

Egypt

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

The ILO estimated that 8.3 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years were working in Egypt in 2002.¹⁴²⁵ Studies have suggested that rural children and children from poor households account for the overwhelming majority of working children,¹⁴²⁶ with many children working in the agricultural sector.¹⁴²⁷ Children in urban areas work in leather tanneries, pottery kilns,¹⁴²⁸ glassworks,¹⁴²⁹ blacksmith, metal and copper workshops, battery and carpentry shops,¹⁴³⁰ auto repair workshops, and textile and plastics factories.¹⁴³¹

Reports indicate a widespread practice of poor rural families making arrangements to send daughters to cities to work as domestic servants in the homes of wealthy citizens.¹⁴³² Urban areas are also host to large numbers of street children who have left their homes in the country-side to find work, and often to flee hostile conditions at home.¹⁴³³ Street children work shining shoes, collecting rubbish, begging, cleaning and

¹⁴²⁵ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004. In 2001, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) conducted a household survey at the request of the government for use in formulation of appropriate child labor policies. The results of the survey were not released during the year as had been anticipated. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Egypt*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27926.htm>.

¹⁴²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Egypt*, Section 6d. See also El Daw A. Suliman and Safaa E. El-Kogali, "Why Are the Children Out of School? Factors Affecting Children's Education in Egypt" (paper presented at the ERF Ninth Annual Conference, American University in Sharja, United Arab Emirates, October 28, 2002), 20; available from <http://www.erf.org.eg/9th%20annual%20conf/9th%20PDF%20Presented/Labor/L-P%20Suliman%20&%20Safaa.pdf>.

¹⁴²⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Egypt*, Section 6d.

¹⁴²⁸ ILO-IPEC official, email communication to USDOL official, January 7, 2002. See also Tonia Rifaey, Mahmoud M. Murtada, and Mohamed Abd el-Azeem, "Urban Children and Poverty: Child Labor and Family Dynamics- Case Studies in Old Cairo" (paper presented at the Children and the City Conference, Amman, Jordan, December 11-13, 2002), 1; available from <http://www.araburban.org/childcity/Papers/English/ToniaRifaey.pdf>.

¹⁴²⁹ United Nations, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention: Addendum-Egypt*, CRC/C/65/Add.9, Committee on the Rights of the Child, November 11, 1999; available from [www.unhcr.ch/TBS/DOC.NSF/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/8f1898b2a712708c802568b200501ed2/\\$FILE/G9945502.doc](http://www.unhcr.ch/TBS/DOC.NSF/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/8f1898b2a712708c802568b200501ed2/$FILE/G9945502.doc). See also Church World Service (CWS), *Addressing Child Labor in Old Cairo - CEOSS Egypt*, [online] October 18, 2004 [cited November 22, 2004]; available from http://www.churchworldservice.org/Development/project_description/descriptions/53.html.

¹⁴³⁰ F. Curtale and et al., "Anaemia among Young Male Workers in Alexandria, Egypt," *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 6 5/6 (September-November 2000); available from www.emro.who.int/Publications/EMHJ/0605/20.htm. See also A. Zaki, M. El-Shazly, M. Abdel-Fattah, K. El-Said, and F. Curtale, "Lead Toxicity among Working Children and Adolescents in Alexandria, Egypt," *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 4 (3) (1998); available from <http://www.emro.who.int/Publications/EMHJ/0403/4313.htm>.

¹⁴³¹ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6469*, Cairo, October 2001.

¹⁴³² Child domestic workers are excluded from the protections of the labor code and are highly susceptible to physical and sexual abuse, harsh working conditions, and exploitation. See Karam Saber, *A Situational Analysis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Egypt*, Land Centre for Human Rights (LCHR), March 2003, 10-11; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/rabat/egypt.pdf. See also Dena Rashed, "Born an Adult," *Al-Ahram Weekly* (Cairo), June 19-25, 2003; available from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2003/643/fe2.htm>.

