

# Jordan

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Jordan are unavailable.<sup>2497</sup> 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.<sup>2498</sup> Child vendors on the streets of the capital city of Amman work selling newspapers, food, and gum. Other children earn income for their families by rummaging through trash piles to find recyclable items.<sup>2499</sup> Due to deteriorating economic conditions, the number of working street children and child beggars may be greater now than it was 10 years ago.<sup>2500</sup> Many of these children are forced to beg by their parents.<sup>2501</sup> Working children are primarily concentrated in the governorates of Amman, Balqa, Irbid, Ma'an, and Zarka.<sup>2502</sup> Child labor is one of many problems associated with poverty. In 1997, the most recent year for which data are available, less than 2.0 percent of the population in Jordan were living on less than USD 1 a day.<sup>2503</sup>

Many working children are victims of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse in the workplace and are exposed to hazardous chemicals and dangerous working conditions.<sup>2504</sup> Jordan may also be a destination country for girls trafficked from South Asia and South East Asia, primarily from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, for the purpose of labor exploitation and domestic service.<sup>2505</sup>

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<sup>2497</sup> This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. 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 of this report.

<sup>2498</sup> 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.

<sup>2499</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Jordan*, Washington, DC, February 28, 2005, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41724.htm>.

<sup>2500</sup> Ibid. See also National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study of Disadvantaged Children*, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Amman, May 2004, 29.

<sup>2501</sup> The Ministry of Social Development estimates that on average 20 child beggars are arrested daily and imprisoned until their parent or guardian picks them up. There is currently no fine or penalty assessed against the parents. See U.S. Embassy- Amman, *reporting*, August 28, 2005.

<sup>2502</sup> 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.

<sup>2503</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2005.

<sup>2504</sup> 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, 143. See also Kamal S. Saleh, *Child Labour in Jordan*, Department of Statistics, Amman, 2003, 6-7. In industrial areas, the major occupational accidents reported are burns and injuries, such as accidents from sharp machines and materials, and burns from explosive gases and substances. See ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), "Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182): Jordan (ratification: 2000)" (paper presented at the 75th Session, Geneva, 2004); available from <http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/appl/>.

<sup>2505</sup> A small number of these girls may end up victims of involuntary servitude, or circumstances that amount to forced labor. See U.S. Embassy - Amman, *reporting*, May 27, 2005.

Basic education is mandated by the Jordanian Constitution for all children until the age of 16,<sup>2506</sup> and is provided virtually free in government-funded schools.<sup>2507</sup> In addition to free tuition in public schools, the government also provides food and transportation supplements to poor families and those with many children.<sup>2508</sup> 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.<sup>2509</sup> The Government of Jordan and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) also have a long history of providing free education to Palestinian refugee children in Jordan.<sup>2510</sup> However, in recent years, the government has denied Iraqi refugee children admittance to school if they lack legal residence or official refugee status.<sup>2511</sup>

In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 99 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 92 percent.<sup>2512</sup> 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.<sup>2513</sup> As of 2001, 97 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.<sup>2514</sup> Males are more likely to drop out than females.<sup>2515</sup> The most commonly cited reasons for dropping out of school are poverty; disability; poor academic performance; indirect costs of schooling; poor school quality; physical distances to school; lack of transportation; early marriage; restricted mobility for girls; and the family's need for the child's labor both inside and outside the home.<sup>2516</sup>

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<sup>2506</sup> *Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, (1952), Chapter 2, Article 20; available from <http://www.mfa.gov.jo/uploads/const.pdf>. While education is compulsory through the tenth grade, no legislation exists to enforce the law or punish guardians for violating it, and children's absence from school does not carry a penalty. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Section 5.

<sup>2507</sup> Article 10 of the Education Act No. 3 of 1994 states that basic education is free and compulsory for Jordanian children. See Angela Melchiorre, *At What Age?are School-Children Employed, Married and Taken to Court?* Right to Education, Sweden, April 20, 2004, 81-82; available from <http://www.right-to-education.org/content/age/>. See also UNDP, *Jordan Human Development Report 2004: Building Sustainable Livelihoods*, prepared by Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development, 2004, 60; available from [http://www.undp-jordan.org/jordan\\_hdr/JHDR\\_2004.pdf](http://www.undp-jordan.org/jordan_hdr/JHDR_2004.pdf).

