



EGYPT

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Egypt made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government conducted a national child labor survey and launched a referral mechanism that uses a whole-of-government approach to identify victims of trafficking, refer them to necessary services, investigate cases, and provide rehabilitation and reintegration services. However, 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. The minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment also does not meet international standards as it is below age 16. In addition, 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. Moreover, reports indicate that victims are unwilling to interact with state entities, hindering the government’s ability to refer them to appropriate services.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	3.6% (Unavailable)
Boys		4.8%
Girls		2.4%
Urban		2.1%
Rural		4.6%

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	12.1% (Unavailable)
Boys		13.7%
Girls		10.4%
Urban		8.1%
Rural		15.0%
Attending School	5 to 14	94.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	3.8%

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 forced begging.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming, including the production of cotton, feeding chickens, collecting and packaging eggs, and fishing.



Industry

Quarrying† limestone, making bricks, construction, and working in carpentry workshops.



Services

Street work, including selling goods and collecting garbage, repairing automobiles and heavy machinery, driving *tuktuks*, and domestic work.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced domestic work and forced begging.

† 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.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Egypt's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Provide criminal penalties for recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Prohibit school fees for the first 9 years of education.

Establish age 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.

Enforcement

Publish information on civil child labor law enforcement, including labor inspectorate funding, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of penalties collected.

Establish a mechanism for the labor inspectorate to assess civil penalties for violations of child labor laws.

Employ at least 1,897 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 28.5 million people.

Social Programs

Ensure universal access to free public education, especially for girls and refugee children, by addressing the cost of school fees and supplies, violence in schools, lack of documentation, and other barriers to education.

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.

Institute programs to encourage migrants and victims of trafficking to make use of government reporting mechanisms so that they can be referred to the proper services.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children from poor families are most likely to engage in child labor, with some families forcing their children into street work and domestic work. Some Egyptian girls are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation under the pretext of temporary marriage, sometimes called "summer marriage," to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Persian Gulf countries. Some migrant and refugee girls are subjected to sex trafficking. Additionally, unaccompanied migrant children are at risk of being forced to sell drugs by criminal gangs.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children in Egypt face barriers to education, including lack of access to identity documentation and their families' inability to pay 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. Children also drop out of school because of school-related costs, such as educational supplies, transportation, and uniforms. A lack of qualified teachers, poorly maintained schools, sanitation issues, classroom density, insufficient infrastructure, and bullying in schools prevent some children from attending school. In rural communities, children face difficulties getting to school due to long commuting distances. In addition, girls face additional barriers to education, including harassment on the way to school, as well as cultural constraints. The government offers some refugee children access to the public education system; however, refugee children face language barriers and are subjected to racism and bullying. 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.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Egypt has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Egypt's laws do not criminally prohibit military recruitment by non-state armed groups and the minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment is below the age of 16.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years	✓	Articles 64 and 74 of the Child Law
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years	✓	Articles 1 and 3 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215; Articles 1 and 3 of the Child Law
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	✓	Articles 1 and 3, and Table 1 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor	✓	Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2,3, 5, and 6 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	✓	Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2,3, 5, and 6 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	✓	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
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	✓	Article 34 of the Law on Narcotics; Article 65 of the Child Law; Article 3 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 15 Years	✗	Ministry of Defense Guidelines on Youth Volunteers in the Armed Forces
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	✓	Article 1 of the Law on Military and National Service
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	✗	Article 7- <i>bis</i> (b) of the Child Law
Compulsory Education Age, 15 Years	✓	Article 59(1) of the Child Law; Articles 19, 80, and 238 of the Constitution
Free Public Education	✗	Article 54 of the Child Law

‡ Age calculated based on available information

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



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to address child labor. However, an insufficient number of inspectors and insufficient financial resources allocated to law enforcement bodies hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

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, who operate under the Ministry of Interior. If police investigations confirm criminal activity, cases are subsequently sent to the Prosecutor General’s Office (PGO), which operates under the Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Interior: Investigates cases of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Reports violations to the Public Prosecution Office under the PGO. Also receives reports of violations from the Administrative Control Authority, which investigates government corruption and human trafficking.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	No	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2023, **1,500** labor inspectors conducted **14,600** worksite inspections, finding an **unknown** number of child labor violations. It is **unknown** how many investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions initiated, or perpetrators convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Egypt established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.</p>	<p>National Steering Committee for the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Families: Coordinates efforts to implement the National Action Plan for Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Family. Membership includes the Ministries of Manpower, Social Solidarity, Education, Agriculture, Interior, Planning, Finance, Investment and International Cooperation, Trade, Justice, Health, Local Development, and <i>Awqaf</i> (religious endowments,) in addition to the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), the National Council of Women, the Central Agency for Population and Statistics, the National Media Agency, and Al Azhar University. Active in 2023.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Egypt established policies related to child labor.</p>	<p>National Action Plan for Combating 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. Other objectives include expanding the child labor knowledge base; capacity building of agencies providing support; providing social protection, with links to existing programs; enhancing education, including vocational education for children; and advocacy and awareness raising. Active in 2023.</p>

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p>	<p>National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (2022–2026): Aims to address trafficking in persons through prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnership. Includes goals such as empowering households to combat poverty and illiteracy, preventing school dropouts, and reducing child labor. In 2023, the government launched a referral mechanism that uses a whole-of-government approach to identify victims of trafficking, refer them to necessary services, investigate cases, and provide rehabilitation and reintegration services. However, reports indicate that victims may be unwilling to interact with the state, hindering the government’s ability to refer them to appropriate services. Active in 2023.</p> <p>National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood (2018–2030): Includes a chapter on child labor that aims to promote dialogue on child labor legislation, including updating the hazardous work list; building the capacity of relevant government agencies, such as the Ministry of Manpower and NCCM; developing programs to address child labor; and expanding educational and vocational training opportunities. Active in 2023.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Egypt funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the full scope of the problem, including in forced begging.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Egypt.</i></p>	<p>Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) 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. Active in 2023.</p> <p>Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains in Africa (ACCEL Africa) (2018–2024): 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. In 2023, worked with the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics to conduct a national child labor survey.</p> <p>Solidarity and Dignity Program (Takaful and Karama):† Funded by MoSS, this program promotes school attendance and health monitoring for children by providing income supplements to poor families. This partnership between the government and the World Food Program, the UN Development Program, UNICEF, and the World Bank offers income supplements to poor families provided that household children maintain at least an 80 percent attendance record in school and mothers and children under age 6 provide demonstrable evidence of having been seen at health clinics four times per year. Active in 2023.</p>

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects

 **WORKER RIGHTS SPOTLIGHT**

Egyptian authorities dissolved over 1,000 unions in 2018 and mandated all unions re-register. As of 2023, only 122 were successfully registered. The government also imposed a single, state-controlled trade union federation and arrested union leaders. The suppression of workers’ rights and the lack of genuine collective bargaining have contributed to labor rights violations in the country and hindered workers’ ability to report child labor, particularly in agriculture and the informal economy.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports