

In 2013, Egypt made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified the 2014 Constitution, which establishes a new minimum age for work that is harmonized with the compulsory education age and prohibitions on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and hazardous work for children under the age of 18. Implementing legislation will be necessary in order for these protections to take effect. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood increased its efforts to combat trafficking through training and awareness raising activities. Finally, the Government started to participate in an EU-funded program with an \$81.5 million component designed to provide access to education for children vulnerable to entry into child labor. However, children in Egypt continue to engage in child labor, including in agriculture and domestic service. The Government has not addressed gaps in its legal and enforcement framework to protect children.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Egypt are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and domestic service.(1) Data from the 2010 National Child Labor Survey indicate that 55 percent of all child laborers work in agriculture. Boys are three times more likely to engage in child labor.(1) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Egypt.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	6.7 (993,417)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	88.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	6.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		107.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(2)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2005.(3)

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	Picking cotton (4-7)
	Caring for livestock† (4)
	Fishing,* activities unknown (4, 8)
Industry	Quarrying limestone† (5, 6, 9)
	Making bricks* (5, 10)
	Construction, activities unknown (9, 11)
Services	Domestic service (12-16)
	Work in automobile workshops (5, 10)
	Street work, including selling goods, begging, shining shoes, collecting garbage, and carrying goods (6, 9, 13, 16-20)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Domestic service, agricultural labor, and commercial sexual exploitation, as a result of human trafficking (15-17, 19-22)
	Forced begging (16, 22, 23)

\* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

† 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.

Anecdotal reports indicate that the poor economic situation in Egypt led to an increase in the number of children working on the streets in 2013.(22) Some working children are also trafficked internally, primarily to urban centers and tourist destinations. Children who are trafficked internally are involved in domestic service, agricultural labor, and commercial sexual exploitation.(15, 17, 19-21, 24) Street children are especially vulnerable to internal trafficking for begging or commercial sexual exploitation.(23, 24)

Cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children have been reported in a number of governorates, including Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor.(21, 24, 25) In return for payments, parents give their young daughters into “temporary (or summer) marriages” to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Gulf countries.(17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26-28)




The ongoing political transition in Egypt, heightened by an economic crisis, and recurring periods of violence, has increased children’s vulnerability to child labor, including hazardous child labor. This situation has also hampered the development of policies by the Government to address the worst forms of child labor.(6, 21, 28)

Costs associated with school attendance and cultural practices keep many children out of school. The costs of school fees, books, and uniforms are prohibitive for lower income families. This causes some children to drop out of school or, most often in the case of girls who face certain cultural barriers, results in their parents not sending them to school in the first place.(18, 29, 30)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Egypt has ratified all 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, including its worst forms (Table 4).

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor**

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 64 of the Child Protection Law (6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Ministry of Manpower and Migration’s (MOMM) Decree 118 (31)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	Yes		MOMM Decree 118 (31)

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)**

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 12 of the Constitution (32)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 291 of the Child Protection Law; Penal Code; Civil Status Law (19, 33, 34)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 291 of the Child Protection Law; Penal Code; Civil Status Law (19, 33, 34)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		MOMM Decree 118 (31)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Military and National Service Act (1980) (35, 36)
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	16	Military and National Service Act (1980) (35, 36)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Child Protection Law (33)
Free Public Education	Yes		Child Protection Law (33)

The Egyptian Constitution was passed by referendum in January 2014.(6, 32) The Constitution prohibits trafficking and forced labor, and expands the rights of children, including establishing a new right to free early education in a childhood center until age 6. However, legislation implementing the forced labor protection has not been enacted. Article 80 of the Constitution sets a minimum age for work that is harmonized with the compulsory education age, prohibits hazardous work by children under the age of 18, and calls for the protection of children from all types of commercial and sexual exploitation.(6, 32) The new Constitution also requires the state to allocate a minimum of 4 percent of GDP to education.(32) Enforcement and implementation of Article 80 is pending the passage of new or amended legislation. Until then, existing laws on child labor remain in effect.(6)

The Child Protection Law sets the minimum age for regular employment at 15, and at 13 for seasonal employment.(6) The Unified Labor Code allows children as young as 13 years old to work as apprentices.(6, 37, 38) The Unified Labor Code limits the hours children can work and mandates that they be allowed shift breaks. However, children working in domestic work, in family businesses, and in agriculture are excluded from coverage by the Unified Labor Code.(37)

The Ministry of Manpower and Migration’s (MOMM) Decree 118 bars children under age 18 from 44 occupations and certain dangerous work activities; however, some dangerous tasks that children perform are not explicitly prohibited by this decree, particularly in the agriculture and domestic service sectors. For instance, although children are prohibited from preparing or spraying pesticides, they are not prohibited from working in fields just after pesticides have been applied.(4, 29) Decree 118 also prohibits children under age 16 from performing work that exposes them to physical, or sexual exploitation, or to chemical, biological, or mechanical dangers; but it does not define these terms.(31) These protections do not apply to children ages 16–17.

