

Armenia

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Armenia are unavailable.²²⁵ Children work in family-run agricultural or small business enterprises.²²⁶ Children can be observed selling flowers on the streets of Yerevan and working in local marketplaces, usually after school hours.²²⁷ There are reports of increasing numbers of children begging on the streets²²⁸ and dropping out of school to work in the informal sector, especially in agriculture.²²⁹ Child labor is one of many problems associated with poverty. In 1998, the most recent year for which data are available, 12.8 percent of the population in Armenia were living on less than USD 1 a day.²³⁰

Girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation from and through Armenia to the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and several other countries.²³¹ In November 2005, a case of trafficking to Armenia came into the public eye when the National Security Service discovered a trafficked 16-year-old Ukrainian girl being exploited in the commercial sex industry in Yerevan. She was repatriated with the assistance of the Armenian government, who also arrested the trafficker.²³²

By Constitutional guarantee, primary education and 5 years of secondary education are free and compulsory through age 14.²³³ In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 99 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 94 percent.²³⁴ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of

²²⁵ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for information about sources used. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section.

²²⁶ 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, *reporting*, August 2000. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2005: Armenia*, Washington, DC, February 28, 2005, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41668.htm>.

²²⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *reporting*, August 2006. See also 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.

²²⁸ National Center for Democracy and Human Rights, *NGO Report: Supplementary report to Armenia's second periodic report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Yerevan, January 30, 2004; available from http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/crc.35/armenia_ngo_report.pdf.

²²⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Armenia*, Geneva, January 30, 2004, Paragraph 60; available from <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/doc/co/Armenia%20-%20CO2.pdf>.

²³⁰ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2005.

²³¹ Countries thought to be destination countries for girls trafficked from or through Armenia include Russia, Uzbekistan, and Greece, among others. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 5. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Washington, DC, June 6, 2006; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65988.htm>.

²³² U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *reporting*, November 22, 2005.

²³³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 5. See also EuroEducation.net, *Armenia: Structure of Education System*, International Associations of Universities, [online] 2001-2002 [cited June 24, 2005]; available from <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/armenco.htm>.

²³⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableView/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005).

students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Primary school attendance statistics are not available for Armenia.²³⁵ Children from ethnic minority communities may be deterred by the scarcity of school materials and classes available in their native languages.²³⁶ Access to education in rural areas remains poor, and many schools lack heating and basic facilities.²³⁷ Agricultural responsibilities take precedence over school in rural areas, and children work in the fields during harvest season leading to prolonged absence from school.²³⁸

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age of employment for children at 16 years, but allows children ages 14 to 16 years to work with written permission from a parent or guardian.²³⁹ Children ages 14 to 16 may only work up to 24 hours per week, and children ages 16 to 18 may work a maximum of 36 hours per week. Employers must require proof of a medical examination from any employee under age 18.²⁴⁰ Children under age 18 are prohibited from working overtime, at night, on holidays, or in hazardous work such as strenuous physical labor. The Law on the Rights of the Child further defines hazardous work to include the production and/or sale of alcohol and tobacco products, as well as activities that may compromise children's health, physical, or mental development, or interfere with their education.²⁴¹

Although there is no law specifically prohibiting the worst forms of child labor in Armenia, there are statutes under which the worst forms can be prosecuted. The Constitution and the Law on Employment of 1992 prohibit forced and bonded labor, including by children.²⁴² The Criminal Code outlaws trafficking in persons, which is punishable by fines or up to 8 years of imprisonment, and specifically outlaws child trafficking, which is punishable by up to 7 years of imprisonment.²⁴³ Sexual intercourse with a minor under age 16 and enticing underage girls into prostitution are also criminal offenses.²⁴⁴ The Law on the Rights of the Child gives responsibility to the government to protect children from criminal activities,

²³⁵ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

²³⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 5.

²³⁷ Government of Armenia, *National Plan 2003-2015: Rights of the Child*. See also UNICEF, *All Rights for All Children: UNICEF in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Geneva, January, 2005; available from http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_CEE-CIS.pdf.

²³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*.

²³⁹ Children under 14 are prohibited from working. See *Labor Code of the Republic of Armenia*, (November 9, 2004); available from <http://www.astp.am/laws/index.html>. See also U.S. Embassy-Yerevan Official, email communication to USDOL official, February 8, 2005.

²⁴⁰ *Labor Code of the Republic of Armenia*. The Ministry of Social Welfare maintains a list of "hazardous and harmful" jobs in which children are not allowed to work. See U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *reporting*, August, 2000. See also Labor Code as cited in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*.

²⁴¹ U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *reporting*, August 18, 2004. See also Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Questionnaire Responses*.

²⁴² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 6c. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2000: Armenia*, Washington, D.C., February 23, 2001, Section 6c; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/672.htm>.

²⁴³ IOM, *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. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Armenia*, Section 5. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

²⁴⁴ IOM, *Analysis of Institutional and Legal Frameworks*. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Armenia*, United Nations, July 17, 2003, Paragraph 417; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/693ad0fbe22529cbc1256dc70027de86/\\$FILE/G0343131.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/693ad0fbe22529cbc1256dc70027de86/$FILE/G0343131.pdf).

prostitution, and begging.²⁴⁵ Armenian males are registered for military conscription at age 16, but are not subject to compulsory military service until age 18.²⁴⁶

According to the U.S. Department of State, local community councils and unemployment offices have jurisdiction to enforce the laws on minimum working age, but their efforts are uneven.²⁴⁷ There have been no reports of child labor complaints being prosecuted in Armenia.²⁴⁸ Although the Armenian government has heightened its attention to the issue of trafficking and is taking steps to more effectively prevent and prosecute trafficking-related offenses,²⁴⁹ the U.S. Department of State reports that enforcement of anti-trafficking laws is generally weak, and there is evidence of collusion with traffickers by individual government officials. Traffickers were tried under the Criminal Code, however, there were instances when cases that should have been trafficking cases were classified under the pimping statutes, which carry lower penalties.²⁵⁰

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

In 2005, the Government of Armenia ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.²⁵¹ Ratification of these instruments is thought to be a step forward in the implementation of Armenia's National Plan of Action for the Protection of Children's Rights 2003-2015.²⁵² This plan, adopted in 2003, was designed in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is linked to Armenia's Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.²⁵³

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 government approved a National Action Plan to combat trafficking in January 2004. Armenian officials began to implement elements of the plan and increased the number of prosecutions under the

²⁴⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties: Armenia (2003)*, Paragraph 414.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Paragraph 51.

²⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 6d.

²⁴⁸ U.S. Embassy- Yerevan, *reporting*, August 18, 2004.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 5.

²⁵¹ UNICEF, *Armenia Ratifies Key Treaties for Children*, UNICEF, [online] April 13, 2005 [cited June 23, 2005]; available from http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/media_1587.html. See also United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Ratifications and Reservations: 11.c. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography New York, 25 May 2000.*, December 13, 2005 [cited December 16, 2005]; available from http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/11_c.htm. See also United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Ratifications and Reservations: 11.b. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict New York, 25 May 2000*, December 13, 2005 [cited December 16, 2005]; available from http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/11_b.htm.

²⁵² UNICEF, *UNICEF Praises Armenian Progress Towards a Protective Environment for All Children*, UNICEF, [online] April 13, 2005 [cited June 23, 2005]; available from http://www.unicef.org/media/media_26000.html.

²⁵³ UNICEF, *Armenia Reviews Progress on Child Rights*, UNICEF, [online] April 29, 2005 [cited June 23, 2005]; available from http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/media_1648.html.

anti-trafficking statute, but the government's record on victim protection remained mixed.²⁵⁴ However, the government is collaborating with international organizations and NGOs on a variety of counter-trafficking efforts, including mass-media public awareness campaigns and two NGO-run hotlines for trafficking victims.²⁵⁵ IOM contributes to Government of Armenia counter-trafficking efforts through projects that train Armenian consular staff to recognize and assist trafficking victims in Armenia and destination countries and support Armenian law enforcement agencies and border guard troops in detection, investigation and prosecution of traffickers.²⁵⁶ Armenia has participated in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Working Group on Cooperation in Combating Crime since 1998.²⁵⁷ Armenian officials coordinate with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on anti-trafficking efforts, including a March 2005 workshop on Combating Trafficking in Children.²⁵⁸ In June 2005, Armenia's Office of the Prosecutor General signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNDP, aimed at improving trafficking prevention and victim assistance.²⁵⁹

