

The Role of ILO in Combating Child Labour

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The ILO (International Labour Organization) combats child labour at several levels:

- By advocating with policy makers for ensuring revisions and reforms of related national legislations.
- By developing or revising already existing related policies and plans of which the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of child labor in Lebanon launched by the President of the Republic lately in Lebanon is an example.
- Through direct interventions with working as well as at risk children and their families. Direct interventions usually include the following:
 - i) Enrolling children in formal or informal education.
 - ii) Enrolling children between 15 and 18 yrs. old in vocational training, especially if they are working children and need to be transferred to a less hazardous occupation.
 - iii) Providing recreational, health, social and psychological counseling services where needed.
 - iv) Raising the awareness of the children, their parents, their employers and public at large on the specific health hazards that the children are subjected to in the different types of occupations that they work in.

1. Is Lebanon committed to ILO Conventions?

Yes, Lebanon has ratified two major ILO Conventions that are related to child labour:

- i) ILO C.138 on the Minimum Age for Employment which means that children cannot be employed before the age of 15 yrs. old in any occupation. However, Lebanon's minimum age is 14yrs. old exceptionally due to the socio-economic circumstances that it has been going

through. However now, there is a new labour law for raising it.

- ii) ILO C.182 against the Worst Forms of Child Labour. **The worst forms of child labour include jobs where children are used in for example prostitution, drug trafficking, pornographic performances and films, child militancy and drug trafficking.** These are also referred to as unconditional forms of child labour meaning that they need to be withdrawn from them immediately. There are also another set of forms of child labour under this convention which are referred to as conditional forms in which children are allowed conditionally; provided that the conditions of their work are appropriate for their social, psychological and moral health and situation and that it preserves their right to formal or informal education, rest and leisure time.

In light of ratifying this Convention, the Lebanese Government represented by the Ministry of Labour produced a list of most hazardous forms of child labour in Lebanon (attached for your reference) in light of C.182 in which children should not work.

Moreover Lebanon has drafted a National Action Plan against Child labour in the year 2012 which was officially launched by the President of the Republic Mr. Michel Sleiman in November 2013.

A National Steering Committee Against Child labour was re-activated in 2012 under the leadership of the Lebanese Minister of Labour Mr.Selim Jreisaty and this committee includes all relevant Ministries as that of health, social affairs, education, justice etc.

2. Most recent census on child labour.

The International Labour Organization in coordination with the Ministry of Labour is carrying out a National Survey on Child Labour in Lebanon, and this is the first



time that a specific survey for this purpose is carried out in Lebanon. The Central Administration for Statistics is supervising the survey and its official results are expected to be out before the end of 2014.

Another survey is carried out by the ILO and the Ministry of Labour in close collaboration with UNICEF, Save the Children International and the First National Bank on specifically those children found working or living on the streets in Lebanon. Expected results of this survey are due within almost 3 months. This survey covers Beirut, Tripoli, Saida and their surroundings in addition to Akkar and Beqaa Regions.

3. What is the reason for increase in child labour in Lebanon?

I would say the awareness on the risks and dangers of child

labour has increased to a large extent; however new waves of children are entering the workforce early due to mainly the deteriorating socio-economic situation.

However, we are also witnessing an abnormal situation of an immense increase in child labour in the streets, in supermarkets, in agriculture and elsewhere due to the Syrian influx of refugees into Lebanon. Their very poor socio-economic situation and the absence of adequate educational opportunities are leading them into accepting very harsh situations of child labour and employer exploitation.