

Egypt

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Egypt established a national plan against child labor in 1995, which proposed education programs, income-generating activities for families, and training for government officials and labor inspectors on child labor issues.⁸³² The government has requested the assistance of the ILO and UNICEF to implement the plan.⁸³³ The Government of Egypt has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 1996, and is implementing various ILO-IPEC initiatives, including direct action to prevent and rehabilitate child laborers in tanneries, pottery kilns, and other hazardous industries.⁸³⁴ Other ILO-IPEC efforts involve public awareness raising against child labor and capacity-building, including a project with the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) and the Arab Labor Organization to train and educate inspectors in the Child Labor Unit.⁸³⁵ In addition, the ILO in Cairo plans to implement a rapid assessment survey that will provide updated estimates on the number of working children in Egypt.⁸³⁶

The National Council for Children and Motherhood, under the guidance of First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, is also coordinating a national plan for the protection of mothers and children, and working with various research institutions to study and propose specific programs to eliminate child labor.⁸³⁷ UNICEF has been working in urban slums and other impoverished regions of rural Egypt since 1993, implementing micro-credit projects that provide small loans to women under the condition that they ensure that their children attend classes.⁸³⁸ USAID and the Alexandria Cotton Exporters Association are collaborating to raise awareness about child labor.⁸³⁹

⁸³² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Periodic Reports of States Parties Due in 1997, Addendum, Egypt, CRC/C/65/Add. 9*, November 11, 1999 [hereinafter *Periodic Reports of States Parties*], para. 220.

⁸³³ *Ibid.* at para. 213.

⁸³⁴ Sule Caglar, ILO-IPEC official, electronic correspondence to USDOL official, January 7, 2002 [hereinafter Caglar correspondence].

⁸³⁵ U.S. Embassy—Cairo, unclassified telegram no. 6469, October 2001 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 6469]. See also Caglar correspondence.

⁸³⁶ SIMPOC Target and Implementation Schedule 1998-2003 at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/countries.htm> on 11/26/01.

⁸³⁷ The National Council is focusing in particular on the areas of social welfare, health, education, and social protection. The Council includes active participation by the Ministers of Social Affairs, Health, Culture, Education, Manpower and Vocational Training, Planning, and Information; the chairman of the High Council for Youth and Sports; and the First Lady. See *Periodic Reports of States Parties* at para. 215. See also *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Egypt* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2000) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 6d, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/nea/index.cfm?docid=784>.

⁸³⁸ *Egypt: Combating Child Labour Through Microcredit*, UNICEF, Family Development Fund Project, Cairo, 1996, at <http://www.unicef.org/credit/creegypt.htm> on 08/01/01.

⁸³⁹ Child Labor Coalition notes, March 14, 2001, Washington, D.C.

In 1996, the Ministry of Education established the Mubarak Program for Social Cooperation to offset school fees and indirect costs of schooling and promote school attendance.⁸⁴⁰ The Ministry of Education has been encouraging working children and school dropouts in rural areas to attend school by increasing the number of schools being built.⁸⁴¹ The location of these new school buildings are within walking distance of many of the community homes, and an increase in the number of female teachers adds incentive for girls to continue their schooling. In addition, the Ministry of Education provides a meal to children during the school day as an additional incentive to attend classes.⁸⁴² USAID has initiated a Girls' Education Program to build over 800 new classrooms and boost school attendance for girls. USAID has also implemented a New Schools Program that targets girls aged 6 to 14 who have never enrolled or have dropped out of school.⁸⁴³ In some northern communities of program operation, girls' enrollment has increased from 30 percent to 70 percent, and attendance rates have remained consistently high (between 95 and 100 percent).⁸⁴⁴

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 1998, the Egypt Labor Market Survey estimated that 6 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 14 years in Egypt were working.⁸⁴⁵ An estimated 78 percent of working children are