The Ministry of Education and Science is implementing the final phase of its Educational National Plan 2001-2005 which focuses on improving education quality and broadening children's involvement in the system.²⁶⁰ Under its National Plan of Action for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (2003-2015), the government aims to implement numerous other educational reforms including improved registration systems; psycho-social support services in schools; programs targeted to special-needs children; greater outreach to families; support for extracurricular activities; modernized technology; curriculum and teaching methodologies; and better financial management in the education sector.²⁶¹ Progress toward these reforms has been slow, due largely to inadequate financing.²⁶²

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.²⁶³ The World Bank is currently funding the Second Social Investment Fund Project, which assists the Government of Armenia in ongoing efforts to upgrade schools; repair school heating systems; upgrade furniture in schools; and carry

²⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Interim Assessment*.

²⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Armenia*, Section 5. See also U.S. Embassy Yerevan, *reporting, August 2006*.

²⁵⁶ IOM Online Project Compendium, <http://www.iom.int/> (Capacity Building for the Consular Personnel in Counter Trafficking: Armenia; accessed June 27, 2005). See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Armenia*, Section 5. See also IOM staff, email communication to USDOL official, June 29, 2005.

²⁵⁷ Other participating states include Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. See Black Sea Economic Cooperation- Working Group on Cooperation in Combating Crime, *Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Interior / Public Order of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, [online] 2004 [cited June 25, 2005].

²⁵⁸ OSCE, *Combating Trafficking in Children: Conference sponsored by the OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*, OSCE, Vienna, March 18, 2005; available from http://www.osce.org/documents/cthb/2005/03/15338_en.pdf. See also OSCE Office in Yerevan, *OSCE anti-trafficking meeting discusses establishment of National Referral Mechanism in Armenia*, press release, OSCE, Yerevan, June 15, 2005; available from <http://www.osce.org/item/15194.html?print=1>.

²⁵⁹ UNDP, *UNDP Armenia and the Prosecutor General Join Efforts to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings*, press release, UNDP, Yerevan, June 14, 2005; available from <http://www.undp.am/?page=pressrel>.

²⁶⁰ Ministry of Education and Science, *Educational National Plan 2001-2005*, as cited in UNESCO, *Education Plans and Policies, 2005* [cited June 27, 2005]; available from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17855&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations: Armenia (2004)*, Paragraph 54.

²⁶¹ Government of Armenia, *National Plan 2003-2015: Rights of the Child*.

²⁶² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations: Armenia (2004)*, Paragraphs 16, 17, 18, 54.

²⁶³ 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]. The framework is now in its second stage, 2004-2006; see Council of Europe, *Walter Schwimmer meets Education Ministers of South Caucasus*, press release, Strasbourg, May 18, 2004.

out other community development activities that aim to strengthen local educational institutions.²⁶⁴ Another World Bank-funded project, Educational Quality and Relevance, 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 improve project evaluation.²⁶⁵ Current UNICEF projects are working with the government toward its goal of increasing preschool enrollment and making preschools more flexible and family-friendly,²⁶⁶ and on promoting life-skills activities and inclusive education for children with disabilities.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ World Bank Projects Database, <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P057952> (Second Social Investment Fund Project; accessed June 27, 2005).

²⁶⁵ World Bank Projects Database, <http://www.worldbank.org.am/external/default/main?pagePK=64027221&piPK=64027220&theSitePK=301579&menuPK=301610&Projectid=P074503> (Educational Quality and Relevance Project; accessed June 27, 2005).

²⁶⁶ UNICEF, *Armenia: No Small Matter*, UNICEF, [online] n.d. 2005 [cited June 27, 2005]; available from http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives_2092.html.

²⁶⁷ UNICEF Staff, email communication to USDOL official, June 28, 2005.