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2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Egypt

Moderate Advancement

In 2022, Egypt made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government approved an updated National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons, which includes outcomes related to reducing child labor. The government also provided comprehensive criminal law enforcement data for inclusion in this report for the first time, and investigated 107 crimes involving 237 individuals, initiated 171 prosecutions, and achieved 70 convictions related to the worst forms of child labor. However, children in Egypt are subjected to 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 its efforts to enforce its child labor laws, including labor inspectorate resources, number of child labor violations found, and penalties imposed for child labor violations. Additionally, programs to address child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem, particularly the lack of targeted programming to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child labor in limestone quarrying.

I. Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Egypt.

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	6 to 14	3.3 (583,290)
Working children by sector	6 to 14	
Agriculture		10.4
Industry		82.4
Services		7.2

Children	Age	Percent
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	96.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		66.1

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2022, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2020. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of cotton† (5)
	Tending livestock and poultry (6,7)
	Fishing, activities unknown (6)
Industry	Quarrying† limestone (5,7,9)
	Making bricks (3-5,9,10)
	Working in carpentry workshops (6)
	Construction, activities unknown (4,5,10)
Services	Domestic work (3-5,10,11)
	Driving <i>tuktuks</i> (5)
	Repairing automobiles (3-5)
	Street work, including selling goods and collecting garbage (5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced domestic work (3,5,8,12)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-5,12-15)
	Forced begging (3,4,12)
	Trafficking of drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,12,15)

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

† 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.

In Egypt, some children are forced by their immediate and extended families into sexual exploitation, begging, domestic work, and factory labor. (12,13) In addition, some girls are subjected to commercial sexual

exploitation under the pretext of temporary marriage, sometimes called "summer marriage," to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Persian Gulf countries. (3-5)

Children in Egypt face barriers to education, including access to identity documentation and the associated costs of attending school, such as school fees. Enrolling in public school requires a certified birth certificate, which some children born out of wedlock or born to parents of differing religions lack. (5) Children also drop out of school because of school-related costs, such as educational supplies, transportation, and clothing. (6) A lack of qualified teachers, poorly maintained schools, sanitation issues, classroom density, insufficient infrastructure, and bullying in schools prevent some children from attending school. (3) In rural communities, children face difficulties getting to school due to long commuting distances. In addition, girls face additional barriers to education, especially in rural Egypt, including harassment on the way to school, as well as cultural barriers. (3,8)

The government offers refugee children access to the public education system; however, refugee children are subjected to racism and bullying, and face language barriers. In response, some non-Egyptians residing in the country, such as those from Sudan, have organized independent school systems unaffiliated with the government for their children. (3,16)

II. Legal Framework for Child Labor

Egypt has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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	✓

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

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 incomplete hazardous work prohibitions for children.

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 64 and 74 of the Child Law (17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 3 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215; Articles 1 and 3 of the Child Law (17,32)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1, 3, and Table 1 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215 (32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (17,19,20)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (17,19,20)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 116- <i>bis</i> (a) of the Child Law; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2,3, 5, and 6 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking; Articles 1-4 and 6 of the Law on the Combating of Prostitution (17,20,21)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 34 of the Law on Narcotics; Article 65 of the Child Law; Article 3 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215 (17,22,32)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No	15	Ministry of Defense Guidelines on Youth Volunteers in the Armed Forces (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Military and National Service (24)

Standard	Meets		Age	Legislation
	International Standards			
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		No		Article 7- <i>bis</i> (b) of the Child Law (17)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes		15‡	Article 59(1) of the Child Law; Articles 19, 80, and 238 of the Constitution (17,19)
Free Education	Public	No		Article 54 of the Child Law (17)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

‡ Age calculated based on available information (17)

The minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment does not meet international standards as it is below age 16. (23) Additionally, the law does not criminally prohibit military recruitment by non-state armed groups. (17) While public education is free by law, there are still fees for attending which, if not met, disqualify students from sitting for final exams. Not completing final exams results in a failing grade. (5,17)

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 operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Manpower	Enforces child labor laws and regulations through its inspection department, including receiving and investigating child labor complaints. Inspectors conduct labor inspections and report violations to the police, which operate under the Ministry of Interior. (5) If police investigations confirm criminal activity, cases are subsequently sent to the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO), which operates under the Ministry of Justice. (5)
Ministry of Interior	Investigates cases of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Reports violations to the Public Prosecution Office under the PGO. (3,4) Also receives reports of violations from the Administrative Control Authority, which investigates

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
	government corruption and human trafficking. (3,25)
Ministry of Justice, Prosecutor General's Office (PGO)	Prosecutes violations of laws related to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking. (3,4)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Manpower that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of inspectors.

