

Jordan

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

The ILO estimated that less than one percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Jordan were working in 2002.²¹⁸⁵ According to a study by the Ministry of Labor (MOL) published in 2002, children who work are employed in automobile repair, carpentry, sales, blacksmith shops, tailoring, construction, and food services.²¹⁸⁶ Child vendors on the streets of Amman work selling newspapers, food, and gum. Other children provide income for their families by rummaging through trash dumpsters to find recyclable items.²¹⁸⁷ Due to deteriorating economic conditions, the presence of working children, especially as street vendors, may be more prevalent now than it was 10 years ago.²¹⁸⁸ Working children are primarily concentrated in the governorates of Amman, Zarka, Irbid, Balqa, and Ma'an.²¹⁸⁹ Many working children are victims of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse in the workplace and are exposed to hazardous chemicals and dangerous working conditions.²¹⁹⁰

Education in Jordan is free and compulsory for children ages 6 to 17 years.²¹⁹¹ The Ministry of Education (MOE) is required to open a school in every community where there are at least 10 students for grades 1 through 4.²¹⁹² In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 98.6 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 91.3 percent.²¹⁹³ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Jordan. Dropout rates are relatively high at the

²¹⁸⁵ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004. Nevertheless, recent studies suggest that tens of thousands of children in Jordan, perhaps more than 290,000, fit the category of working children. See National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study of Disadvantaged Children*, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Amman, May 2004, 7, 48.

²¹⁸⁶ Mohammed Shahateet and Nihaya Issa Dabdub, *A Report on the Status of Child Labour in Jordan-2001*, The Jordanian Ministry of Labour, Amman, July 2002, 15-16.

²¹⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Jordan*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27930.htm>.

²¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Section 6d. See also National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 29.

²¹⁸⁹ Dr. Mohammed Shahateet and Nihaya Issa Dabdub, *Estimating Child Labour in Jordan: 1991-2005*, The Jordanian Ministry of Labour, Amman, October 2002, 11. See also Ministry of Labor, *Towards a Healthy Environment for Children 2003*, Amman, 2003.

²¹⁹⁰ Dr. Muntaha Gharaibeh and Dr. Shirley Hoeman, "Health Hazards and Risks for Abuse among Child Labor in Jordan," *Journal of Pediatric Nursing* 18 no. 2 (April 2003), 140, 43. See also Kamal S. Saleh, *Child Labour in Jordan*, Department of Statistics, Amman, 2003, 6-7.

²¹⁹¹ Article 10 of the Education Act No. 3 of 1994 states that basic education is free and compulsory for Jordanian children. Basic education extends from first through the end of tenth grade. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Periodic Reports of States Parties due in 1998 (Addendum)*, CRC/C/70/Add.4, prepared by Government of Jordan, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, September 17, 1999, para. 91; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/a06f687951c4fc1080256846003b7763?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/a06f687951c4fc1080256846003b7763?Opendocument).

²¹⁹² ILO-IPEC, *National Programme for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in Jordan*, project document, Geneva, September 2002, 5.

²¹⁹³ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 98.7 percent for girls and 98.4 percent for boys, while the net primary enrollment rate was 91.7 for girls and 90.9 for boys. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*.

intermediate stage, particularly in rural areas after children reach the age of 13 years.²¹⁹⁴ The most commonly cited reasons for dropping out of school are poverty, disability, poor academic performance, and parental attitudes.²¹⁹⁵

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum legal working age at 16 years.²¹⁹⁶ Minors must be given a break after 4 hours of work, are not allowed to work more than 6 hours per day, and may not work during weekends and holidays, or at night.²¹⁹⁷ Before hiring a minor, a prospective employer must obtain a guardian's written approval, the minor's birth certificate, and a health certificate.²¹⁹⁸ An employer that violates these provisions faces a fine ranging from 100 to 500 dinars (USD 142 to 710). The fine doubles for subsequent infractions.²¹⁹⁹ In February 2003, King Abdullah issued a royal decree requiring that the minimum age for employment of children working in hazardous occupations was raised from 17 to 18 years.²²⁰⁰ Provisions in the Labor Code do not extend to children employed in the informal sector, which includes agriculture, domestic service, and small family enterprises.²²⁰¹

