

In 2018, Lebanon made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education adopted the Policy for the Protection of Students in the School Environment to protect children's right to education. The government also issued a new regulation for Syrian refugee children ages 15 to 17 that improves their access to education. In addition, the President launched a children's choir to raise awareness on child labor and empower former child laborers. However, children in Lebanon engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in construction and in forced labor in agriculture. Children also engage in child labor in the production of potatoes and tobacco. The Ministry of Labor's budget was unable to cover equipment, personnel, and transport costs to conduct inspections, and labor inspectors do not have the authority to assess penalties. In addition, programs targeting child labor remained insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Lebanon engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in construction and forced labor in agriculture. (1-4) Children also engage in child labor in the production of potatoes and tobacco. (2,3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Lebanon. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

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

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		74.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (5)  
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2019. (6)

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 picking potatoes, cucumbers, almonds, plums, olives, beans, figs, grapes, eggplants, and cannabis (2,3,7-14)
	Production of tobacco† (15-17)
	Fishing, activities unknown (2,18)
Industry	Construction,† including carpentry, tiling, and welding† (2,3,10,13,16,19,20)
	Working in cement factories† (19,21)
	Making handicrafts (2,18)
	Working in aluminum factories (10,22)
Services	Working in textile factories (23,24)
	Street work,† including begging, street vending, portering, washing cars, scavenging garbage,† and shining shoes (7,10,13,25-29)
	Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles,† and painting† (2,10,13,24,27)
	Domestic work† (2,10,13,30)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Cleaning sewage† and collecting waste materials, including scrap metal (2,7,13)
	Food service,† including working as waiters (2,3,10,17,25)
	Working in cemeteries, including covering bodies in shrouds, cleaning graves, and assisting with rituals (31)
	Cleaning marketplaces (7,16)
	Working in slaughterhouses† and butcheries (2,15)
	Working in small shops (2,3,25,27)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking or production, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and arms dealing (2,20,26,27,31-33)
	Forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,27)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,7,24,32,34-36)
	Forced labor in agriculture, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-4,13)
	Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (37,38)

† 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.

Child labor has increased, and conditions that affect Lebanese and Syrian children have worsened since the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon starting in 2011. (14,18,39) As of December 2018, over 948,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon were registered with UNHCR, and more than half of them were children. (40) Child labor is also prevalent in other refugee communities in Lebanon, including the Palestinian and Iraqi communities. (18,41)

Syrian girls are trafficked into Lebanon for commercial sexual exploitation under the guise of marriage. (4,20) Some boys are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly boys who work and Kurdish boys from Syria. (20,42) Working on the streets is especially common among refugee children from Syria, including Palestinians from Syria. (26)

The UN reported that several armed groups recruited children to be used as guards or in support roles, such as in carrying weapons or food. (38)







Syrian children are also subjected to forced labor in agriculture. (1-4) Some Syrian refugee children and their families in the Bekaa Valley are kept in bonded labor in agriculture to pay for makeshift dwellings provided by landowners. (1,4,14,43) Adult Syrian refugees face legal restrictions that allow them to only work in agriculture, construction, and sanitation. (2,44) To work legally, they also need to be registered with the UNHCR or have local sponsors. (44) These restrictions on adults make children vulnerable to child labor. (13,45)

In the last few years, the government waived fees for public primary schools and opened second shifts in about 240 schools. (16) But the public school system in Lebanon lacks the capacity to accommodate the large number of school-age Syrian refugee children. (2,46) Some schools refuse to enroll students who lack documentation, contradicting the official policy. (18,47,48) Over 50 percent of Syrian refugee children and 35 percent of Palestinian refugee children were not enrolled in formal education. (27,48-50) Children in Lebanon, particularly Syrian refugee children, face barriers to accessing education, including the cost of transportation and supplies, occupation of schools by armed groups or use as shelters, fear of passing checkpoints or of violence, lack of private sanitation facilities for girls, discrimination, bullying, corporal punishment, and a different curriculum in Lebanon than in their country of origin. (3,16-18,49,51-55) Children with disabilities, particularly Syrians, are either denied access to schools or do not receive additional tailored services. (54) In addition, some refugee children from Iraq and Syria do not attend Lebanese schools because many classes are taught in French or English, and refugee children do not speak these languages. (51,55) Lebanese and refugee children who work in agriculture often do not attend school during harvesting and planting seasons. (56,57) One local organization observed a direct correlation between school dropout rates and an increase in child labor. (27)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Lebanon has ratified most 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 Lebanon's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of debt bondage.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 22 of the Labor Code (58)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 1 of Decree No. 8987 (59)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (2,59)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 8 of Decree No. 3855; Article 569 of the Penal Code (60,61)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 586.1 and 586.5 of the Penal Code (61)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 507–510, 523–527, 586.1, and 586.5 of the Penal Code (61)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 586.1, 586.5, and 618 of the Penal Code (61)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 30 of the National Defense Law (62)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 586.1 of the Penal Code; Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (59,61)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 49 of the Education Law (63)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 49 of the Education Law (63)

