

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

The Government of Lebanon has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 2000.<sup>2521</sup> That year, a study to assess the working conditions of child labor in tobacco cultivation in Lebanon was conducted with technical assistance from ILO-IPEC's SIMPOC and funding from USDOL.<sup>2522</sup> In May 2001, the Ministry of Labor (MOL) established a National Committee to Combat Child Labor, which is charged with developing a national strategy for preventing child labor.<sup>2523</sup> In 2002, the Ministry of Interior and ILO-IPEC signed an agreement to implement a program to prevent and eliminate the trafficking of children and the work of street children through a multi-sector program.<sup>2524</sup> In 2002, IPEC, in coordination with the MOL, initiated projects in Nabatiyah, Tripoli, Sin el Fil, Bourj Hammud, and Ain el-Hilweh (the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon). These programs were aimed at the prevention, rehabilitation, and withdrawal of children from the worst forms of child labor.<sup>2525</sup>

The Ministry of Social Affairs through its Higher Council for Childhood coordinates efforts of governmental agencies and NGOs involved in supporting the rights of children.<sup>2526</sup> In 2000, with the support of UNICEF, the government's Central Bureau of Statistics conducted a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey on the Situation of Children, of which child labor and education were essential components.<sup>2527</sup> In March 2000, the World Bank approved a USD 56.6 million loan to the government to support a project designed to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport, intended to benefit 150,000 primary and secondary students and 20,000 teachers.<sup>2528</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 45.3 percent of children ages 6 to 14 years were working in Lebanon.<sup>2529</sup> Children are employed in metal works, handicraft and artisan establishments,<sup>2530</sup> as well as sales, construction work

<sup>2521</sup> ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, ILO-IPEC, [online] [cited June 13, 2003]; available from [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/countries/t\\_country.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/countries/t_country.htm).

<sup>2522</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Lebanon: Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, Geneva, May 2002.

<sup>2523</sup> U.S. Embassy- Beirut, *unclassified telegram no. 3065*, August 11, 2003, 2-3.

<sup>2524</sup> Current efforts by the Ministry of Interior aimed at raising awareness on the issue of working street children include training police on the appropriate means of approaching working street children, preparation for a study on the extent of the problem, and a public television ad campaign on the issue. See *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>2525</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>2526</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties due in 1998: Lebanon*, CRC/C/70/Add.8, prepared by Government of Lebanon, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, September 2000, paras. 173-74; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/d11949f24a039688c1256ace00329028?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/d11949f24a039688c1256ace00329028?Opendocument).

<sup>2527</sup> UNICEF, *Preliminary Report on the Multiple Cluster Survey On the Situation of Children in Lebanon*, prepared by Government of Lebanon: Central Bureau of Statistics, February 2001; available from <http://childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/lebanon/lebanon.pdf>.

<sup>2528</sup> World Bank, *World Bank Approves Loan to Lebanon for General Education*, press release, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2000; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20017568~menuPK:34466~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>. See also World Bank, *General Education Project*, in *Projects Database*, [online] 2003 [cited September 30, 2003]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P045174>.

<sup>2529</sup> UNICEF's estimate derives from a broad definition of children's work represented as the proportion of children 6 to 14 years of age who are currently working (paid or unpaid; inside or outside the home). See UNICEF, *Preliminary Report on the Multiple Cluster Survey*, 33.

<sup>2530</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, viii.

and the operation of machinery.<sup>2531</sup> Approximately 11 percent of working children are employed in agriculture.<sup>2532</sup> In 2000, national reports estimated that 25,000 children ages 7 to 14 were working in tobacco cultivation.<sup>2533</sup> The majority of children working in tobacco cultivation are unpaid, some entering the labor force as early as 3 years old.<sup>2534</sup> Reportedly, the employment of children under the age of 10 in other sectors is rare.<sup>2535</sup> UNICEF estimates of all child labor in Lebanon, including unregistered labor, suggest that over half of the children ages 6 to 14 who are engaged in work are girls.<sup>2536</sup> In poorer, more remote regions child labor is more prominent, and larger proportions of young children are economically active.<sup>2537</sup> Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon are more likely to work than their Lebanese counterparts.<sup>2538</sup>

Children are involved in prostitution in Lebanon, and sometimes find themselves in situations that amount to forced labor.<sup>2539</sup> There are no indications of child combatants in government armed forces, however children, including boys and girls as young as 8 years old, have been known to participate in various armed militia groups operating in the country.<sup>2540</sup>

In March 1998, the Government of Lebanon adopted legislation providing free and compulsory primary school education through the age of 12.<sup>2541</sup> Despite this legislation, education is not free. The average annual cost per

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<sup>2531</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>2532</sup> Ibid. For a further breakdown on child labor in specified sectors, see UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties: Lebanon*, 125-26.

