to physical, psychological, sexual exploitation, or chemical, biological, or mechanical dangers but does not define these terms.¹⁶⁴²

The Child Law and Penal Code criminalize some worst forms of child labor, including trafficking and sexual exploitation.¹⁶⁴³ A 2008 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.¹⁶⁴⁴

The Constitution of Egypt guarantees the right of education, and the Child Law makes it compulsory at the primary and preparatory stages, for a total of nine years between the ages of 6 and 14.¹⁶⁴⁵ This standard may leave some 14-year-old children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, since they are old enough to leave school legally, but not to work. The Child Law prohibits employers from depriving children of their right to education.¹⁶⁴⁶

	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	14
	Free Public Education	Yes

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Ministry of State for Family and Population has a General Committee for Child Protection, which coordinates the Government's National Protection Program. This Committee is comprised of representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education, and Health.¹⁶⁴⁷ The National Protection Program includes a mandate to identify and monitor children at risk of exploitive labor.¹⁶⁴⁸ During the reporting period child protection committees were formed at the governorate level, with sub-committees at each circuit and police station.¹⁶⁴⁹ In addition, the Ministry of State for Family and Population has an office dedicated to combating child labor by implementing pilot programs and awareness raising campaigns.¹⁶⁵⁰

The Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) is responsible for enforcing child labor laws and regulations. Labor inspectors from the MOMM have the authority to inspect businesses, industrial facilities, and commercial agricultural enterprises for child labor legal compliance.¹⁶⁵¹ Labor inspections are not legally permitted in private homes or non-commercial farms.¹⁶⁵² This presents a serious potential gap in enforcement since the majority of working children are found on farms or in domestic service.

The MOMM established and began to pilot a central database to monitor child labor during the reporting period.¹⁶⁵³

The Ministry of the Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office enforce laws and regulations prohibiting trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. In late 2009, the Ministry of the Interior established a special unit to combat child trafficking.¹⁶⁵⁴ The Public Prosecutor's office provided training on forced child labor and trafficking for prosecutors working on cases involving children and created a handbook for prosecuting such cases.¹⁶⁵⁵ Enforcement data on child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children is not publicly available; however in 2009 the Government prosecuted two marriage registrars for facilitating temporary marriages of under-aged girls to foreign men.¹⁶⁵⁶ There were 22 other marriage registrars who were arrested during the year and are reportedly under investigation. In May 2009, two men in Alexandria were convicted for luring eight street children into prostitution and were sentenced to prison.¹⁶⁵⁷

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Egypt continues to implement the 2006 "First National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor." In 2009, MOMM formed a committee to develop a National Action Plan to combat the worst forms of child labor, with representation from the Government, trade unions, and employers.¹⁶⁵⁸ They have not yet drafted this National Action Plan.

In late 2009, MOMM and the ILO agreed to conduct a comprehensive survey of child labor in Egypt. The survey is being implemented by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the government statistical agency.¹⁶⁵⁹ It will provide statistics on the nature and prevalence of child labor in Egypt to guide policies and programs to address the problem.

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

The Ministry of State for Family and Population has implemented pilot projects to withdraw children from hazardous child labor and increase family incomes.¹⁶⁶⁰ However, these programs are not sufficient to address the number of children in the worst forms of child labor, especially those working in agriculture and domestic service. The Ministry also launched awareness-raising campaigns in 2009 and 2010 to address the commercial sexual exploitation of young girls through temporary summer marriages in Lower Egypt.¹⁶⁶¹

The Government is participating in a USDOL-funded 4-year project which provides educational and other social services to 10,300 children targeted to be withdrawn or prevented from exploitive labor primarily in the informal sector.

