



National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Lebanon by 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Republic of Lebanon

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CONTEXT

International commitment

The worst forms of child labour, as defined by the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), of the ILO are considered as gross violations of child rights and a flagrant breach of the inherent dignity of the human being. With the continuing support of the ILO and its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the member States of the ILO reconfirmed their commitment at The Hague Global Child Labour Conference held in 2010 to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016. More than 500 delegates from 97 countries, who participated in the Hague Conference, agreed on a Roadmap aimed at «substantially increasing» global efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016. The Roadmap affirms also that child labour is an impediment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and that eliminating child labour yields high social and economic returns and contributes to households breaking out of the cycle of poverty. This commitment was strongly inspired and backed up by the principles and provisions of the ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age of employment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 2000 Palermo Protocol on human trafficking.

Commitment of the Government of Lebanon

The Government of Lebanon ratified the CRC in 1991, and has been reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child since that time. Article 32 of the CRC which refers to child labour has always been at the heart of the CRC reports that Lebanon has been submitting. In addition, the Government of Lebanon has committed itself officially and in particular to combat child labour in Lebanon since the year 2000. This commitment materialized through a number of memoranda of understanding that have been signed since 2000 between the ILO and the Government of Lebanon, represented by the Ministry of Labour. As a result of that collaboration, the Government has been taking measures towards combating child labour in Lebanon, especially the worst forms of child labour. Significant measures taken by the Government of Lebanon are represented by the preparation of a National Policy and Programme Framework, referred to as the National Strategy against child labour in 2004, the establishment of a Child Labour Unit at the Ministry of Labour and a National Steering Committee Against Child Labour in 2001, in addition to initiating a database on child labour at the Child Labour Unit. The National Steering Committee was strengthened through another decree in 2005, and then amended by Decree No. 5137 in 2010 making it a Higher Committee by the Council of Ministers. Another measure taken by the Government of Lebanon was the adoption of Decree No. 8987 in the 2012, related to the definition of the worst forms of child labour in Lebanon. In the same year, the Government prepared, in close cooperation with and support from the ILO, this National Action Plan (NAP) to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Lebanon.

Preparation of the National Action Plan (NAP)

The preparation of the NAP started on the directive of the Lebanese Minister of Labour, President of the National Steering Committee Against Child Labour. The process was driven by strong commitment from the members of the National Steering Committee, including workers' associations, represented by the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers; and employers, represented by the Association of Lebanese Industrialists. In addition, several officials from ministries and civil society organizations participated in the preparation and validation of the NAP, enriching the debate and contributing to the adoption of a more realistic approach. The views of working children and their parents were also taken into account during the preparation of the NAP.

PROBLEM AND RESPONSE

Magnitude of the problem

Exact numbers of children working in the worst forms of labour do not exist in Lebanon. However, a number of studies have been conducted which show that the problem is increasing due to several factors, including the lack of appropriate response mechanisms in the country, and especially the lack of adequate prevention programmes. In addition, poverty contributes to the seriousness of the child labour problem in general. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) National Development Report for Lebanon (2008–2009), poverty is a serious problem in Lebanon, with almost 300,000 individuals unable to meet their food and non-food basic needs. The number of people living below the poverty line has increased in the past decade. According to the Lebanon Millennium Development Goal Report 2008, 28.5 per cent of the population is living below the upper poverty line (with an estimated income below \$4 per capita per day), and 8 per cent of them are extremely poor and live below the lower poverty line (with an estimated income below \$2.4 per capita per day), and cannot meet their basic needs. A large number of children are found to work in sectors and occupations such as auto repair (eg. mechanical work, car painting etc.), construction, metal working including aluminium and forged iron, and sanitary installations. In general, child workers are mainly employed in industrial sites and places that lack adequate infrastructure and they work with obsolete technology and unsafe machinery and tools. Most of these enterprises use inflammable, explosive, harmful or hazardous materials and substances. Within these environments there is a low level of awareness of the health and safety considerations that should govern basic working conditions.

Children work in such establishments for long hours and at low rates of pay in jobs that are not suitable for their physical and mental development or skill levels. Most of these workplaces are not legally registered or covered by formal regulation or inspection. Poor sanitary conditions and dangerous machinery contribute to the hazards faced by children at work. There are also industry-specific hazards in the form of exposure to toxic materials and by-products.

In addition, there are many children working in the agricultural sector in Akkar, Hermel and Baalbek districts. In most families, every child has to pitch in and work along with his or her family, especially during harvesting and when preparing the ground for planting, because every small amount saved on hired hands is more income for the family. Dangers arise from use of plant pesticides and fertilizers that contain elevated levels of toxic chemicals, with possible risk to children's health. Moreover, often no safety precautions are taken, such as use of protective masks, gloves and hats. Agricultural work is seasonal and can result in long absenteeism from school, affecting children's academic achievements and possibly leading to them falling behind their peers academically and eventually dropping out of school.

However, the National Steering Committee Against Child Labour will be using more recent data, figures and information to be provided by a national survey on child labour to be implemented in 2013/2014 by the Central Administration of Statistics in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the ILO in order to monitor, follow up and evaluate the NAP.

Principles and approaches of the National Action Plan (NAP)

In line with the ILO Draft Guide for Preparing National Child Labour Policies and Plans of Action; the formulation of this NAP has been guided by a set of overarching principles, which have been drawn from:

- the country's fundamental statements as part of the Constitution, national legislation, long-term vision statement, medium-term development plans and National Child Development Policy;
- the international instruments, including the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and Convention No. 182 and respective Recommendations, international human rights covenants, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and regional agreements to which the country.

In this context, this NAP has been based on the general principles of child rights, adopted by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, in particular Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the CRC, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989. The four general principles of the Convention are:

- non-discrimination;
- best interests of the child;
- survival and development; and
- participation.

In addition to the rights-based approach, the NAP adopts a results-based approach, of which all objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. The strategic interventions of the NAP go beyond the elimination of the worst forms of child labour to ensuring the well-being of rescued children through appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration programmes on one hand, and through the establishment of a prevention system on the other hand.

Wide Consultation Process

Extensive consultations for information, opinions and validation took place with a wide variety of Stakeholders who are crucial to the process of drafting the NAP as well as for success in its implementation. These included but were not limited to the following; Advisor for Social and Human Rights Affairs to the President of the Republic, Focal Point for Social Policies at Council of Ministers, Legal Advisor to Minister of Social Affairs, General Director of Ministry of Education in addition to Minister of Labour and Head of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists and General Confederation of Lebanese Workers and other members of National Steering Committee such as representatives of Ministries of Justice, Interior and Municipalities, Agriculture in addition to those mentioned above as well as NGO's and UNICEF and UNESCO.

Strategic interventions

The NAP revolves around eleven strategic areas, which together, when implemented fully, can lead to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Lebanon by 2016. The strategic areas are:

1. Legislation and law enforcement;
2. Free and compulsory education;
3. Integration in the educational system;
4. Economic opportunities for parents and youth of working age;
5. Capacity building and development;
6. Development services centres;
7. Local authorities;
8. Local community and community leaders;
9. Prevention;
10. Withdrawal; and
11. Rehabilitation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Costing and funding

The NAP has been prepared in a very practical and realistic way. The cost has been estimated in the same way by calculating each activity separately. Potential sources of funding for the NAP are as follows:

- contribution of the Government of Lebanon;
- ILO contribution;
- contribution of donor countries;
- contribution of Lebanese commercial companies and the international commercial companies working in Lebanon, based on their corporate social responsibility policy.

The estimated total cost for the implementation of the NAP is USD 23,735,000 , over and beyond the resources already in place and/or mobilized by Lebanese institutions and society .

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment are three essential principles for ensuring the success of the NAP. The monitoring process for the NAP entails the continuing and systematic gathering and analysis of all information related to its implementation. The evaluation is essential for assessing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the implementation process and formulating recommendations for its improvement, as needed. The NAP also relies on an impact assessment mechanism, where results are measured according to the real and positive change in the lives of children who have been withdrawn from the worst forms of child labour, or in the lives of working children in general.

Based on the above, the NAP contains in the attached Logical Framework measurable indicators for each Expected Outcome corresponding to the results obtained for each of the eleven strategic areas covered by the NAP.

The National Steering Committee Against Child Labour, in coordination with the Child Labour Unit at the Ministry of Labour, will be using these indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NAP.

Political commitment

The Government of Lebanon, represented mainly by the Ministry of Labour, is committed to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, in a child rights-based programmatic approach. The same commitment is explicitly expressed by the workers' associations and employers, in addition to NGOs working in the field of child rights.

The adoption of the NAP by the Council of Ministers and its launch from the Presidential Palace undoubtedly constitute clear proof of the firm commitment of the Government of Lebanon to eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

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