

Armenia

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 years in Armenia are unavailable.²⁷¹ Children work in family businesses and in agriculture.²⁷² There are reports of increasing numbers of children dropping out of school and starting to work in the informal sector, especially in agriculture.²⁷³ Children in the streets of Yerevan can be observed, often during school hours, selling newspapers and flowers.²⁷⁴ The commercial exploitation of girls is reportedly increasing in Armenia.²⁷⁵ Trafficking of girls to Turkey and the United Arab Emirates for prostitution is a problem.²⁷⁶ There are reports that children as young as 14 years were receiving military training.²⁷⁷

Primary and secondary education is free for all children for 8 years and compulsory through age 14.²⁷⁸ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 96.3 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 84.6 percent.²⁷⁹ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in

²⁷¹ LABORSTAT, 1A- Total and economically active population, by age group (Thousands) [Database], Geneva, 2004; available from <http://laborsta.ilo.org>.

²⁷² Such activities are not forbidden by law. By Armenian law and custom, children working in family-run small businesses (including farms) are considered to be doing chores. See U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*, August 2000. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Armenia*, Washington D.C., February 26, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrprt/2003/27823.htm>.

²⁷³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Armenia*, CRC/C/15/Add.119, February 24, 2000, para. 50.

²⁷⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*, submitted in response to the U.S. Department of Labor Federal Register Notice (September 25, 2001) "Request for Information on Efforts by Certain Countries to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor", October 24, 2001. See also Association of Investigative Journalists of Armenia, *Followers of Gavroche: Children on the streets of Yerevan*, online, [online] 2002 [cited June 27, 2003]; available from <http://www.hetq.am/en/h-0403-gavrosh.html>.

²⁷⁵ Sona Meloyan, *Armenia: Child Prostitution Taboo*, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, [online] June 5, 2003 [cited June 27, 2003]; available from http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/cau/cau_200306_182_3_eng.txt. See also Armenia, *Followers of Gavroche: Children on the streets of Yerevan*.

²⁷⁶ Minors are sometimes unaccompanied by their parents, which implies the involvement of corrupt officials in the trafficking chain. See IOM, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study*, Yerevan, 2001, 10, 11, 20, 22. Girls are also thought to be trafficked to Germany, Greece, the United States, and other European countries. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Armenia*, Section 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report - 2004: Armenia*, Washington, D.C., June 14, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33192.htm>.

²⁷⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports of States Parties*, CRC/C/SR.924, United Nations, Geneva, January 15, 2004, para. 16. The United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern in 2000 about the conscription of children into the Armenian armed forces. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Concluding Observations*, CRC/C/15/Add.119, para. 48.

²⁷⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Armenia*, Section 5. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*. See also *Structure of Education System in Armenia*, EuroEducation.net, [online] 2003 [cited April 4, 2004]; available from <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/armenco.htm>.

²⁷⁹ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. The gross primary school attendance rate in 2001 was 127.3, while the net primary attendance rate was 97.2.²⁸⁰ Dropout, retention, and absenteeism rates remain high in Armenia, possibly as a result of Armenia's serious economic downturn, the high number of non-native Armenian-speaking students, and the requirement that all classes must be taught in the Armenian language.²⁸¹ Access to education in rural areas remains poor.²⁸² Agricultural responsibilities take precedence over school in rural areas, and children work in the fields during harvest season leading to prolonged absence from school.²⁸³

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age of employment for children at 16 years.²⁸⁴ However, in special cases, a child of 15 years can work, with the consent of the trade union of the organization.²⁸⁵ The Labor Code stipulates that all child workers are required to undergo a medical examination prior to starting work and annually thereafter until they reach 18 years of age.²⁸⁶

Children under the age of 18 years are prohibited by the Labor Code from working in "harmful or hazardous" conditions, such as underground work, and may not work overtime, on holidays, or at night.²⁸⁷ Article 19 of the Law on Children's Rights prohibits children from working in the production and/or sale of alcohol and tobacco products as well as in employment activities that may compromise their health, physical, or mental development, or interfere with their education.²⁸⁸ The Constitution prohibits forced and bonded labor of children.²⁸⁹ The new Criminal Code specifically prohibits trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation, and child trafficking.²⁹⁰ Having sexual intercourse

²⁸⁰ USAID, *Global Education Online Database: Armenia*, 2004 [cited March 29, 2004]; available from http://esdb.cdie.org/cgi-bin/broker.exe?_program=gedprogs.dhspr1_1.sas&_service=default.