¹⁴³³ A survey of urban street children conducted by Human Rights Watch in 2002 found that in almost every case, the children were living and working on the street because of severe family crises. Their experiences as street children are also plagued with trauma

directing cars into parking spaces, and selling food and trinkets.¹⁴³⁴ Street children are particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in illicit activities, including stealing, smuggling, pornography, and prostitution.¹⁴³⁵ In particular, the commercial sexual exploitation of children is greatly under-acknowledged given that Egyptian cities (Alexandria and Cairo in particular) are reported destinations for sex tourism.¹⁴³⁶ Egypt is a country of transit for child trafficking, particularly for underage girls from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union who are trafficked into Israel and for forced labor and sexual exploitation.¹⁴³⁷ It is a common practice for underage girls from poor and rural areas to be forced to marry men from the Gulf States, often at the behest of their families.¹⁴³⁸ Although the legal age of consent to marriage in Egypt is 16, falsification of documents enables brokers to sell underage girls into circumstances amounting to forced sexual servitude.

The Constitution guarantees free and compulsory basic education for children ages 6 to 15 who are Egyptian citizens.¹⁴³⁹ Despite the constitutional guarantees to universal education, in practice, education is not free, and parents are increasingly responsible for both the direct and indirect costs of education. In fact, Egyptian law allows for public schools to charge fees for services, insurance, and equipment.¹⁴⁴⁰ In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 96.6 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 89.9 percent.¹⁴⁴¹ Girls' enrollment and attendance still lags behind that of boys. In 2000, the gross primary

as Egyptian police routinely arrest and detain them, often subjecting them to extreme forms of abuse. For a more detailed discussion, see Clarisa Bencomo, *Charged with Being Children: Egyptian Police Abuse of Children in Need of Protection*, Vol.15, No.1, Human Rights Watch (HRW), New York, February 2003, 9, para. 221d; available from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/egypt0203/egypt0203.pdf>.

¹⁴³⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴³⁵ Ibid. According to research conducted by Dr. Nicholas Ciaccio at the American University of Cairo, more than 80 percent of the estimated 93,000 street children in Egypt are exploited sexually, mainly through prostitution and pornography. See ECPAT International, *Egypt*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited May 26, 2004]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp. Due in part to the extremely taboo nature of sexual issues in Egypt, particularly involving children, information on the extent of commercial sexual exploitation of children is limited. However, crime statistics in Egypt reveal that up to 92 children were prosecuted for child pornography in 2001. See Saber, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Egypt*, 5-6.

¹⁴³⁶ The Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs collaborated with UNICEF recently in a major research project, which highlighted that some poor suburbs in Cairo were major destinations for rich men from the Gulf States, specifically for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation of children. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Egypt*, Section 5. See also ECPAT International, *Egypt*. See also UNICEF, *Profiting from Abuse: An investigation into the sexual exploitation of our children*, New York, November 2001, 11; available from http://www.unicef.org/publications/pub_profiting_en.pdf.

¹⁴³⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Egypt*, Washington, D.C., June 14, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33195.htm>.

¹⁴³⁸ See Saber, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Egypt*, 6-7. See also ECPAT International, *Five Years After Stockholm*, Bangkok, November 2001, 27; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/publication/other/english/Pdf_page/ecpat_5th_a4a_2001_full.pdf.

¹⁴³⁹ *The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt: Amendment Ratified on May 22, 1980*, (May 22), Articles 18 and 20; available from <http://www.sis.gov.eg/egyptinf/politics/parlament/html/constit.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Egypt*, Section 5.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Bencomo, *Charged with Being Children*, 11.

¹⁴⁴¹ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*. For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report. A recent study on the impact of work on children's schooling in Egypt suggests that decisions regarding school and work participation are jointly determined and that work significantly reduces school attendance for

enrollment rate for girls was 93.1 percent, compared to 99.9 percent for boys. The net primary enrollment rate was 87.5 percent for girls, compared to 92.2 percent for boys.¹⁴⁴² 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. In 2000, the gross primary attendance rate was 102 percent and the net primary attendance rate was 85 percent.¹⁴⁴³ A 2000 national survey of children ages 6 to 15 years found that 14 percent of girls were not currently attending school, compared to 8 percent of boys who were also not attending school.¹⁴⁴⁴ Working children are predominantly school dropouts or have never been enrolled in school.¹⁴⁴⁵ The 2000 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey of children ages 8 to 10 found that 3.4 percent of boys had never attended school, compared to 8.4 percent of girls in that age group.¹⁴⁴⁶

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

Article 99 of the Labor Law of 2003 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 or those not reaching the age of complete elementary education, whichever is older.¹⁴⁴⁷ The law also prohibits juveniles ages 14 and above from working more than 6 hours per day, requires at least a 1 hour break, and prohibits juveniles from working overtime, on holidays, more than 4 consecutive hours, or between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.¹⁴⁴⁸ However, the labor law does not apply to children working in the agricultural sector.¹⁴⁴⁹ This shortcoming is partially compensated for in ministerial decrees complementing the labor law, especially Decree No. 118 of 2003, which prohibits children below 16 from working in 44 hazardous professions, including agricultural activities involving the use of pesticides.¹⁴⁵⁰ The labor law also stipulates

girls and boys. See Ragui Assaad, Deborah Levison, and Nadia Zibani, *The Effect of Child Work on Schooling: Evidence from Egypt*, August 2004; available from <http://www.hhh.umn.edu/people/dlevison/AssaadLevison&Zibani-2004.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴² World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*.

¹⁴⁴³ USAID Development Indicators Service, *Global Education Database*, [online] [cited October 13, 2004]; available from <http://quesdb.cdie.org/ged/index.html>. For an explanation of gross primary enrollment and/or attendance rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definitions of gross primary enrollment rate and gross primary attendance rate in the glossary of this report.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Mothers of children who had dropped out or never attended school cited cost as the primary reason. Among the poorest households, the distance to school and a need for the child's income from working were also significant reasons for children's non-attendance. See Suliman and El-Kogali, "Why Are the Children Out of School?" 16-19.

¹⁴⁴⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Committee on the Rights of the Child - NGO Alternative Report, CRC.26/Egypt*, prepared by NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child, pursuant to Article 44 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, January 2001, 24; available from http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/CRC.26/egypt_ngo_report.pdf.

¹⁴⁴⁶ The American University in Cairo, *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2000 (EDHS)*, [online] 2000 [cited October 27, 2004]; available from http://www.aucegypt.edu/src/girlseducation/statistics_edhs2000.htm.

¹⁴⁴⁷ *Labour Law*, Law No. 12/2003, (April 7), Article 99.

¹⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 101.

¹⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 103.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Decree 118 specifically prohibits employment in cotton compressing, leather tanning, bars, auto repair shops, or with explosives and chemicals (including pesticides). The Decree identifies maximum allowable weights that male and female children are allowed to carry and stipulates that employers provide health care and meals for employed children and implement appropriate occupational health and safety measures in the work place. See *Decree Determining the System of Employing Children, and the Conditions, Terms and Cases in which They Are Employed as well as the Works, Vocations, and Industries in which it is Prohibited to Employ Them, According to the Different Stages of Age*, Decree No. 118 of 2003, (June 30), Articles 1-9. See also U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6904*, Cairo, August 18, 2003, 1.

penalties pertaining to the employment of children, which include fines that range from 500 to 1,000 Egyptian pounds (about USD 85 to 170) per employee.¹⁴⁵¹ Children ages 12 to 18 are permitted to participate in apprenticeship training for a period of up to 3 years provided the work complies with the provisions stipulated for employment of children or juveniles in Law No. 12 of 2003.¹⁴⁵²

Although Egypt lacks an anti-trafficking law,¹⁴⁵³ it does prohibit forced labor and prostitution.¹⁴⁵⁴ The Penal Code makes it illegal for a person to entice or assist a male under the age of 21 or a female of any age to depart the country to work in prostitution or other lewd activities. Violations of this law are punishable with imprisonment for 1 to 7 years and fines from 100 to 500 pounds (USD 16 to 81).¹⁴⁵⁵

The Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) is the government agency responsible for enforcing child labor laws.¹⁴⁵⁶ The Child Labor Unit within the MOMM coordinates investigations of reports of child labor violations and ensures enforcement of the laws pertaining to child labor.¹⁴⁵⁷ The U.S. Department of State reported that in state-owned enterprises, enforcement is adequate while enforcement in the private and informal sectors is inadequate.¹⁴⁵⁸ There is a shortage of labor inspectors trained to identify and intervene in cases involving child labor. However, over the past year, a number of cases involving MOMM's enforcement of child labor infractions were reported by the local press. In most of the cases, underage children were withdrawn from the work environment and sanctions were imposed on the employers who were found in violation of child labor laws.¹⁴⁵⁹ In the past year, the MOMM has trained labor inspectors to more effectively deal with child labor and the new regulations and ministerial decrees pertaining to child labor. The MOMM has also worked with the Ministry of Education to identify governorates with high dropout rates, and has increased child labor inspection in those areas.¹⁴⁶⁰ There were no reported arrests or prosecutions for trafficking crimes during the last year, and no trafficking victims were identified.¹⁴⁶¹