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) created a 24-hour child labor hotline and implemented awareness-raising campaigns against the worst forms of child labor.¹⁶⁶² NCCM's anti-trafficking unit is mandated to spread awareness about trafficking in Egypt and to provide services to child victims of forced child labor and trafficking.¹⁶⁶³ During the reporting period, NCCM opened a rehabilitation center for child victims of human trafficking.¹⁶⁶⁴

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

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Amend legislation to protect children involved in the worst forms of child labor in exempted areas such as seasonal labor, apprenticeships, domestic service, and agriculture.
- Amend the *Child Law* by increasing the age of compulsory education to 15.
- Amend *Decree 118* to prohibit all children under the age of 18 from involvement in specific work activities that expose them to physical, psychological, or sex exploitation, or to physical, chemical, biological, or mechanical dangers; include specific hazardous tasks in agriculture and other sectors for which there is evidence of worst forms of child labor.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Create enforcement mechanisms to protect children employed as domestic servants, on family farms, and in the informal sector.
- Create monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to protect children younger than 15 who are working seasonally as agriculture laborers or in apprenticeship situations from dangerous or exploitative working conditions.

IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Assess pilot programs addressing the worst forms of child labor with a view toward expanding those that are most successful and targeting children involved in agriculture and domestic service;
- Continue to raise awareness of employers, families, and labor inspectors on the hazardous occupations for children below the age of 18.

¹⁶²² Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates*, 2005-2010. Data provided are from 2005. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics on children's work are reported here, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used for these statistics, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section.

¹⁶²³ Leila Reem, "Child labour online," *Al-Ahram Weekly* (Cairo), July 09, 2008; available from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/904/eg7.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Cairo, reporting, February 10, 2010, section 2A.1. See also U.S. Department of State, "Egypt," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*, Washington, DC, March 11, 2010, section 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136067.htm>.

¹⁶²⁴ Dan McDougall, "Working flat out - the child labour behind your Egyptian cotton sheets," *The Observer* (London), June 08, 2008; available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/jun/08/childprotection.humanrights>.

¹⁶²⁵ Ibid. See also Julia Simon, *Children keep Egypt's cotton spinning*, pursuant to Marketplace, July 07, 2010;

available from <http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/07/07/pm-children-keep-egypt-cotton-spinning/>. See also Gamal Nkrumah, "Picking on cotton," *Al-Ahram Weekly* (Cairo), July 16, 2008; available from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/905/feature.htm>.

¹⁶²⁶ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, reporting, February 10, 2010, section 2A.1. See also Nkrumah, "Picking on cotton." See also Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), *The Deadly Chemicals in Cotton*, Environmental Justice Foundation in collaboration with Pesticide Action Network UK, London, UK, 2007; available from http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdf/the_deadly_chemicals_in_cotton.pdf.

¹⁶²⁷ Agence France-Presse, "Study Highlights Egypt's 'invisible' child workers," *France 24* (Issy-les-Moulineaux, France), June 17, 2010; available from http://www.france24.com/en/20100617-study-highlights-egypts-invisible-child-workers?quicktabs_1=1. See also Yasmine M. Ahmed and Ray Jureidini, *An Exploratory Study on Child Domestic Workers in Egypt*, Terre des hommes, American University of Cairo Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, Cairo, June 2010, 7-11.

¹⁶²⁸ The Associated Press, "Egypt: child workers a growing problem as food prices rise," *International Herald Tribune*, April 3, 2008; available from <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17211>. See also United Nations World Food Programme, *Rapid Assessment: Identification of Worst Forms of Child Labor in Beni Sweif, Assiut, Sohag and Red Sea*, May, 2007.

¹⁶²⁹ WFP, *Rapid Assessment: Identification of Worst Forms of*

Child Labor in Beni Sweif, Assiut, Sohag and Red Sea, May 2007, section V.A. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), “Egypt: Focus on child labour”, IRINnews.org, [online], June 28, 2010 [cited July 14, 2010]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?Reportid=89653>.

¹⁶³⁰ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section 2A. See also Daily Star Egypt, “Children of the quarries,” *Daily News Egypt* (Cairo), April 10, 2006; available from <http://www.dailystaregypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=1153>.

¹⁶³¹ U.S. Department of State, “Egypt “ in *Trafficking in Persons Report 10th Edition- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142759.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Egypt,” section 6.

