

In 2018, Egypt made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Social Solidarity provided supplemental financial support to over 1.6 million individuals to support children's school attendance. The government also supported the enrollment of 44,000 refugee children in schools and formally adopted the National Plan of Action Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Family and the National Strategy on Childhood and Motherhood, which also has a section on child labor. However, children in Egypt engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in quarrying limestone. The government did not publish data on the enforcement of child labor laws. In addition, programs to combat child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Egypt engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in quarrying limestone. (I-5) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Egypt.

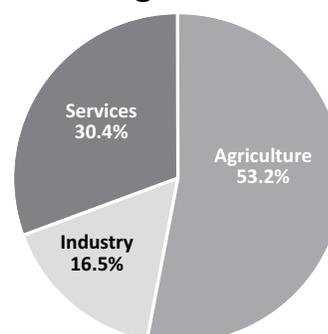
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|----------|---------------|
| Working (% and population) | 10 to 14 | 2.9 (246,179) |
| Attending School (%) | 10 to 14 | 93.8 |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 10 to 14 | 1.3 |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 95 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Survey of Young People in Egypt, 2009. (7)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



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 the production of cotton (4,8-11) |
| | Caring for livestock (4,11,12) |
| | Fishing, activities unknown (4,13) |
| Industry | Quarrying† limestone (1-4) |
| | Making bricks (4,14-18) |
| | Working in carpentry workshops (4,19,20) |
| | Working in marble workshops (21,22) |
| | Construction, activities unknown (4,11,18,23) |
| | Working in aluminum factories (4,24) |
| Services | Domestic work (4,12,18) |
| | Driving tuktuks (4,25,26) |

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

| Sector/Industry | Activity |
|---|---|
| Services | Repairing automobiles (4,27) |
| | Street work, including selling goods, collecting garbage, and sweeping (4,8,19,23,28) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Domestic work as a result of human trafficking (13,29) |
| | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,5,30) |
| | Forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,5,31) |

† 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.

Some girls are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation under the pretext of temporary marriage to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Persian Gulf countries. (4,13,30) In the past 2 years, Egyptian children were trafficked to Italy, where they were used for bonded child labor, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit activities. (11,29,32-37) Although the numbers decreased in 2017, and further in 2018, approximately 930 unaccompanied Egyptian children were registered in Italy in 2018 and another 300 had escaped from their shelters in Italy. Some Egyptian children continued to fall victim to labor exploitation in agriculture and food services, and some were sexually exploited. (38)

Many children drop out of school because of school-related costs, such as transportation, clothing, and food. (4,10,13) Girls face additional barriers to education, including long distances to school, harassment and violence at school and on the way to school, lack of sanitation facilities, and cultural barriers. (13,39) However, in academic year 2017–2018, the government helped enroll 44,000 refugee children in schools, not all of whom were registered with UNHCR. (40) Of these, approximately 40,000 Syrian refugee children received education grants from UN agencies to enroll in school. (41)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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 (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Egypt’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

| Standard | Meets International Standards | Age | Legislation |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|---|
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 15 | Article 64 of the Child Law (42) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Article 1 of Ministry of Manpower’s Decree 118 (43) |

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

| Standard | Meets International Standards | Age | Legislation |
|---|-------------------------------|-----|--|
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | Yes | | Articles 1–2 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 118 (43) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes | | Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2–3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (42,44,45) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2–3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (42,44,45) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | No | | Article 116-bis (a) of the Child Law; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2–3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking; Articles 1–4 and 6 of the Law on the Combating of Prostitution (42,45,46) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes | | Article 34 of the Law on Narcotics; Article 65 of the Child Law; Article 2.2 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 118 (42,43,47) |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment | Yes | 15 | Ministry of Defense Guidelines on Youth Volunteers in the Armed Forces (48) |
| Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military | Yes | | Article 1 of the Law on Military and National Service (49) |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups | Yes | | Article 7-bis(b) of the Child Law (42) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 15‡ | Article 59(1) of the Child Law; Articles 80 and 238 of the Constitution (42,44) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 54 of the Child Law (42) |

‡ Age calculated based on available information (32,50)

Laws prohibiting the commercial sexual exploitation of children are not comprehensive because they do not criminally prohibit the use of a child in prostitution, although procuring of children for commercial sexual exploitation is covered under the Child Law. (42)

The law prohibits hazardous occupations and activities for children, including in quarrying, tanning, welding, spraying pesticides, and carrying heavy loads. (43) However, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover brick production, an area of work in which there is evidence of exposure to hazardous temperatures. (14,15,17,18)