<sup>2508</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Section 5.

<sup>2509</sup> ILO-IPEC, *National Programme for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in Jordan*, project document, Geneva, September 2002, 5.

<sup>2510</sup> National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 25-26. UNRWA estimates that there are approximately 1.7 million refugees in Jordan, of whom about 644,000 are children. Of these children, UNRWA provides ten years of basic education schooling for 136,000 children, including 63,000 that attend UNRWA schools inside the refugee camps. In addition, eight centers for learning difficulties serve children with refugee status.

<sup>2511</sup> Prior to the war, there were several hundred thousand Iraqis residing in Jordan, and it is estimated that upwards of 500,000 Iraqis have fled Iraq into Jordan since the war began. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Sections 2d, 5. According to a recent UNICEF report, around 280 children ages 3 to 18 years are living within a "no-man's land" between the Jordanian and Iraqi borders and have not had access to education since September 2004. See UNICEF, *UNICEF Jordan - May 2005 Newsletter*, UNICEF, [online] n.d. [cited June 17, 2005]; available from [http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources\\_454.html](http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources_454.html).

<sup>2512</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005).

<sup>2513</sup> This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for more information about sources used.

<sup>2514</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=55> (School life expectancy, % of repeaters, survival rates; accessed December 2005).

<sup>2515</sup> From various research studies of enrollment and dropout rates for Jordanian children over a ten-year period (the number of years of mandatory schooling), estimates of total numbers of dropouts range from around 85,000 to 94,000. While this may constitute less than one percent of school-aged children in a given year, the cumulative number is significant in a country the size of Jordan. Those children who do not complete their education are at risk of low-paid employment, begging, violence and abuse, panhandling, getting in trouble with authorities, and abusing substances. See National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 13.

<sup>2516</sup> UNDP, *Jordan Human Development Report 2004*, 15, 52, 60-61, 111-112. See also National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 15, 22, 45, 73. See also Senator H.E. Dr. Rowaida Al-Maaitah, "Disadvantaged Children in Jordan" (paper presented at the Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region, Dubai, May 17, 2005).

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code of 1996, which was amended in 2004, sets the minimum legal working age at 16 years and 18 years for hazardous jobs.<sup>2517</sup> Pursuant to the 2004 amendments, children under 18 years of age shall not perform work with mechanically operated equipment; work with oil and gas machines; work requiring scuba diving equipment; construction work; work in which the worker is exposed to noise, vibration, high air pressure, radiation, or dust; underground work; and work in offices, hotels, restaurants, or nightclubs.<sup>2518</sup> Minors must be given a rest 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.<sup>2519</sup> Before hiring a minor, a prospective employer must obtain a guardian's written approval, the minor's birth certificate, and a health certificate.<sup>2520</sup> An employer that violates these provisions faces a fine ranging from 100 to 500 Dinars (USD 142 to 711). The fine doubles for subsequent infractions.<sup>2521</sup> Provisions in the Labor Code do not extend to children employed in the informal sector, which may include children working in agriculture, domestic service, and in small family enterprises.<sup>2522</sup>

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Jordan. Compulsory labor is prohibited by the Constitution of Jordan.<sup>2523</sup> While the law does not specifically prohibit forced or bonded labor by children, such practices are not known to occur.<sup>2524</sup> The Military Service Act No. 2 prohibits voluntary enlistment into the government armed forces for children under 16 years of age, although children may be enlisted as cadets at the age of 15.<sup>2525</sup> A child may be legally recruited into the armed

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<sup>2517</sup> *Labour Code, Law No. 8 of 1996*, Chapter VIII, Sections 73-74; available from

<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/45676/65048/E96JOR01.htm#c1>. In February 2003, King Abdullah issued a royal decree requiring that the minimum age for employment of children working in hazardous occupations be raised from 17 to 18 years. 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. U.S. Embassy- Amman, *reporting*, August 28, 2005.