Compulsory labor is prohibited by the Constitution of Jordan.²²⁰² While the law does not specifically prohibit forced or bonded labor by children, such practices are not known to occur.²²⁰³ A Jordanian law specifically prohibits trafficking in children, and there is no indication that children were trafficked, to,

²¹⁹⁴ According to the MOL study conducted in 2001, 60 percent of working children had completed the ninth grade. This study was based on 2,539 working children. See Mohammed Shahateet and Nihaya Issa Dabdub, *Child Labour Report-2001*, 9 and 23. See also Dalya Dajani, "CLU Embarks on New Survey Examining Health, Safety Indicators of Working Children," *The Jordan Times* (Amman), February 23, 2004; available from http://www.amanjordan.org/english/daily_news/wmview.php?ArtID=3984.

²¹⁹⁵ ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan--project document*, 6, 12 and 13. These reasons are based on two studies. One was conducted in 1995 and the other in 2001. See also Dajani, "CLU Embarks on New Survey."

²¹⁹⁶ *Labour Code, Law No. 8 of 1996*, Section 73; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/E96JOR01.htm>.

²¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Section 75. The Code does not specify the age of a minor. Young people are defined as individuals of either sex who have not yet reached 18 years of age. Elsewhere in the Code, 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." Definitions may be found in Section 2 of the Code.

²¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Section 76.

²¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Section 77. For currency conversion, see FXConverter, in Oanda.com, [online] [cited October 29, 2004]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

²²⁰⁰ Parliament has yet to pass the corresponding law, but draft legislation is pending approval and the Ministry of Labor has issued instructions to inspectors to enforce this change. See U.S. Embassy- Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 6977*, August 19, 2004.

²²⁰¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Jordan*, Section 6d. The Labor Law also does not specify a minimum age for vocational training of children. Presently, the law implies that any juvenile over the age of 7 years may be taken on as an apprentice. There are no clear standards to regulate apprenticeships nor are inspection mechanisms in place to ensure children's safety. See National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 53.

²²⁰² In circumstances of war or natural disaster, forced labor may be mandated by the Government. See *Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, (1952), Chapter 2, Article 13; available from <http://www.parliament.gov.jo/english/legislative/constit.htm>.

²²⁰³ Some foreign domestic servants worked under conditions that amounted to forced labor; however, there were no reports of such cases involving children. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Jordan*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Sections 6c & d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18279.htm>.

from, or within the country.²²⁰⁴ Inducing a girl under the age of 20 to engage in prostitution and inducing any child under the age of 15 to commit sodomy are prohibited. Sanctions for these offenses include imprisonment for up to 5 years and a fine.²²⁰⁵

The Child Labor Unit (CLU) of the MOL is primarily responsible for monitoring child labor, collecting and analyzing data, and reviewing and ensuring the enforcement of existing legislation.²²⁰⁶ The MOL's inspection division, which is comprised of 21 field offices and 79 inspectors, is mandated to inspect all registered establishments with more than 5 employees.²²⁰⁷ In 2002, approximately 3,000 child labor allegations were investigated by MOL inspectors, yet none of these cases resulted in sanctions against the employers.²²⁰⁸ Current inspection mechanisms are inadequate in terms of their frequency, scope, outreach, and quality of reporting.²²⁰⁹

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

The Government of Jordan, through its Information Resource Center (IRC) of the King Hussein Foundation, sponsored a 3-day conference in October 2003 for regional experts to collaborate on action plans to combat child labor.²²¹⁰ The IRC continues to conduct research on child labor and is also implementing a program for street children in Irbid with support from the Swiss government.²²¹¹ In May 2004, the National Council for Family Affairs in collaboration with the World Bank, concluded a study of disadvantaged children in Jordan, with a particular emphasis on working children and street children.²²¹² The Ministries of Labor, Education, and Social Affairs are working

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	3/23/1998	✓
Ratified Convention 182	4/20/2000	✓
ILO-IPEC Member		✓
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

²²⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Jordan*, Section 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Near East*, Washington, D.C., June 14, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33195.htm>.