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (26)	No (5)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (26)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (26)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (26)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (26)	Yes (5)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts specific to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this

report. Although the number of labor inspectors is unknown, research indicates that Egypt does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (27)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including in financial resource allocation.

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (26)	Yes (15)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (26)	107 (15)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (26)	161 (15)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (26)	70 (15)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (26)	Yes (15)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (26)	Yes (15)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

In 2022, Egyptian authorities investigated 107 crimes related to the worst forms of child labor involving 237 individuals. Crimes included commercial sexual exploitation and drug trafficking. (15)

IV. Coordination of Government Efforts on Child Labor

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

Coordinating Body Role & Activities

National Steering Committee Coordinates efforts to implement the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Families. Membership includes the Ministries of Manpower, Social Solidarity, Education, Agriculture, Interior, Child Labor and Planning, Finance, Investment and International Cooperation, Trade, Justice, Health, Local Development, and Awqaf, in addition to the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), the National Council of Women, the Central Agency for Population and Statistics, the

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
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National Media Agency, and Al Azhar University.
(3,4) In 2022, the committee met four times. (28)

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

V. Government Policies on Child Labor

The government has established relevant policies related to child labor (Table 9).

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan Against Worst Forms of Child Labor 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. (3,8) Other objectives include expanding the knowledge base; capacity building of agencies and providing support; providing social protection, with links to existing programs; enhancing education, including vocational education for children; and advocacy and awareness raising. (10) Active in 2022. (15)
National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking Persons (2022–2026) †	Aims to address trafficking in persons through prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnership. Includes goals such as empowering in households to combat poverty and illiteracy, preventing school dropouts, and reducing child labor. (29)
National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood (2018–2030)	Includes a child labor chapter that 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 educational and vocational training opportunities. (3,6) Active in 2022. (14)

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Program	Description & Activities
Solidarity and Dignity Program (<i>Takaful and Karama</i>)†	Funded by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS), this program promotes school attendance and health monitoring for children by providing income supplements to poor families. (3,6) This partnership between the government and the WFP, the UNDP, UNICEF, and the World Bank offers income supplements to poor families under the conditions that household children maintain at least an 80 percent attendance record in school and that mothers and children under age 6 provide demonstrable evidence of having been seen at health clinics four times per year. (3) In 2022, the number of families receiving assistance increased from 4.1 million to more than 5 million. (30)
Ministry of Social Solidarity Centers for Combating Child Labor†	MoSS-run centers, operated by partner NGOs, to provide services to children and their families. Consisting of 17 centers across 14 governorates. (28) In 2022, MoSS centers provided services to 600 children and their families. (28)
ACCEL Africa (2018–2023)	Aims to eliminate child labor in the cotton, textiles, and ready-made-garments sectors; implemented by the ILO and funded by the Dutch government. ACCEL Africa-Egypt partners with the Ministries of Manpower, Education, and Agriculture, as well as MoSS and NCCM, to improve policy, legal, and institutional frameworks. (31) Active in 2022. (5)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Egypt.

Although Egypt has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address 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).

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law establishes age 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by	2019 – 2022

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested	
	the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.		
	Ensure that there are criminal penalties for recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.	2022	
	Ensure that the law prohibits school fees for the first nine years of education.	2022	
Enforcement	Publish information on civil child labor law enforcement, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, training for labor inspectors, number of labor inspections conducted, number of child labor violations found, number of penalties imposed for child labor violations, number of penalties that were collected, whether routine inspections were conducted and whether they were targeted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2011 2022	-
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for violations of child labor laws that are not considered criminal.	2017 2022	-
	Employ at least 1,897 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 28.5 million people.	2018 2022	-
Social Programs	Ensure universal access to free public education, especially for girls and refugee children, by addressing the cost of school fees, supplies, violence in schools, lack of documentation, and other barriers to education.	2010 2022	-
	Expand programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, particularly targeted programming to prevent and address child commercial sexual exploitation and limestone quarrying.	2010 2022	-

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

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