<sup>2518</sup> ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), "CEACR Comments."

<sup>2519</sup> *Labour Code of 1996*, 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.

<sup>2520</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 76.

<sup>2521</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 77. For currency conversion, see FXConverter, in Oanda.com, [online] [cited June 17, 2005]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

<sup>2522</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: 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. See also ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), "Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138): Jordan (ratification: 1998)" (paper presented at the 75th Session, Geneva, 2004); available from <http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/appl/>.

<sup>2523</sup> In circumstances of war or natural disaster, forced labor may be mandated by the Government. See *Constitution of Jordan*, Chapter 2, Article 13.

<sup>2524</sup> 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- 2004: Jordan*, Sections 5 and 6c.

<sup>2525</sup> Article 5 of the Military Service Act No. 2 of 1972 sets the legal age for voluntary enlistment at 16 years, which must be attested by a birth certificate or in the absence of this the child's age is determined by the Medical Board. According to the same article, enlistment is subject to the fulfillment of other conditions such as, in particular, educational attainment of at least the tenth grade level. 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, paras. 160-162; available from

[http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/a06f687951c4fc1080256846003b7763?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/a06f687951c4fc1080256846003b7763?Opendocument).

forces at age 17.<sup>2526</sup> The 1988 Law on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances provides for the death penalty for anyone who uses a minor in the production, transportation, sale, or purchase of drugs.<sup>2527</sup> A Jordanian law specifically prohibits trafficking in children.<sup>2528</sup> It is illegal to induce a girl under the age of 20 to engage in prostitution or to entice any child under the age of 15 to commit sodomy. Sanctions for these offenses include imprisonment for up to 5 years and a fine.<sup>2529</sup> Since 1999, the Government of Jordan has submitted to the ILO a list or an equivalent document identifying the types of work that it has determined are harmful to the health, safety or morals of children under Convention 182 or Convention 138.<sup>2530</sup>

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.<sup>2531</sup> The MOL's inspection division, which is comprised of 21 field offices and 72 inspectors, is mandated to inspect all registered establishments with more than 5 employees.<sup>2532</sup> The Government, however, has provided little training on child labor and inspectors generally try to remedy the situation through informal mechanisms, including referring some adult family members to job training programs.<sup>2533</sup> According to the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) and the ILO Committee of Experts, current labor inspection mechanisms are inadequate in terms of their frequency, scope, outreach, and quality of reporting. According to the Ministry of Labor, 88 percent of working children are working in establishments employing five workers or less, for which labor inspectors have no jurisdiction.<sup>2534</sup>

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

The Jordanian National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children 2004-2013 was launched by King Abdullah II and Queen Rania in October 2004.<sup>2535</sup> The plan takes into consideration global, regional, and national commitments made to Jordanian children such as the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Arab Plan of Action for Children, the National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labor, and the

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		

<sup>2526</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *The Use of Child Soldiers in the Middle East and North Africa Region*, prepared by Ibrahim Al-Marashi, pursuant to the Amman Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers, April 8-10, 2001, 19; available from [http://www.id.gov.jo/human/activities2000/middleeast\\_report.html](http://www.id.gov.jo/human/activities2000/middleeast_report.html).

<sup>2527</sup> ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), "CEACR Comments".

<sup>2528</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Section 5. 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>.

<sup>2529</sup> 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](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp).

<sup>2530</sup> ILO-IPEC official, email communication to USDOL official, November 14, 2005.

<sup>2531</sup> ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan--project document*, 20. Although the CLU receives, investigates and addresses child labor complaints, it lacks a formal mechanism for doing so. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Section 6d.

<sup>2532</sup> National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 58. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Section 6d. See ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), "CEACR Comments."

<sup>2533</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Section 6d.

<sup>2534</sup> National Council for Family Affairs, *Jordan Country Study*, 59. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Jordan*, Section 6d. See also ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), "CEACR Comments."

<sup>2535</sup> UNICEF, *Jordan Launches National Plan of Action for Children*, UNICEF, [online] October 25, 2004 [cited June 17, 2005]; available from [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_23864.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_23864.html).