⁸⁴⁰ School grants are provided through the Ministry of Social Affairs to school children whose families earn less than 100 Egyptian pounds (USD 21.70) per month. During 1996-1997, about 169,000 children received grants, either in-kind or cash, to cover the costs of school uniforms, books, supplies, and school fees. The average annual grant per child was equal to USD 4.17. Grants fall short of the estimated costs of sending children to school, where average primary school fees range from 11.35 to 15.85 pounds (USD 2.50 to 3.40), and the Ministry of Education estimates that the average annual cost paid by poor families for primary school education amounts to 348 pounds (USD 75.45) per child. See Nadia Ramsis Farah, *Child Labour in Egypt Within the Context of the Committee on the Rights of the Child* (Cairo: Cairo Center for Development Studies/UNICEF, June 1997) [hereinafter Ramsis Farah, *Child Labour in Egypt*], 27. Currency conversion at <http://www.carosta.de/frames/convert.htm> on 1/29/02.

⁸⁴¹ Hussein Kamel Bahaa El-Din, Minister of Education, interview by USDOL official, May 12, 1998.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ U.S. Department of State official, U.S. Embassy—Cairo, interview by Sudha Haley, USDOL official, December 2001 [hereinafter U.S. Embassy—Cairo interview].

⁸⁴⁴ Kristin Moehlmann, "Girl-Friendly Schools Improve Egypt's Report Card," UNICEF [hereinafter Moehlmann, "Girl-Friendly Schools"], at <http://www.unicef.org/information/mdg/mdg07.htm> on 11/26/01. See also "UNICEF Global Girls' Education Programme: Country Highlights" at <http://www.unicef.org/efa/girlsed.htm#Egypt>, on 11/26/01.

⁸⁴⁵ This figure accounts for children who are working only (3 percent), as well as working and studying (3 percent). See Egypt Labour Market Survey 1998, as found on Understanding Children's Work Project at <http://www.ucw-project.org/cgi-bin/ucw/Survey/> on 11/20/01. According to the ILO, in 1999 an estimated 10 percent of children between ages 10 and 14 were working, a total of 23,687,000. See *World Development Indicators for 2001—Egypt* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001) [hereinafter *World Development Indicators 2001*] [CD-ROM]. See also Nassar F., *Economic Aspects of Children's Vulnerability in Egypt* (Cairo: UNICEF, 1995), as cited in Philip L. Graitcer and Leonard B. Lerer, *The Impact of Child Labor on Health: Report of a Field Investigation in Egypt*, July 2000 [hereinafter Graitcer and Lerer, *Investigation*

in the agricultural sector,⁸⁴⁶ in which over one million children between the ages of 7 and 12 are hired each year to work in agricultural cooperatives.⁸⁴⁷ Children work in the carpet and textile industries, as apprentices in auto repair, craft shops, construction, brick making, and in tanneries.⁸⁴⁸ Many children, especially daughters from poor families, work as domestic servants in the homes of other families,⁸⁴⁹ and in urban areas, street children sell items or resort to begging to meet their basic needs.⁸⁵⁰ Government studies reveal that the concentration of working children is higher in rural than in urban areas.⁸⁵¹

The Education Law No. 139 (1981) calls for compulsory primary education through the eighth grade and requires children to attend school until they reach the age of 15.⁸⁵² Egypt's Constitution also establishes compulsory primary school education and mandates that education should be free for all children.⁸⁵³ The government, however, imposes school fees as high as 15.85

in Egypt], 33. Other sources suggest that the number of working children in Egypt reached 1.5 million in 1999, making up 9 percent of the country's total labor force. Estimates from some nongovernmental organizations also indicate that up to 1.5 million children are working throughout the country. See *Al-Wafd Newspaper*, issue no. 3807, 1999, as quoted in *Children—Laborers of the Stone Crushers in Egypt*, report prepared for Land Center for Human Rights, The Series of Reports on the Economic and Social Rights, Issue No. 13, March 2000, 5. See also *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Egypt* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2000) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 6d, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/nea/index.cfm?docid=784>.