²⁸¹ Because of the serious economic problems, an increasing number of Armenian as well as minority students are leaving school early to work to help support their families. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Concluding Observations*, CRC/C/15/Add.119, para. 44. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Armenia*, Section 5. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations: Armenia*, January 30, 2004, para. 54.

²⁸² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Concluding Observations*, CRC/C/15/Add.119, para. 44.

²⁸³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*.

²⁸⁴ Article 200 of the Labor Code, as cited in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*. A new Labor Law effective June 2005 stipulates that children ages 14-16 years will be eligible to work if they have permission from a parent or guardian and work under a labor contract. Children under age 14 will be prohibited from working. U.S. Embassy- Yerevan Official, email communication to USDOL official, February 8, 2005.

²⁸⁵ See Civil Code, as cited in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*, articles 19, 198.1. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Armenia*, Section 6d.

²⁸⁶ Article 201 of the Labor Code, as cited in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*.

²⁸⁷ Workers ages 16 to 18 years must have a shorter workday and cannot work more than 36 hours per week, according to the Labor Code (children 15 years of age may only work 24 hours per week). The Ministry of Social Welfare maintains a list of "hazardous and harmful" jobs in which children are not allowed to work. See Labor Code as cited in *Ibid.*, Articles 200, 02, and 15. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*.

²⁸⁸ U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 1838*, August 2004. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*.

²⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Armenia*, Section 6c.

with a person under the age of 16 is prohibited and punishable by imprisonment of 3 to 8 years.²⁹¹ Article 9 of the Children's Rights Act gives responsibility to the government to protect children from criminal activities, prostitution, and begging. The Criminal Code prohibits enticing underage girls into prostitution.²⁹²

Local community councils and unemployment offices are responsible for enforcing child labor laws.²⁹³ Alleged violations of child labor laws are investigated by the Ministry of Social Welfare. If there is probable cause, the Ministry turns the case over to the National Police, which takes action. There are no reports of child labor complaints being investigated or prosecuted since 1994.²⁹⁴

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

The Government of Armenia approved the National Plan of Action for the Protection of Children's Rights 2003-2015 in December 2003. The plan was designed in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.²⁹⁵ The government approved a National Action Plan to combat trafficking in January 2004, and continues to support the National Anti-Trafficking Commission.²⁹⁶ The Government of Armenia is also a member of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and cooperates with other members to combat organized crime, including criminal activities concerning trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of women and children.²⁹⁷ The government, with international assistance, has trained its

²⁹⁰ International Organization for Migration, *Analysis of the Institutional and Legal Frameworks and Overview of Cooperation Patterns in the field of Counter-Trafficking in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, Vienna, November, 2003, 18. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Armenia*. See also Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, *OSCE Yerevan workshop focuses on identification of trafficking victims*, OSCE, 2003 [cited May 6, 2004]; available from http://www.osce.org/news/show_news.php?id=3794. Traffickers of women and children can also be tried under other articles of the criminal code. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Armenia.*, Section 6f.

²⁹¹ International Organization for Migration, *Analysis of the Institutional and Legal Frameworks.*, 20.

²⁹² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Armenia*, CRC/C/93/Add.6, United Nations, July 17, 2003, paras. 414, 17.

²⁹³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Armenia*, Section 6d.

²⁹⁴ Family-run businesses may not be monitored as closely because of legal and cultural reasons. In this context, exploitation of children by a child's family may not be reported. See U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 2213*. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 1838*.

²⁹⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports of States Parties*, CRC/C/SR.924, para. 8. See also International Bureau for Children's Rights, *Implementation of the Armenian National Plan of Action for the Protection of Children's Rights*, [online] [cited May 6, 2004]; available from http://www.ibcr.org/Projects/Nat_plan.htm.

²⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Armenia*.

²⁹⁷ Armenia is a signatory to the *Agreement Among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, In Particular in its Organized Forms*. Participating states include the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Moldova Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey, and Ukraine. See Working Group on Cooperation in Combating Crime, *Agreement Among the Governments of the BSEC Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in Particular in its Organized Forms*, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, [online] 1998 [cited May 6, 2004]; available from <http://www.bsec.gov.tr/cooperation.htm>.

worldwide consular staff to recognize trafficking, and has collaborated with police in destination countries to apprehend traffickers.²⁹⁸

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is also implementing a small U.S. Department of State-funded project to provide technical assistance and training to local NGO trafficking research grantees.²⁹⁹ The IOM launched a new trafficking hotline and hosted two one-day trafficking workshops for government officials, NGO's, and the media.³⁰⁰ UNICEF is active in Armenia and supports child protection activities as well as efforts to improve basic education.³⁰¹

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	
Ratified Convention 182	
ILO-IPEC Member	
National Plan for Children	✓
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan (Trafficking)	✓

The Ministry of Education and Science works in partnership with UNICEF and World Vision on the Inclusive Education Project to integrate children with special needs into the education system.³⁰² The World Bank is currently funding several projects in Armenia. The Second Social Investment Fund Project aims to upgrade schools, repair school heating systems, and fund furniture purchases for schools, as well as carry out other community development activities that will strengthen local level institutions.³⁰³ The Educational Quality and Relevance Project is building the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Science to develop education quality monitoring systems, strengthen ongoing education reforms, implement communications technology, and project evaluation.³⁰⁴ The Ministry of Education and Science is implementing the final phase of the Educational National Plan³⁰⁵ and works in cooperation with international development institutions to improve the quality of education and living conditions at boarding schools, as well as to provide social support for children who need special educational facilities.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁸ U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 1838*.

²⁹⁹ U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *unclassified telegram no. 99901*, May 5, 2004. To facilitate government efforts against trafficking, the OSCE has developed a matrix that outlines all ongoing and planned anti-trafficking activities by NGOs and international organizations, which will be regularly updated and distributed to Interagency members. See OSCE Yerevan Office official, email communication to USDOL official, 2003, February 20, 2003.

³⁰⁰ *Armenia - Counter-Trafficking Hotline and Workshops*, International Organization for Migration, May 11, 2004.

³⁰¹ UNICEF, *At a glance: Armenia*, [website] 2004 [cited August 30, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/armenia.html>.

³⁰² World Vision, *Armenian children celebrate International Child Protection Day*, [online] June 11, 2003 [cited May 6, 2004]; available from <http://www.child-rights.org/pahome2.0.nsf/allArticles/6BA8B6CFC0DC627A88256D4200022271?OpenDocument>.

³⁰³ World Bank, *Armenia- Second Social Investment Fund Project*, [project appraisal document] March 29, 2004 [cited March 29, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P057952>.

³⁰⁴ World Bank, *Armenia - Educational Quality and Relevance Project*, [Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet] September 8, 2003 [cited March 29, 2004]; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDS_IBank_Servlet?pcont=details&eid=000094946_03082904013043.

³⁰⁵ Ministry of Education and Science, *Educational National Plan*, as cited in UNESCO, *Education Plans and Policies, 2000* [cited May 13, 2004]; available from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17855&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

³⁰⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Armenia, CRC/C/93/Add.6*, para. 333.

The Government of Armenia is a participating member of the Framework Program of Cooperation between the Council of Europe and Ministries of Education of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. The Framework aims to develop the education system in these countries, assist in structural reform of the education sector, develop curriculum and teaching methodologies, and support regional cooperation.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Council of Europe, *Framework Programme of Co-operation between the Council of Europe Secretariat and the Ministries of Education of the South Caucasus Region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: 2002-2004*, [online] 2002 [cited May 6, 2004]; available from http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/education/e.d.c/documents_and_publications/by_language/english/framework_programme_south_caucasus.asp#ToPOfPage.