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 Manpower that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

| Organization/Agency | Role |
|--|---|
| Ministry of Manpower | Enforces child labor laws and regulations, including receiving and investigating child labor complaints. Inspectors conduct routine labor inspections and report violations to the Ministry of the Interior, which then refers the case for prosecution. (13) |
| Ministry of the Interior | Enforces laws and regulations prohibiting human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (13) |
| Ministry of Justice, Prosecutor General's Office | Prosecutes violation of laws related to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking. (13) |
| Ministry of Local Development | Provides administrative and logistical support for the enforcement of child labor laws. Administers the Child Protection Committees. (13) |
| Administrative Control Authority | Investigates government corruption and trafficking in persons, and reports violations to the Ministry of the Interior, which refers the case for prosecution. (51) |

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Manpower 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 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|--------------|-------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors | Unknown (13) | 530 (4) |
| Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties | No (13) | No (4) |
| Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors | Yes (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor | N/A | N/A |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Yes (13) | Yes (18) |
| Number of Labor Inspections Conducted | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Number Conducted at Worksite | 3,388 (52) | Unknown (4) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found | 509 (52) | 602 (51) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Routine Inspections Conducted | Yes (13) | Yes (4) |
| Routine Inspections Targeted | Unknown (13) | Yes (4) |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted | Yes (13) | Yes (4) |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted | Yes (13) | Yes (4) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists | Yes (13) | Yes (4) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (13) | Yes (4) |

In 2018, the Ministry of Manpower continued its cooperation with the ILO on labor inspector training. From November 2013 to March 2018, the Ministry provided training on core labor standards to 911 labor inspectors. (18) During the reporting period, the government issued 6,663 formal warnings for labor violations, and filed 602 violation reports. (51) Additionally, from January 2017 to March 2018, the Ministry referred 74 institutions to the Prosecutor General's Office for child labor violations. During the same period, the Ministry protected approximately 19,000 children from child labor. (50) It is unclear if all of these children were engaged in child labor or were at risk. (50)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Egypt's workforce, which includes over 29.95 million workers. (53) According to the ILO's technical advice of 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Egypt would employ about 1,997 inspectors. (54,55) The government does not publish information about the funding of the inspectorate, initial training for new inspectors, the number of inspections, and penalties for violations. (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Egypt 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 disaggregation of human trafficking enforcement data on children.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|--------------|-------------|
| Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor | Unknown (13) | N/A |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Yes (56) | Yes (57) |
| Number of Investigations | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|--------------|-------------|
| Number of Violations Found | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Number of Convictions | Unknown (13) | Unknown (4) |
| Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor | Unknown | Unknown |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (13) | Yes (4) |

In 2018, government bodies, such as the National Coordination Committee on Preventing Illegal Migration and Combating Trafficking in Persons, provided training on human trafficking to 261 judges, 159 public prosecutors, 98 police officers, and other government officials, social workers and civil society representatives, and journalists. (57) The Ministry of the Interior investigated 78 cases of human trafficking, prosecuted 11 cases, and convicted 40 individuals. At the end of year, there were 32 pending prosecutions and 21 active investigations. (57) At least some cases involved child trafficking, but the exact disaggregate number is unavailable. (57)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including among government agencies.

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

| Coordinating Body | Role & Description |
|--|--|
| National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) | Coordinates enforcement of laws related to child labor, including its worst forms. Provides technical support and training about child labor for the Ministry of Manpower's inspectors. (7) Identifies and monitors at-risk children. Manages two 24-hour hotlines and receives reports of child labor and child trafficking. (13) In 2018, NCCM held consultative workshops with government partners and NGOs to implement the National Strategic Plan to Counter Violence against Children, which includes elements to counter sexual exploitation of children. (40) NCCM also provided human trafficking training of trainers, who subsequently held sessions with 720 children. An additional 700 children received awareness messaging through interactive skits. (57) Because of awareness-raising campaigns, NCCM reported an increase in the number of reports of irregular migrations and child trafficking that it received in 2018. NCCM also cooperated with other government agencies and signed a protocol to establish a shelter for survivors of human trafficking. (57) |
| National Coordinating Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor | Coordinates the efforts of the Ministries of Manpower, Justice, Social Solidarity, and the Interior; the Council for Human Rights, Childhood, and Motherhood; and the Council for Women, for drafting a National Strategy to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (13) Research was unable to determine whether the National Coordinating Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor was active during the reporting period. |
| National Coordination Committee on Preventing Illegal Migration and Combating Trafficking in Persons | Coordinates efforts to combat human trafficking. Led by an Ambassador appointed by the Prime Minister, comprises 18 government entities, including the Ministries of the Interior and Manpower. (13) In 2018, the Committee carried out a national campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking. Projects included a photo exhibit, a music video featuring several pop stars that was viewed 8 million times, a media campaign on the treatment of domestic workers, updated information on its Facebook page, publication of a book on children on the move, and a manual for NGOs on countering human trafficking. (57,58) Despite efforts, insufficient coordination prevents effective collaboration of government agencies and NGOs. (57) |
| Child Protection Committees | Coordinates child protection efforts at the local level. Led by the Ministry of Social Solidarity and chaired by local governors in each governorate, with subcommittees at each police station. (13) In January 2019, NCCM re-established Child Protection Committees that had previously been inactive. (57) |