Millennium Development Goals. Among other goals, the NPA aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Jordan by 2014, and decrease the number of child laborers under 16 years of age.<sup>2536</sup> The Childhood Unit of the NCFA takes the lead responsibility for Jordan's programs to eliminate child labor.<sup>2537</sup>

The Government of Jordan, through its Information Resource Center (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.<sup>2538</sup> In November 2004, Jordan hosted the first Arab Parliamentary Conference on Child Protection, at which parliamentarians from 17 Arab countries pledged their commitment to review all domestic legislation with regard to its compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>2539</sup> The Ministries of Labor, Education, and Social Development and the NCFA are working in collaboration with a British NGO to implement two major projects with at-risk youth that aim to reduce child labor. The World Bank funded the mentoring program until April 2005. The program will continue to operate through October 2006, though on a severely limited scale. The second project, dubbed "Earn & Learn" is working with 2,000 out-of-school children to provide non-formal education, vocational and entrepreneurial training. Jordan's Development and Employment Fund provides microfinance assistance to participants, enabling them to start their own businesses.<sup>2540</sup>

USDOL is supporting a USD 1 million ILO-IPEC project to combat child labor in the urban services sector in Jordan, which is being undertaken with the cooperation of the Ministries of Labor, Education, and Social Development. The program aims to withdraw 3,000 child workers from the worst forms of child labor over a three-year period; 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.<sup>2541</sup> In 2005, the Ministry of Labor's CLU continued to expand ILO-IPEC's Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media (SCREAM) program to raise awareness among young people and their communities on the negative effects of child labor and the benefits of education.<sup>2542</sup>

In 2005, the MOE continued to implement 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,

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<sup>2536</sup> The NPA also aims to rehabilitate and reintegrate working children in schools; secure working children's right to free primary education and appropriate vocational training; conduct studies to better understand the scope of child labor in Jordan; offer income generation alternatives for families of children who work; develop national legislation that conforms to international commitments on child labor; and raise awareness on the negative effects of child labor. The plan was jointly developed by the NCFA, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, and UNICEF. See UNICEF, *The Jordanian National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2013)*, UNICEF, [online] n.d. [cited June 17, 2005]; available from [http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources\\_809.html](http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources_809.html).

<sup>2537</sup> U.S. Embassy- Amman, *reporting*, August 28, 2005.

<sup>2538</sup> U.S. Embassy- Amman, *reporting*, August 19, 2004. The IRC plans to expand the program for street children in Irbid to areas in and around Amman as well. See U.S. Embassy- Amman, *reporting*, August 28, 2005.

<sup>2539</sup> The parliamentarians discussed strategies to improve legislative protections for children in a number of areas, including child labor, child abuse, child prostitution and guaranteeing access to education and health services. See Petra News Agency, *Arab Parliamentary Conference on Child Protection Starts in Amman*, press release, Amman, November 22, 2004; available from <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/11222004009.htm>. See also Dalya Dajani, "Parliamentarians to Review Legislation on Rights of the Child," *The Jordan Times* (Amman), November 23, 2004; available from <http://www.jordanembassy.org/11232004001.htm>.

<sup>2540</sup> Questscope, *Pro-social Mentoring with Children At-Risk: Countrywide Roll Out: 2002 to date*, [online] June 18, 2003 [cited June 17, 2005]; available from <http://www.questscope.org/Projects/projects.htm>. See Questscope, *Non-formal Education and Vocational Guidance for At-Risk Children: 2003 to date*, [online] June 18, 2003 [cited June 17, 2005]; available from <http://www.questscope.org/Projects/projects.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Amman, *reporting*, August 28, 2005.

<sup>2541</sup> See ILO-IPEC, *National Program in Jordan--project document*, 26-27.

<sup>2542</sup> SCREAM activities in Jordan have included art and writing competitions, as well as theatre productions. See U.S. Embassy- Amman, *reporting*, August 19, 2004. See also UNICEF, *May 2005 Newsletter*.