<sup>2533</sup> These estimates are based on a survey of 128 children working in tobacco cultivation in 4 districts of South Lebanon. The most widely cited reason for children engaging in child labor was economic need. The survey was conducted between July and September 2000 by the Consultation and Research Institute in Lebanon. See ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, viii, 7-8.

<sup>2534</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>2535</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties: Lebanon*, 118.

<sup>2536</sup> UNICEF, *Preliminary Report on the Multiple Cluster Survey*. For more specific figures on gender disparities in paid and unpaid child labor see UNICEF, *Preliminary Report on the Multiple Cluster Survey on the Situation of Children in Lebanon*, February 2001, 10-11; available from <http://childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/lebanon/lebanon.pdf>. Illegal and undocumented child labor overlap and are excluded from official figures. Consequently, the MICS2 survey used a broader scope in order to incorporate these sectors. Child labor below the legal age limit is, for instance, included in the MICS2 survey, but not in official figures. See UNICEF, *Preliminary Report on the Multiple Cluster Survey*, 3, 10-11.

<sup>2537</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, 8. It should also be pointed out that Syrian and Palestinian children are involved in child labor in Lebanon. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties: Lebanon*, 127.

<sup>2538</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties: Lebanon*.

<sup>2539</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Lebanon*, Washington, D.C., March 31 2003, Sections 6c and f.; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18281.htm>. See also The Protection Project, "Lebanon," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children: A Country-by-Country Report on a Contemporary Form of Slavery* Washington, D.C., 2002; available from [http://www.protectionproject.org/human\\_rights/countryreport/lebanon.htm](http://www.protectionproject.org/human_rights/countryreport/lebanon.htm). The country is also a destination point for trafficking victims primarily from Africa, Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2003: Lebanon*, Washington, D.C., June 11, 2003; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003//21276.htm>. See also The Protection Project, "Human Rights Country Report- Lebanon." The extent to which children are involved is unclear. See Emebet Kebede, *Ethiopia: An Assessment of the International Labour Migration Situation*. IOM, "New IOM Figures on the Global Scale of Trafficking," *Trafficking in Migrants - Quarterly Bulletin* 23 April (2001); available from [http://www.iom.int/documents/publication/en/tm\\_23.pdf](http://www.iom.int/documents/publication/en/tm_23.pdf).

<sup>2540</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Global Report 2001," London, 2001; available from <http://www.child-soldiers.org/cs/childsoldiers.nsf/3f922f75125fc21980256b20003951fc/36f0ab38f2f12bdd80256b1e00442ff4?OpenDocument>. See also Human Rights Watch, *Stop the Use of Child Soldiers!*, [online] [cited October 2, 2003]; available from <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>.

<sup>2541</sup> Government of Lebanon, *Decree No. 686*, New Article 49, as cited in UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties due in 1998*, CRC/C/70/Add.8, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Addendum: Lebanon, Geneva, September 2000, 60.

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student for primary education in 1997 was 271,000 Lebanese pounds (USD 176).<sup>2542</sup> Economically disadvantaged families, especially refugees, are often unable to afford the tuition costs for their children, and are compelled to withdraw them from school and send them to work.<sup>2543</sup> Lebanon enjoys one of the most advanced educational systems in the Arab world in terms of quality and gender parity. Literacy rates are the highest in the Middle Eastern region.<sup>2544</sup> In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 98.9 percent, (100.6 percent for boys and 97.2 percent for girls), and the net primary enrollment rate was 74.2 percent (74.1 percent for boys and 74.3 percent for girls).<sup>2545</sup> Attendance rates are not available for Lebanon. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>2546</sup>

The progress in education is due in part to the high number of private schools in Lebanon.<sup>2547</sup> Notwithstanding this progress, child labor negatively affects the education of working children in Lebanon.<sup>2548</sup> Although the majority of the children working in tobacco cultivation, for instance, enroll in elementary school, work-related absenteeism negatively affects these children and contributes to high dropout rates before reaching the secondary level.<sup>2549</sup> Approximately 38 percent of working children are illiterate or have abandoned primary education entirely.<sup>2550</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code of 1996 established the minimum age for employment at 14 years.<sup>2551</sup> In regard to the definition of the child and the minimum age for admission to employment, the Labor Code makes a distinction between two stages in the case of minors, children ages 13 and younger, and children ages 14 to 17. In the first stage, children are prohibited from engaging in any kind of work. In the second stage, consisting of the 14 to 17 age group, children may be employed under special conditions relating to matters such as working hours and conditions, type