⁸⁴⁶ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

⁸⁴⁷ In November 1999, the Ministry of Social Affairs reported that 1 million children worked in this sector. These children perform seasonal work for 11 hours per day, 7 days a week, and are exposed to heat and pesticides and suffer from abuse by foremen. According to an agricultural engineer assigned to a cooperative, children are hired because they are cheaper and more obedient, and are the appropriate height to inspect cotton plants. See Human Rights Watch, *Underage and Unprotected: Child Labor in Egypt's Cotton Fields*, vol. 13, no. 1 (E) (New York, January 2001) [hereinafter *Underage and Unprotected*], 2. See also *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d and Anthony Shadid, "Year After Tragic Deaths, Egypt's Young Return to Cotton Fields," *Associated Press*, September 24, 1998, as cited in USDOL, *By the Sweat and Toil of Children, Vol. V: Efforts to Eliminate Child Labor* (Washington, D.C., 1998) [hereinafter *Sweat and Toil of Children*], 18.

⁸⁴⁸ Bjorne Grimsrud and Liv Jorunn Stokke, *Child Labour in Africa: Poverty or Institutional Failures? The Cases of Egypt and Zimbabwe*, Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, report no. 233, 1997 [hereinafter Grimsrud and Jorunn Stokke, *Child Labour in Africa*], 35. See also *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

⁸⁴⁹ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

⁸⁵⁰ "About ten million street children in Arab world," News-in-Brief, *Child Labor News Service*, at <http://www.globalmarch.org/clns/clns-15-06-2001.htm>.

⁸⁵¹ While the number of working children is similar among boys and girls in rural areas, boys account for approximately 70 percent of working children in urban areas. See *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d. According to a survey in urban Cairo, most girls work in clothing or textile manufacturing, while most boys work as mechanics or in the retail or service sector jobs. See Graitcer and Lerer, *Investigation in Egypt*, at 34, 51.

⁸⁵² Law No. 12 for 1996: Child Law, Article 59 [on file].

⁸⁵³ Constitution of Egypt, Articles 18, 20, at <http://www.newafrica.com/egypt/constitution.asp#Part%20Three> on 11/21/01. See also Ramsis Farah, *Child Labour in Egypt*, at 27.

pounds (USD 3.40) for primary education.⁸⁵⁴ In 1997, the gross primary enrollment rate was 101.1 percent, and in 1996, the net primary enrollment rate was 93 percent.⁸⁵⁵ Cultural and social traditions, as well as work in the domestic service sector, contribute to significantly lower school enrollment rates for girls.⁸⁵⁶ In 1996, primary school attendance was 88.3 percent.⁸⁵⁷ However, as many as 37 percent of Egyptian children do not complete a basic education.⁸⁵⁸

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Child Law of 1996 establishes 14 years as the minimum age for employment.⁸⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the Child Law allows for provincial governors, with the consent of the Ministry of Education, to permit seasonal agricultural work for children between the ages of 12 and 14, provided that it is not hazardous and does not interfere with a child's education.⁸⁶⁰ In April 2001, however, the government issued a decree making it illegal to employ children below the age of 14 in cotton fields.⁸⁶¹ The Child Law also prohibits children from working for over six hours a day or more than four consecutive hours, at night, or during overtime hours.⁸⁶² Forced labor is prohibited by the Constitution.⁸⁶³ In 1997, the MOMM issued two decrees restricting the employment of youths in hazardous work.⁸⁶⁴ In addition, the Suppression of Prostitution Act No. 10 criminalizes prostitution; the Penal Code, which has penalties for the abduction of children, can be used to prosecute trafficking.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁵⁴ Ramsis Farah, *Child Labour in Egypt*, at 27. Currency conversion at <http://www.carosta.de/frames/convert.htm> on 1/29/02.

⁸⁵⁵ *World Development Indicators for 2001*.

⁸⁵⁶ Girls working in domestic service are often deprived of an education. See Grimsrud and Stokke, *Child Labour in Africa*, at 32. See also Moehlmann, "Girl-Friendly Schools."

⁸⁵⁷ USAID, Global Education Database 2000, Washington, D.C. [CD-ROM], at http://www.usaid.gov/educ_training/ged.html.

