

Jordan

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

The Government of Jordan has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 2000.¹⁹⁰⁴ Queen Noor established the National Task Force for Children (NTFC) in 1995. The NTFC conducted its first national study on child labor in 1997.¹⁹⁰⁵ The Ministry of Labour initiated an ILO-IPEC Action Program in January 2001. As a result, the Child Labour Unit (CLU) was established. The CLU developed a database on child labor issues and is in the process of establishing a National Policy and Program Framework, which will provide policy makers with a country-wide strategy for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.¹⁹⁰⁶

In 2002, USDOL funded an ILO-IPEC national program in Jordan.¹⁹⁰⁷ The program aims to withdraw approximately 3,000 child workers from the worst forms of child labor, mainstream them into non-formal and formal education programs, provide them with pre-vocational and vocational training, and support them with counseling, health care and recreational activities.¹⁹⁰⁸

The government has placed a strong emphasis on providing education for all. A ten-year education reform program was initiated in 1987. Two subsequent Human Resources Development Sector Investment programs were financed by the government, World Bank, the Government of Japan, and other technical agencies. An Education Plan of Jordan was implemented from 1988-1995 and was funded by the government, World Bank, the Government of Japan, USAID, and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development.¹⁹⁰⁹ The second Education Development Plan ran from 1996-1999 and the third is scheduled to run from 1999-2003. Progress in literacy, enrollment, and numbers of students and teachers has been made throughout the course of these three plans.¹⁹¹⁰ More recently, the government has recognized the link between lack of education and child labor, and the Ministry of Education has taken steps to address child labor issues in its 2003-2015 Educational Development Plan.¹⁹¹¹

¹⁹⁰⁴ ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, [online] [cited August 8, 2002]; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/about/countries/t_country.htm.

¹⁹⁰⁵ ILO-IPEC, *National Programme for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in Jordan*, project document, JOR/02/P50/USA, Geneva, September 2002, 7. Also see H.M. Queen Noor, *National Task Force for Children*, [online] 2002 [cited August 8, 2002]; available from <http://www.noor.gov.jo/main/ntfc.htm>.

¹⁹⁰⁶ ILO-IPEC, *National Programme Jordan*, project document, 24-25.

¹⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, cover.

¹⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Recent statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in Jordan are unavailable. In 1997, the Department of Statistics estimated that approximately 13 percent of boys ages 15 to 16 years and 1.1 percent of girls of that age were working.¹⁹¹² A Ministry of Labour study published in 2002 stated that children are employed in automobile repair, carpentry, sales, blacksmith shops, tailoring, construction, and food services.¹⁹¹³ Child vendors on the streets of Amman work selling newspapers, food and gum. Other children provide an important source of income for their families by rummaging through trash dumpsters to find recyclable items.¹⁹¹⁴

Education in Jordan is free and compulsory for 10 years, including six years of primary education and four years of secondary education. The Ministry of Education is required to open a school in every community where there are at least 10 students for grades one through four.¹⁹¹⁵ The government spends about 11 percent of its annual budget on education.¹⁹¹⁶ In 1998, gross primary enrollment was 68.9 percent and net primary enrollment was 63.9 percent.¹⁹¹⁷ Rural drop-out rates were high, particularly after the age of 13.¹⁹¹⁸ The primary reasons for dropping out of school are financial pressures, poverty, disability, poor performance, teaching styles, parental attitudes, and lack of adequate transportation.¹⁹¹⁹ The 2001 Ministry of Labor study indicated that most of child workers interviewed had completed nine years of education or more.¹⁹²⁰

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

In 1996, the Labor Code was amended to raise the minimum legal working age from 13 to 16 years.¹⁹²¹ The law prohibits the employment of children under the age of 17 in dangerous and hazardous work.¹⁹²² Minors must be given a break after four hours work, are not allowed to work

¹⁹¹² Mohammad Shahateet and Nihava Issa Dabdub, *A Report on the Status of Child Labour in Jordan 2001*, The Jordanian Ministry of Labour, Amman, July 2002, 10.

¹⁹¹³ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁹¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Jordan*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 2147-51, Section 5 [cited December 23, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8266.htm>.

¹⁹¹⁵ ILO-IPEC, *National Programme Jordan, project document*, 5.

¹⁹¹⁶ Approximately 73 percent of the total student population attend government schools, 15 percent private schools, and 12 percent United Nations Relief Work Agency (UNRWA) schools. *Ibid.*, 3, 5.

¹⁹¹⁷ In 1998, the GPE was 68.9 percent for females and 68.4 percent for boys, while the NPE was 64.6 for females and 63.3 for males. World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

¹⁹¹⁸ ILO-IPEC, *National Programme Jordan, project document*, 6.

¹⁹¹⁹ These reasons are based on two studies. One was conducted in 1995 and the other in 2001. *Ibid.*

¹⁹²⁰ This study was based on 2,539 working children. Shahateet and Dabdub, *Child Labour in Jordan 2001*, 9 and 23.

¹⁹²¹ Government of Jordan, *Labour Code, Law No. 8 of 1996*, (March 2, 1996), Section 73 [cited December 23, 2002]; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/E96JOR01.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 3340*, June 2000.

¹⁹²² *Labour Code*, Section 74.

more than six hours per day, and may not work during weekends and holidays, or at night.¹⁹²³ Before hiring a minor, a prospective employer must obtain a guardian's written approval, the minor's birth certificate, and a health certificate.¹⁹²⁴ An employer found in violation of these provisions will face a fine ranging from 100 to 500 dinars (USD 142 to 710). The fine will double with each subsequent infraction.¹⁹²⁵ Compulsory labor is prohibited by the Constitution of Jordan.¹⁹²⁶

The Ministry of Labour's CLU's main responsibilities are to monitor child labor, collect and analyze data, and review and ensure the enforcement of existing legislation. There are 81 labor inspectors in the country, 35 of which have received training on issues of child labor. These inspectors play a critical role in combating child labor.¹⁹²⁷

The Government of Jordan ratified ILO Convention 138 on March 23, 1998 and ILO Convention 182 on April 20, 2000.¹⁹²⁸

¹⁹²³ The Code does not specify the age of a minor. Young people are defined individuals of either sex who have not yet reached 18 years of age. In other cases, the use of the term "minor" is qualified as to specify an age. For example, see Section 73 "no minor under sixteen" or Section 74 "no minor under seventeen." Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the term "young person" is synonymous with "minor," meaning any person under 18 years of age. Definitions can be found in Section 2 of the code. *Ibid.*, Section 75.

¹⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Section 76.

¹⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Section 77. For currency conversion, see FX Converter, [online] [cited August 13, 2002]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/>.

¹⁹²⁶ *Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, Chapter 2, Article 13 [cited October 25, 2001]; available from <http://www.parliament.gov.jo/english/legislative/constit.htm>.

¹⁹²⁷ ILO-IPEC, *National Programme Jordan, project document*, 20.

¹⁹²⁸ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited October 3, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.