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 Plan of Action Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Family (2018–2025)† | Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and identify roles of government agencies responsible for assisting child laborers. (13) Developed in 2017 and formally adopted in 2018, the strategic objectives of the National Plan of Action include expansion of the child labor knowledge base; capacity building of agencies providing support; social protection, with links to existing programs; enhanced education, including vocational education for children; and advocacy and awareness raising. (18) |
| Third National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking (2016–2021) | Aims to maintain referral mechanisms, train law enforcement officials, and combat trafficking of street children. (13) During the reporting period, the National Coordination Committee on Preventing Illegal Migration and Combating Trafficking in Persons began to work on improving the national referral mechanism. Several government agencies provided human trafficking training to officials. (52) In 2017 and 2018, the Ministry of Social Solidarity provided services to thousands of children who engage in street work. (52) |
| National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood (2018–2030)† | The child labor chapter aims to promote dialogue on child labor legislation, including updating the hazardous work list; building the capacity of relevant government agencies, such the Ministry of Manpower and NCCM; developing programs to address child labor; and expanding education and vocational training opportunities. (4) |

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, 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 the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

| Program | Description |
|--|---|
| Enhancing Access of Children to Education and Fighting Child Labor (2014–2018) | \$65 million, EU-funded, 4-year project implemented by the WFP to provide food security for up to 100,000 children at risk of child labor and financial assistance to 400,000 family members to compensate for wages that child labor would have otherwise generated, enabling children to attend school. (59) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period. |
| Expanding Access to Education and Protection for At-Risk Children in Egypt (2016–2021) | \$32 million, EU-funded project implemented by UNICEF in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the NCCM to expand access to education for 36,000 children, including 6,000 children with disabilities, and to support 15 Child Protection Committees in 15 governorates. (60) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement Expanding Access to Education and Protection for at Risk Children in Egypt during the reporting period. |
| Solidarity and Dignity Program (Takaful and Karama)† | Funded by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the program promotes schools attendance and health monitoring for children by providing income supplements to poor families. (4) In 2018, the program had over 1.6 million participants. (40) |
| Children without Shelter† | The Ministry of Social Solidarity operates shelters for victims of human trafficking, child victims of trafficking and forced labor, and other vulnerable individuals. Dar as-Salam, operated by the NCCM and an NGO, Face, provides social services, including psychological counseling and health services. (63) Mobile units in 10 governorates work to reintegrate children with their families or place them in foster care. (40) In 2018, the units provided legal, medical, social, and psychological services to over 14,600 children. (57) |

† Program is funded by the Government of Egypt.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education began providing training sessions for educators and administrators on human trafficking, forced marriage, and child labor. (57)

Although Egypt has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to address fully the extent of the problem, particularly for commercial sexual exploitation and quarrying limestone.

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 Egypt (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children for commercial sexual exploitation. | 2017 – 2018 |
| | Ensure that the types of work that children perform in Egypt that expose them to hazardous temperatures, such as brick production, are prohibited for children under age 18. | 2017 – 2018 |
| Enforcement | Publish information on labor inspection, including the funding, initial training for inspectors, number of labor inspections, and penalties imposed and collected. | 2011 – 2018 |
| | Strengthen the labor inspectorate by authorizing inspectors to assess penalties. | 2017 – 2018 |
| | Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice. | 2018 |
| | Publish information on initial training for criminal investigators and the disaggregate number of violations, investigations, prosecutions, and convictions for criminal violations of child labor laws. | 2011 – 2018 |
| Coordination | Ensure the National Coordinating Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor is able to carry out their intended mandates, and ensure effective collaboration between government agencies and other stakeholders. | 2017 – 2018 |
| Social Programs | Ensure universal access to free public education, especially for girls, by addressing the cost of school fees, supplies, and other barriers to education. | 2010 – 2018 |
| | Expand programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation and in quarrying limestone. | 2010 – 2018 |

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