²²⁰⁵ The law regarding prostitution does not apply if the victim is a "known prostitute" or "known to be of immoral character." See ECPAT International, *Jordan*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited May 27, 2004], Protection; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp.

²²⁰⁶ ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan--project document*, 20.

²²⁰⁷ National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 58.

²²⁰⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Jordan*, Section 6d.

²²⁰⁹ National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 59. The Government has provided little training to labor inspectors on child labor. In 2002, the Ministry of Labor reported that it investigated over 3,000 child labor cases; however, no fines were levied and none of the employers were taken to court as a result. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Jordan*, Section 6d.

²²¹⁰ The IRC was formerly called the National Task Force for Children. The forum was attended by child labor experts from Morocco, Sudan, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan. See Dalya Dajani, "Experts Begin Deliberations on Action Plans to Combat Child Labour," *The Jordan Times* (Amman), October 6, 2003; available from <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/10062003005.htm>.

²²¹¹ U.S. Embassy- Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 6977*.

²²¹² National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*.

in collaboration with a British NGO to implement two major projects focusing on juvenile offenders and school dropouts.²²¹³

USDOL is supporting a USD 1 million ILO-IPEC project to combat child labor in Jordan, which is being undertaken with the cooperation of the Ministries of Labor, Education, and Social Development.²²¹⁴ In June 2004, the CLU of the MOL, with support from ILO-IPEC, conducted a workshop to train 38 teachers and volunteers on the negative consequences of child labor. Subsequently, the participants have begun working with youths in community centers and schools to raise awareness about child labor issues.²²¹⁵

In 2003, the MOE began implementing a USD 120 million World Bank project, the Education Reform for Knowledge Economy Project, which aims to transform the education system at the early childhood, basic, and secondary levels to produce graduates with the skills necessary for the knowledge economy.²²¹⁶ This integrated program of education reform is set out in the government's Statement of Sectoral Policy and 2003-2008 Five-Year Implementation Plan.²²¹⁷ Recognizing the link between the lack of education and child labor, the MOE intends to address child labor issues in its 2003-2015 Educational Development Plan.²²¹⁸

The Jordanian Women's Federation and the UN Relief and Works Agency are implementing a pilot project in the Baqa refugee camp to reach street children who have dropped out of school by engaging them in non-formal educational activities.²²¹⁹

²²¹³ The projects are funded by the EU and the World Bank. The first project, which began in 1998, matches juvenile delinquents with mentors from local universities. The program is expected to serve 6,000 children by the end of 2004. The second project provides non-formal education to school drop-outs. Those who earn diplomas through the program are guaranteed one year of vocational training by the government. See U.S. Embassy- Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 6977*.

²²¹⁴ The program aims to withdraw 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. The project aims to reach 3,000 working children over a three-year period. See ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan--project document*, 26-27.

²²¹⁵ U.S. Embassy- Amman, *unclassified telegram no. 6977*.

²²¹⁶ World Bank, *Education Reform for Knowledge Economy I Program*, World Bank, [database online] [cited May 27, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P075829>.

²²¹⁷ World Bank, *Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Loan in the Amount of US\$120 Million to Jordan for an Education Reform for Knowledge Economy I Program*, 25309-JO, April 10, 2003, 3, 14; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2003/05/10/000094946_03043004015982/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf.

²²¹⁸ ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan--project document*, 7.

²²¹⁹ Mahmoud Al Abed, "Child-to-Child Working to End School Dropouts", [online], May 27, 2004; available from http://www.amanjordan.org/english/daily_news/wmprint.php?ArtID=1049.