\* No conscription (64)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (41)

In Lebanon, basic education is compulsory. (63) Children generally complete basic education at age 15. (41) As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

Laws related to forced labor are insufficient because there is no legislative provision that provides criminal penalties for the exaction of forced labor, and debt bondage is not criminally prohibited. (61,65)

Government officials have clarified that although Article 610 of the Penal Code criminalizes begging, Article 26 of the Delinquent Juveniles Law, which takes precedence over the Penal Code, stipulates that in cases of begging, the child is considered in danger and entitled to receive protective measures. (61,66,67)

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### 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 Labor that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor	Enforces child labor laws through desk review and workplace inspections. Acts as government focal point for child labor issues and hosts the National Steering Committee on Child Labor. (2) The Ministry's Child Labor Unit raises public awareness about child labor and the right to education. Receives complaints on child labor violations on its Child Labor Unit hotline. (2)
Internal Security Forces	Enforces laws regarding child labor through the Anti-Human Trafficking and Morals Protection Bureau. (2)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes violations of the Penal Code in coordination with the Internal Security Forces. Maintains general data and statistics on criminal violations involving child labor. (2) Refers at-risk children to shelters and protection services. Coordinates, through signed agreements, with civil society organizations to provide social workers that oversee court proceedings involving juveniles and deliver services to them, including children engaged in begging. (2)
Ministry of Social Affairs	Refers children identified by the Internal Security Forces and the Ministry of Justice to protective institutions, such as health centers. Refers children to shelters through its Higher Council for Childhood. (2)
Directorate of General Security	Focuses on immigration and border protection. Works with farmers union to address child labor in agriculture. (2)

According to local observers, the Ministry of Labor's hotline is not fully functional and works for a limited number of hours on official workdays. It does not have a system to register incoming calls. (27)

#### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor 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	Unknown (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	45 (27)	Unknown
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (68)	No (68,69)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	No (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (69)	Yes (69)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (18)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (2)

In 2018, the Ministry of Labor and the Directorate of General Security held extensive training on issues, including child labor. However, based on available information, the Ministry did not cover the costs of equipment and transportation needed by labor inspectors to carry out their duties. (2) Child labor inspections are generally

a result of a complaint, particularly in the formal sector. However, based on available information, child labor is nearly non-existent in the formal sector. (2,18,70) Research could not identify the number of labor inspectors in 2018, but there were 45 labor inspectors in Lebanon in 2017. (2,27) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Lebanon’s workforce, which includes over 2.1 million workers. (71) According to the ILO’s technical advice of 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Lebanon would employ roughly 144 labor inspectors. (72,73)

The government does not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement efforts. (2)

### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Lebanon 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 the allocation of financial resources.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (18,74)	Yes (2)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Number of Violations Found	4 (74)	Unknown (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (2)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (2)
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 (18)	Yes (2)

In 2018, the Internal Security Forces provided training to officers on investigative procedures and protection of at-risk children. It also provided initial training on countering human trafficking. (2) The Internal Security Forces, the Lebanese Armed Forces, and the Directorate of General Security received training on countering human trafficking. (76)

The government investigated 26 cases, but it is unknown how many of these were related to criminal violations of child labor laws. (2) The government also prosecuted cases of forced begging among Syrian children, but the number of prosecutions is unavailable because there is no centralized record system in the Ministry of Justice. (76)

The Ministry of Justice stated that a lack of sufficient human resources hindered the government’s ability to address child labor. (18) The Internal Security Forces stated they needed additional information technology equipment. (2)

The government does not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts. (2)

## **IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR**

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

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Raises awareness; coordinates efforts among government agencies; establishes standard practices; develops, enforces, and recommends changes; and ensures that government agencies comply with the law. Led by the Minister of Labor, includes representatives from six other ministries and other institutions and international organizations. (18) The Committee met once in 2018, but canceled a subsequent meeting due to the absence of a Minister of Labor. (2)