⁸⁵⁸ Mona El Baradei, *The Impact of Structural Adjustment and Stabilisation Policies on Educational Health in Egypt* (1994), as cited in Grimsrud and Jorunn Stokke, *Child Labour in Africa*, 29

⁸⁵⁹ U.S. Embassy—Cairo, unclassified telegram no. 6469, October 2001 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 6469]. See also *Underage and Unprotected* at 8.

⁸⁶⁰ *Periodic Reports of States Parties*. See also *Underage and Unprotected* at 8.

⁸⁶¹ Unclassified telegram 6469.

⁸⁶² *Ibid.* See also *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

⁸⁶³ Constitution of Egypt, Article 13, at <http://www.newafrica.com/egypt/constitution.asp#Part%20Three> on 11/21/01.

⁸⁶⁴ According to these decrees, children under age 15 are prohibited from work involving furnaces or ovens in bakeries, freezing and refrigeration units, fertilizers, acids, or chemicals; work in cement factories, petroleum and distillation labs, or pressurized gas industries; cotton bailing; work involving bleaching, dyeing, and textile printing; or jobs requiring heavy lifting. Children under age 17 are prohibited from employment in a number of areas, including mining, smelting metals, working with explosives, welding, tanneries, fertilizer industries, or butchering animals. See unclassified telegram 6469.

⁸⁶⁵ *Periodic Reports of States Parties* at para. 229. See also unclassified telegram 6469 and *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6f.

The MOMM and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) are responsible for labor inspections.⁸⁶⁶ The MOMM maintains approximately 2,000 inspectors who are charged with investigating safety, health, and age violations.⁸⁶⁷ In 2000, the MOMM issued Decree No. 117 which established a specialized Child Labor Unit within the Juvenile Department.⁸⁶⁸ In 2001, the Child Labor Unit carried out a raid that removed 112 children from work in 17 workshops.⁸⁶⁹ In addition, in 1999, the government investigated two reported cases of child labor violations, involving 34 children.⁸⁷⁰ Local trade unions have reported that the MOMM adequately enforces child labor laws in state-owned enterprises but there has been much criticism that the MOMM has not enforced the restrictions in the informal sector.⁸⁷¹

Egypt ratified ILO Convention 138 on June 9, 1999, and ratified ILO Convention 182 on May 6, 2002.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁶ The Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) are currently enacting a protocol for interministerial coordination of child labor enforcement and inspection. *See* U.S. Embassy—Cairo interview.

⁸⁶⁷ Inspectors work out of 450 different MOMM offices in Egypt's 26 governorships. *See* unclassified telegram 6469.

⁸⁶⁸ Unclassified telegram 6469.

⁸⁶⁹ The government has provided a package of services to the children removed from work and their families. The assistance includes financial donations, literacy programs, health care, transportation compensation, and loans for income-generating projects. *See* U.S. Embassy—Cairo interview

⁸⁷⁰ The MOMM raided 16 electrical workshops in Cairo and discovered 30 children between ages 6 and 12 working. In the second case, authorities found four children working in a Cairo restaurant. *See Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

⁸⁷¹ Article 74 of the Child Law calls for the owners of establishments where working children are found to pay a fine of between USD 27 and 133 per illegal child worker. Fines are doubled in the case of repeat offenders. In addition, parents and employers can be fined USD 59 to 147 or imprisoned for up to 1 month for forcing their children to work and not allowing them to go to school. *See Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d. *See also* Sallama Shaker, Deputy Assistant Minister for North American Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by USDOL officials, May 9, 1999, as cited in *Sweat and Toil of Children* at 45.

⁸⁷² ILOLEX database: Egypt at <http://www.ilolex.ilo.ch/> at 11/21/01. *See also* U.S. Embassy—Cairo interview. The Government of Egypt ratified ILO Convention 182 on April 16, 2002, but as of report publication, the government had not yet submitted the legal instruments of ratification to the ILO. *See* U.S. Embassy-Cairo, unclassified telegram no. 3864, April 23, 2002.

NOTE: Hard copies of all Web citations are on file.