The Child Protection Law provides for compulsory and free education at the primary and secondary stages of education (known in Egypt as “preparatory”), which amounts to a total of 9 years, from approximately ages 6 to 15, depending on when a child starts school.(11, 33)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

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

Organization/Agency	Role
MOMM	Enforce child labor laws and regulations, including receiving child labor complaints and sending labor inspectors to investigate them.(6, 39)
Ministry of the Interior and Prosecutor General’s Office	Enforce laws and regulations prohibiting trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Refer relevant cases to National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM).(6, 28, 39)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecute employers of children found in violation of the Unified Labor Code.(6)

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)**

Organization/Agency	Role
NCCM; Ministry of Local Administration and Development	Enforce child protection laws.(30)

Law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

### *Labor Law Enforcement*

Labor inspectors from MOMM have the authority to inspect businesses, industrial facilities, and commercial agricultural enterprises to ensure legal compliance with child labor regulations, including those related to its worst forms.(6, 39) There is no enforcement mechanism to protect children working on private noncommercial farms, in unregistered businesses, or in private homes as domestic workers.(9)

MOMM’s primary way of responding to child labor is by using a child labor complaints mechanism. When the child labor complaint is filed a labor inspector responds to the violation.(6) MOMM employs more than 500 labor inspectors, all of whom can inspect workplaces for child labor violations.(6) The budget for labor inspections is not publicly available.(6) During 2013, MOMM conducted inspections specifically for child labor in 6,732 workplaces, of which 1,466 sites were found to employ a total of 9,268 children, in violation of the law. MOMM reportedly issued warnings to all workplaces found in violation.(6) In response, 1,400 workplaces complied with the warning and ceased the illegal employment of children. The remaining 66 workplaces were referred to the Prosecutor General’s office, and the courts ordered all 66 employers to pay a fine of \$72 per illegally-employed child, according to government officials.(6) MOMM reported that the number of labor inspectors and of labor inspections is not enough to address the magnitude of child labor in Egypt.(6) MOMM did not provide information on the number of children assisted or removed as a result of the investigations.(6)

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) provided technical and financial support to train MOMM labor inspectors on child labor. In addition, MOMM provided 300 small “in-house” training programs for 400 labor inspectors on Egypt’s commitments to child labor, the national legislative framework, and polices on child labor.(6)

MOMM conducted training and provided equipment to authorities to support the operation of a child labor monitoring database that will track children working, or at risk of working, in the worst forms of child labor. According to MOMM, the database will be launched in 2014.(28, 30, 40)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2013, there were 10 ongoing trafficking investigations and prosecutions of trafficking offenders under the 2010 Combating Human Trafficking law; half of the investigations involved forced child labor.(22)

IOM, in coordination with NCCM, conducted anti-trafficking training for 4,650 officials, including 550 prosecutors and judges.(22) Reports indicate that, because of this training, the number of trafficking victims being treated as criminals decreased.(22)

## **IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR**

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

**Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Coordination Committee (NCC) on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons	Coordinate efforts to combat human trafficking, including women and children. Led by the Deputy Minister of Justice with committee members from the Ministries of Justice, Interior, the General Intelligence Service, and Councils for Human Rights, Childhood and Motherhood, and Women.(6, 22, 41)

**Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (cont)**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
NCCM	Focal point for the National Protection Program, which identifies and monitors children at risk, including those vulnerable to exploitative labor.(39, 42) Oversees a committee comprising various ministries, international agencies, and civil society organizations to address the issue of domestic workers.(43, 44)
Child Protection Committees	Coordinate child protection efforts at the local level. Organized at the governorate level, with subcommittees at each police station.(34, 39, 45)

In 2013, oversight of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) was transferred from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Justice and now reports directly to the Prime Minister. This realignment is meant to assist with the prosecution of traffickers.(22)