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**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (Cont.)**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates efforts against human trafficking, including child trafficking. Based at the Ministry of Labor and meets on a monthly basis. (18) In 2018, the Committee met every month. (76)
UNICEF and UNHCR	Coordinate efforts to address the needs of children affected by the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. Maintain interagency standards for child protection. The UN representatives identify crucial concerns, including factors that make children vulnerable to child labor. Make recommendations to the government on the use of resources, including referral services. (18) In 2018, UN agencies and international and local NGOs coordinated child protection efforts through Child Protection Working Groups. (2)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2013–2019)	Establishes strategies for addressing child labor, including improving enforcement of child labor laws and expanding access to education. (43,77) In 2018, the President, working with the ILO and the NGO Beyond, established the National Choir Against Child Labor, made up of 180 children who have previously been engaged in child labor. The children's choir is meant to empower children, encourage them to stay in school, and advocate against child labor. (2,78)
Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon	Provides the policy framework for the prevention of children's involvement in armed conflict. (53) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period. However, based on available information, approximately 40 children were kept in detention centers for previous activities related to armed conflict. (2)
Policy for the Protection of Students in the School Environment†	Protects children's right to education and promotes non-violence in schools by establishing mechanisms to receive complaints of violence, mistreatment, and bullying and addresses those cases while safeguarding children's privacy. Trains school staff and officials on identifying risk factors. (79,80) In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in cooperation with UNICEF, trained 55 Ministry employees and 600 points-of-contact in 300 schools on their roles in the implementation of this policy. (79)

† 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 adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Child Protection Program	Joint program by UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Addresses child labor through interventions, including psychological counseling; raising awareness among employer; and working with employers to decrease working hours for children and improve working conditions. (81) In 2018, UNICEF worked with government agencies and civil society organizations to provide case management and psychosocial support to children, including children working on the streets. The Ministry of Social Affairs, along with civil society organizations and UNICEF, launched a child protection information management system and a free electronic training course intended to educate frontline social workers on child protection and case management issues. (2,79) UNICEF also worked with partners in the city of Tripoli to ensure that vulnerable children received services such as conditional cash transfer and income-generating activities for their parents. (2)
Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor (CLEAR)	USDOL-funded capacity-building project implemented by the ILO. Aims to improve enforcement of child labor laws and policies in Lebanon. (34) In 2018, the Ministry of Labor worked with the ILO to hold a national workshop to train labor inspectors and other government officials on Decree No. 8987 on hazardous child labor. Engaging with key national and international stakeholders, the project helped revise the National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor to include Syrian children. (34) The revised National Action Plan was pending adoption due to the lack of a Minister of Labor. The project, working with the NGO Beyond, trained 300 children on how to advocate against child labor among their peers and raise awareness in the community about the negative consequences of child labor. (34) For additional information, please see the USDOL website.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)**

Program	Description
Reaching All Children through Education (RACE II) (2017–2021)	Donor-funded 5-year project, implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and partners to ensure quality education opportunities for children ages 3 to 18, regardless of nationality, through holistic interventions that address the demand and availability of quality public education, including non-formal education. (82) In 2018, the program covered school fees and provided remedial and homework support activities for Lebanese and non-Lebanese children. (2)
National Poverty Alleviation Program†	Funded by the government and foreign donors, this Ministry of Social Affairs program pays school tuition and book costs for 74,000 families living in extreme poverty. (41) Research was unable to determine what steps were taken in 2018 in the implementation of this program.

† Program is funded by the Government of Lebanon.

In 2018, Lebanon adopted a new regulation to allow Syrian refugee children, who turn ages 15 to 18 after entering Lebanon, to obtain residency by presenting their Syrian individual status record instead of a passport or national identity card. This regulation enables access to education for these children. (83)

The scarcity of shelters for child trafficking victims results in some children being placed in juvenile detention centers. (57) The lack of shelters and resources to handle child labor and human trafficking cases puts children at a heightened risk of further exploitation. (33) Although Lebanon has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in forced child labor in agriculture and construction.

## 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 Lebanon (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict, which the government signed in 2002.	2013 – 2018
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018
	Ensure that forced labor and debt bondage are criminally prohibited.	2015 – 2018
Enforcement	Ensure that there is an adequate mechanism to receive and log child labor complaints and refer them for investigation.	2017 – 2018
	Track and publish information on labor law enforcement, including the number of labor inspectors and inspections.	2009 – 2018
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2015 – 2018
	Provide Ministry of Labor inspectors with proper funding and necessary transportation, and ensure that they are able to conduct labor inspections in areas where child labor is prevalent, including the informal sector.	2011 – 2018
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2016 – 2018
	Publish information on criminal enforcement of child labor laws.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies have necessary funding, human resources, and equipment to investigate and prosecute criminal cases of child labor, in accordance with the law.	2017 – 2018
Government Policies	Ensure that the Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon is implemented, and that children previously associated with armed conflict receive social and rehabilitation services rather than being detained.	2017 – 2018
Social Programs	Build on current efforts to improve access to public education for all children.	2010 – 2018
	Ensure that the National Poverty Alleviation Program is implemented.	2017 – 2018
	Increase the number of shelters for child victims of human trafficking and other forms of child labor.	2013 – 2018
	Expand programs to fully address the extent of child labor.	2013 – 2018

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