¹⁶³² Abt Enterprises LLC, *Rapid Situation Assessment of Street Children in Cairo and Alexandria*, UNICEF, 2001, section II.10-12; available from http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/EGY_2001_005.pdf.

¹⁶³³ Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), “Egypt: Minors sold for prostitution under guise of marriage”, IRINnews.org, [online], November 16, 2006 [cited July 15, 2010]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=61947>. See also Heba El-Sherif, “Ministry starts campaign against underage, summer marriages,” *Daily News Egypt* (Cairo), July 15, 2010; available from http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=121050&catid=1&Itemid=183. See also Y. Admon and L. Azuri, *In Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Conflict Escalates over Child Bride Marriages*, The Middle East Media Research Institute, March 10, 2010; available from <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2469455/posts>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Egypt.” See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Egypt,” section 6.

¹⁶³⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Egypt.”

¹⁶³⁵ Ibid. See also U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 16, 2010*.

¹⁶³⁶ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section 2B.1. See also Government of Egypt, *On Amending Provisions of the Child Law*, Law No. 126 of the Year 2008, (June 15, 2008), Article 3.

¹⁶³⁷ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section 2B.1. See also Government of Egypt, *Labour Law*, Law No. 12 of the Year 2003, (April 07, 2003); available from <http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/labour/default.aspx> or <http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/pdf/Book2.pdf>. See also Government of Egypt, *Decree Concerning the Rules and Procedures Regulating Vocational Apprenticeship*, Decree No. 175 of 2003, (August 31, 2003), Article 8.

¹⁶³⁸ Government of Egypt, *Labour Law of 2003*, Article 4.

¹⁶³⁹ Ibid., Article 103.

¹⁶⁴⁰ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section 2B.1. See also Government of Egypt, *Decree Determining the System of Employing Children, and the Conditions, Terms and Cases in Which They Are Employed*

as well as the Works, Vocations, and Industries in which it is Prohibited to Employ Them, According to the Different Stages of Age, Ministry of Manpower and Migration Decree No. 118 of the Year 2003, (June 30, 2003).

¹⁶⁴¹ Government of Egypt, *Decree No. 118 of the Year 2003*.

¹⁶⁴² Ibid.

¹⁶⁴³ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section 2B.1. See also Government of Egypt, *Law No. 126 of the Year 2008*.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Government of Egypt, *Law No. 126 of the Year 2008*, Article 5 (31-Bis).

¹⁶⁴⁵ Government of Egypt, *The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt*, (May 22, 1980), Article 18; available from <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/mideast/EG/Egyptian%20Constitution%20-%20english.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Government of Egypt, *Law No. 126 of the Year 2008*, Article Two (65-Bis).

¹⁶⁴⁷ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section I.1.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Government of Egypt, *Law No. 126 of the Year 2008*, Article (97). See also U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section I.1.

¹⁶⁵⁰ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section I.1.

¹⁶⁵¹ Ibid., section I.4-14.

¹⁶⁵² Ibid.

¹⁶⁵³ ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Observation concerning Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (no. 138), Egypt (ratification: 1999)*, [online] 2010 [cited July 20, 2010]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/gbe/ceacr2010.htm>.

¹⁶⁵⁴ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section I.1.

¹⁶⁵⁵ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, March 04, 2009*, section 2.B.

¹⁶⁵⁶ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section I.4-12. See also U.S. Embassy - Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2009*, section I.4-12. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Egypt.” See also Y. Admon and Azuri, *In Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Conflict Escalates over Child Bride Marriages*. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Egypt.”

¹⁶⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*, section I.4-12. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Egypt.”

¹⁶⁵⁸ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*. See also WFP official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, August 8, 2010.

¹⁶⁵⁹ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2010*.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶¹ El-Sherif, “Ministry starts campaign against underage, summer marriages.”

¹⁶⁶² U.S. Embassy - Cairo, *reporting, February 10, 2009*.

¹⁶⁶³ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *reporting, March 04, 2009*.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.