¹⁴⁵¹ Fines double if the violation is repeated. Violations of articles pertaining to occupational health and safety result in imprisonment for a period of at least 3 months and/or a fine of up to 10,000 pounds (USD 1,698). See U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6904*, 1. For the currency conversions, see Oanda.com, *FXConverter*, in *FXConverter*, [online] [cited January 13, 2005]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

¹⁴⁵² *Decree Concerning the Rules and Procedures Regulating Vocational Apprenticeship*, Decree No. 175 of 2003, (August 31), Articles 1-16.

¹⁴⁵³ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Egypt*.

¹⁴⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Egypt*, Section 6f.

¹⁴⁵⁵ *Criminal Code of Egypt*, as cited in The Protection Project Legal Library, [database online] [cited May 26, 2004], Section 16.1, Articles 1-3; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/EgyptF.pdf>. For currency conversion, see XE.COM, *Universal Currency Converter*, XE.COM, [Currency Converter] [cited August 29, 2003]; available from <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>.

¹⁴⁵⁶ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6904*.

¹⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴⁵⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Egypt*, Section 6d.

¹⁴⁵⁹ U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6563*, Cairo, September 1, 2004.

¹⁴⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Egypt*, Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6563*.

¹⁴⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Egypt*.

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

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) is implementing the Second Decade of Protection and Welfare of Children action program that includes a component to reintegrate working children into schools, their families, and the community.¹⁴⁶² The NCCM continues to collaborate with the MOMM, Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), ILO, UNICEF, and the Ministries of Social Affairs, Agriculture, Education, Health, and Interior to formulate a national strategy to combat child labor and to implement action programs to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.¹⁴⁶³ While the action programs began under the support of ILO-IPEC, the NCCM, ETUF, AFL-CIO Solidarity Center, UNICEF, and MOMM now operate the projects independently without support from ILO-IPEC.¹⁴⁶⁴ The Ministries of Manpower and Migration and Agriculture are cooperating to prevent underage children from working in the cotton farming season and to provide children working legally with the necessary protection while engaging in agricultural activities.¹⁴⁶⁵ The NCCM is also implementing projects in the governorates of Sharkia, Menofia, Menya, and Damietta to shift working children into non-hazardous activities and gradually eliminate all forms of child labor.¹⁴⁶⁶

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	6/9/1999	✓
Ratified Convention 182	5/6/2002	✓
ILO-IPEC Member		✓
National Plan for Children		✓
National Child Labor Action Plan		✓
Sector Action Plan		

The World Bank's Education Enhancement Program Project is working to ensure universal access to basic education, with an emphasis on girls, and to improve the quality of education.¹⁴⁶⁷

¹⁴⁶² The action program will continue through 2006. See The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), *NCCM*, [online] [cited May 26, 2004]; available from <http://www.nccm.org.eg/achievements.asp>.

¹⁴⁶³ The national strategy was incorporated into the government's annual Economic and Social Plan and into the government's 2002-2007 5-year plan, but implementation will depend on coordination among the concerned parties. See U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6563*.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Upon the completion of MOMM's collaboration with ILO-IPEC in March 2004, five governorates, including New Valley, Luxor, Aswan, North Sinai, and South Sinai, were declared by the Government to be free of the WFCL. See *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁶⁵ U.S. Embassy- Cairo official, personal communication, to USDOL official, May 26, 2005.

¹⁴⁶⁶ These four governorates were found to have the highest rates of the worst forms of child labor in a national child labor survey conducted by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in 2001. The results of the survey have not yet been released to the public. See U.S. Embassy- Cairo, *unclassified telegram no. 6563*.

¹⁴⁶⁷ The project is slated for completion in December 2004. See World Bank, *Egypt-Education Enhancement Program Project*, World Bank, [online] [cited May 26, 2004]; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDServlet?pcont=details&eid=000009265_3970311113957.