In 2009, MOMM organized a national committee to coordinate government efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor and develop a national action plan to eliminate child labor.(39) The committee has been inactive since 2011 and, due to the political transition, did not meet during the reporting period.(28) Child protection committees are currently operating in 15 of Egypt's 27 governorates; other subcommittees are operating at the district level.(30)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Egypt has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

**Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
First National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor*	Aims to identify vulnerable children and remove them from child labor.(39, 45)
National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking*	Currently in draft form, the plan prioritizes and coordinates activities to combat human trafficking and identifies the relevant Ministries responsible for their execution.(22, 46) The Plan includes a victim assistance fund and a statistical data management system and prioritizes combating the trafficking of street children.(21)

\*The impact of this policy on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

During the reporting period, the political situation impeded progress towards the finalization of a national action plan to implement the First National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor.(30)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, the Government of Egypt funded and participated in programs that aim to, or may contribute to, the elimination or prevention of child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

**Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Socio-Economic Development and Civil Society Support Program‡	\$123 million EU-funded program with a \$81.5 million component to enhance access to education for children, especially girls, in order eliminate child labor in the poorest areas of Egypt.(47, 48) Will target 90,000 children, support 3,800 community based schools, provide families of targeted children with vocational training and link them to social protection schemes.(48)
Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor through Education and Livelihood Interventions in Egypt	USDOL-funded, 4-year, \$9.5 million project to provide educational services for children engaged in or at risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and enhanced livelihood opportunities for members of their households in Upper Egypt and the Delta region.(40, 49, 50) From April to September 2013, provided educational services to 2,748 children at risk of or engaged in the worst forms of child labor and economic strengthening services to 1,263 mothers.(51)
Shelters for Street Children	Program by NCCM, in cooperation with NGOs that operates shelters and provides support services to street children. A center for male street children is operated by a Belgian NGO and NCCM; the center provided services to 1,482 children during the reporting period.(22)
Child Rights Program‡	Program operated by UNICEF, in cooperation with the Government that aims to improve children's rights. Works to improve the quality and coverage of child protection services and programs to prevent violence against children.(52)

**Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)**

Program	Description
Child Help Hotline	NCCM-managed 24-hour child help hotline, which can be used to report cases of child exploitation.(19, 20, 22, 53)
Awareness Raising Campaigns*	NCCM program generating awareness of trafficking violations and victims services through teacher training, pamphlets, and advertising.(22)
Programs for Victims of Trafficking, including Care Centers and Shelters	Program by NCCM, the Ministry of Health, and NGOs providing two health centers and shelter for trafficking victims, including women and children.(20, 21, 24, 41, 54, 55) IOM, in cooperation with NCCM, provided protection and assistance to 177 trafficking victims.(22, 28)
Food Security Support*‡	Program by WFP, in cooperation with the Government, implementing a 4-year project that works to improve food security, nutritional status, and access to socioeconomic opportunities for 800,000 beneficiaries, including women, children, and vulnerable communities.(56-59)

\* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

‡ Program was launched during the reporting period.

There was no information available on the number of complaints, including the number that involved children exploited in child labor, to the Child Help Hotline. Research found no evidence of programs to address child trafficking through “temporary marriages.”(22)

## VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Egypt (Table 9).

**Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Laws	Enact legislation to implement relevant provisions of the 2014 Constitution.	2013
	Harmonize national laws with international standards and the 2014 Constitution to protect children under the age of 18 from hazardous work.	2009 – 2013
Enforcement	Develop monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to protect children working as domestic servants, on private farms, or in unregistered businesses, all of which are currently outside the purview of the labor inspectorate.	2012, 2013
	Increase number of labor inspectors and number of child labor inspections to allow for effective investigations of child labor violations.	2012, 2013
	Ensure that data on government enforcement of trafficking in persons and commercial sexual exploitation of children, including data related to investigations of children sold into “temporary marriage,” are made publicly available.	2011 – 2013
Coordination	Ensure that the National Coordinating Committee is reactivated and operational during the current period of government transition.	2011 – 2013
Government Policies	Implement the First National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor.	2010 – 2013
	Adopt and implement policies to guarantee access to free public education for all children, including by addressing prohibitive costs of school fees and supplies that prevent many students from completing their education, particularly girls.	2010 – 2013
Social Programs	Expand programs to prevent and protect children from trafficking and sexual exploitation, including girls exploited through “temporary marriages.”	2010 – 2013
	Systematically assess the impact of existing social, education, and poverty reduction programs on child labor.	2010 – 2013
	Make publicly available information on the number of complaints, including the number that involved children exploited in child labor, to the Child Help Hotline.	2013

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