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<sup>2542</sup> Lebanon has a unique education system made up of public, private, and semi-private institutions. The government only contributes to public and semi-private institutions. The figure above refers to the average costs of government-supported primary education in the most recent year for which data are available. For a more detailed discussion, see *Ibid.*, Section 5.2. See also U.S. Embassy- Beirut official, electronic communication to USDOL official, March 31, 2004. See also William A. Rugh, "Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform," *Middle East Journal* Vol. 56 No. 3 (2002), 402. See also UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, Arab Fund For Economic and Social Development, 2002 [cited August 29, 2003], 55 [cited August 14, 2002]; available from <http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/CompleteEnglish.pdf>. For currency conversion see FXConverter, in Oanda.com, [online] [cited July 18, 2003]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>. The conversion rate was based on August 1997 figures, the same year the estimates of education costs were calculated.

<sup>2543</sup> There are Palestinian, Sudanese, Syrian, Iraqi and Somali children residing in Lebanon as refugees. The U.N. estimates that 18 percent of street children in Lebanon are Palestinian. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Lebanon*, Section 5. See also Lebanese NGO Forum, *Problems Encountered by Refugees*, [online] [cited October 1, 2003]; available from <http://www.lnf.org.lb/migrationnetwork/ngo2.html>.

<sup>2544</sup> UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, 55. See also Rugh, "Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform," 402. Although Rugh states that Lebanon is the only Arab country in which private spending on education is three times government spending, it should be pointed out that the government subsidizes private schools at all levels. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties: Lebanon*, 60-61. Rugh is drawing on figures from a World Bank report from 1998 and may, subsequently, overlook this fact. See also World Bank, *Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A Strategy Towards Learning for Development*, 21589, Washington, D.C., 1999; available from [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2001/01/20/000094946\\_01010905322286/Rendered/PDF/multi\\_page.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2001/01/20/000094946_01010905322286/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf).

<sup>2545</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

<sup>2546</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

<sup>2547</sup> UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, 55. See also Rugh, "Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform," 402.

<sup>2548</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports of States Parties: Lebanon*, 127.

<sup>2549</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, viii.

<sup>2550</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>2551</sup> Government of Lebanon, *Code du Travail- Travail des enfants*, Loi no 536, (July 24, 1996); available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/F93LBN01.htm#t1c2>.

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of work and so on.<sup>2552</sup> In addition, it is illegal to employ a child under the age of 15 in industrial enterprises that are harmful or detrimental to their health, or to hire youth below the age of 16 in dangerous environments that threaten their life, health or morals.<sup>2553</sup> There are no laws specifically prohibiting trafficking.<sup>2554</sup> The law allows for the establishment of licensed brothels in certain areas, providing that women working in such establishments are at least 21 years old and undergo regular medical examinations.<sup>2555</sup> Despite the age restrictions, the commercial sexual exploitation of children is reported to occur, and in 2002, the police identified and disbanded several child prostitution rings in Lebanon.<sup>2556</sup> MOL is responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws, through its labor inspectors, but the Ministry lacks adequate resources to be effective. According to MOL, the Ministry has 75 labor inspectors nationwide.<sup>2557</sup>

The Government of Lebanon ratified ILO Convention 138 on June 10, 2003 and ILO Convention 182 on September 11, 2001.<sup>2558</sup>

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<sup>2552</sup> A 1999 amendment to the Labor Code forbids the employment of children under the age of 18 for more than 6 hours per day. The amendment also requires a 13-hour period of rest between workdays. In addition, children must be given an hour break after a four-hour period of labor. An employer may not work children between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. Adolescents ages 14 to 18 must pass a medical examination to ensure that they can undertake the work for which they are to be engaged, and the prospective employer must request the child's identity card to verify his or her age. See Government of Lebanon, *Modifiant les dispositions des articles 23 et 25 du Code du travail*, (June 14, 1999); available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/scripts/natlexcgi.exe?lang=E>.

<sup>2553</sup> *Code du Travail*. These types of work include underground mines and quarries, manufacturing of alcohol, chemicals, explosives, asphalt, work in tanneries or with machinery.

<sup>2554</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Lebanon*, Section 6f.

<sup>2555</sup> Dr. Mohamed Y. Mattar, "Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in Countries of the Middle East," *Fordham International Law Journal* 26 721 (March 2003), 7; available from <http://209.190.246.239/article.pdf>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Lebanon*, Section 5.

<sup>2556</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Lebanon*, Section 5.

<sup>2557</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Beirut, *unclassified telegram no. 3065*. See also U.S. Embassy- Beirut, *unclassified telegram no. 3532*, September 2000.

<sup>2558</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited September 30, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Beirut, *unclassified telegram no. 3065*, 1.