



LEBANON

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Lebanon made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Lebanon's Internal Security Forces reported that officers received training related to human rights, child protection, and conducting investigations involving minors. However, government officials continued to indicate that funding is insufficient to properly carry out their duties. In addition, Lebanese law prohibits inspectors from inspecting informal workplaces, where the majority of child labor occurs, and social programs targeting child labor remained insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Lebanon are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in illicit activities and forced labor in agriculture.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming, including the production of potatoes and tobacco,[†] and fishing.



Industry

Construction,[†] including carpentry and welding,[†] working in slaughterhouses[†] and butcheries, and making handicrafts.



Services

Street work,[†] including begging, street vending, portering, and scavenging garbage,[†] and collecting waste materials, including scrap metal. Working in small shops and groceries and in food service,[†] including working as waiters. Domestic work[†] and maintenance and repair of motor vehicles.[†]



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]

Use in illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs, and arms dealing. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced labor in agriculture 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 Lebanon's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Accede to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.

Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.

Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including informal workers, domestic workers, and all agricultural workers.

Enforcement

Track and publish information on labor law enforcement on an annual basis.

Authorize the labor inspectorate to inspect informal employment.

Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties and allow inspections of informal workplaces.

Provide Ministry of Labor inspectors with proper funding and resources and ensure that routine inspections are carried out.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Employ at least 120 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 1.8 million people.

Publish information on the number of prosecutions initiated and number of convictions for violations of criminal laws.

Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Internal Security Forces' Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, have the necessary funding and staff to investigate and prosecute criminal cases of child labor in accordance with the law, and establish field offices outside of Beirut.

Coordination

Ensure that the National Steering Committee on Child Labor meets on a regular basis and coordinates activities to address child labor.

Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to End Street Begging by Children and the Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon during the reporting period and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis.

Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.

Social Programs

Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.

Ensure access to public education for all children, including refugees, by improving transportation, addressing bullying and harassment, accommodating students with disabilities, ending corporal punishment, improving facilities, and accommodating students coming from a different curriculum than that in Lebanon.

Expand programs, including social services for human trafficking survivors, to fully address the extent of child labor, including in construction and forced labor in agriculture.

**CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

Child labor is prevalent among refugee communities in Lebanon. An estimated 75 percent of Syrian refugee children working in the Bekaa Valley do so in agriculture. Children, particularly Syrian refugee children, are forced to beg throughout the country due to extreme poverty. Children involved in street begging are at increased vulnerability for further exploitation and abuse. Syrian refugee children are also subjected to forced labor in agriculture. In addition, some Syrian refugee children and their families in the Bekaa Valley are kept in bonded labor in agriculture to pay for makeshift dwellings.

**BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS**

In 2023, more than 6,000 students were affected by school closures in southern Lebanon due to increased hostilities with Israel. Both Lebanese and Syrian refugee children face barriers to accessing education because of public sector strikes, which include teachers. Additionally, Syrian refugee children face other difficulties, such as the cost of transportation and supplies, 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. In 2023, the government continued its policy of admitting all refugee children regardless of whether they had the required documentation for school enrollment. However, the public school system in Lebanon lacks the capacity to accommodate the large number of school-age Syrian refugee children. Despite the official policy of schools being open to all, in practice, a small number of refugees have been denied access to schools. Students without transcripts are also only eligible to receive a certificate, rather than a diploma, causing some undocumented students to drop out. Furthermore, most children with disabilities, including refugee children, were unable to attend school due to insufficient accessibility or inadequacy of facilities, lack of specialized facilities, or unavailability of tailored services for children with disabilities.

**LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR**

Lebanon has not ratified key international conventions concerning child labor, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict. In addition, Lebanon's law related to the minimum age for work does not meet international standards because it excludes domestic work and non-industrial, non-trade agriculture.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 14 Years		Article 22 of the Labor Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Articles 1 and 2 and Annex 2 of Decree No. 8987
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Article 8 of Decree No. 3855; Articles 569, 586.1, and 586.5 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 586.1 and 586.5 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 506, 523, 525–527, 586.1, and 586.5 of the Penal Code; Decree No. 8987
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Articles 586.1, 586.5, and 618 of the Penal Code; Article 13 of the Law on Drugs
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Article 30 of the National Defense Law
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Article 586.1 of the Penal Code; Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987
Compulsory Education Age, 15 Years‡		Article 49 of the Education Law
Free Public Education		Article 49 of the Education Law

* Country has no conscription

‡ Age calculated based on available information

The Labor Code applies only to workers who perform work in industrial, trading, or agricultural enterprises and excludes domestic work and non-industrial, non-trade agriculture. This does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age for work. In addition, 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.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to address child labor. However, insufficient human and financial resource allocation hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor (MOL): Enforces child labor laws through desk review and workplace inspections. MOL’s Child Labor Unit acts as the government focal point for child labor issues and raises public awareness about child labor and the right to education. Receives complaints of child labor violations on its Child Labor Unit hotline. Is only able to enforce labor laws in the formal sector, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation in the informal sector such as agriculture, small businesses, and in private homes.

Internal Security Forces: Enforce laws regarding child labor through the Anti-Human Trafficking and Moral Crimes Unit. The Anti-Trafficking Unit is reportedly underfunded and understaffed, and it has no field offices outside Beirut.

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	Unknown
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	No	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	No

It is **unknown** how many labor inspectors conducted worksite inspections, or whether child labor violations were found in 2023. Although investigations into **115** suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, it is **unknown** whether prosecutions were initiated or perpetrators were convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Lebanon established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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 MOL, includes representatives from six other ministries and other institutions and international organizations. The committee has not met since 2021.

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Lebanon established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover all the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a comprehensive policy on eliminating child labor.</p>	<p>National Action Plan to End Street Begging by Children: Seeks to end child begging by ensuring legal protection for street children, building capacity to protect street children, rehabilitating and reintegrating street children, and conducting outreach regarding the problem. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to End Street Begging by Children during the reporting period.</p> <p>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. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon during the reporting period.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Lebanon participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs do not adequately address the full scope of the problem.</p>	<p>UNICEF Programs: UNICEF implements several programs with the Ministry of Social Affairs to address child labor through interventions. In 2023, UNICEF established three drop-in centers for children involved in street work where they can access services such as education, psycho-social support, and recreational activities. Additionally in 2023, UNICEF supported the establishment of two regionally based child labor task forces to develop action plans to reduce child labor in coordination with civil society organizations and the Ministry of Social Affairs. UNICEF also continued to support <i>Haddi</i>, a national grant for children. The program provides cash assistance to children at risk of child labor and child marriage, and to children with disabilities, children in non-formal education, and children needing nutrition support. The program pays between \$40 and \$80 to Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian families. Since <i>Haddi's</i> inception as an emergency program in 2021, it has paid out tens of millions of dollars to vulnerable families.</p>

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