

Social Protection for Child Laborers in Egypt: A Review of Implementation

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Abstract

This article examines the implementation of social protection interventions aimed at addressing child labor in Egypt between 2018 and 2024. Using a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, this study explores the root causes of child labor, which are deeply embedded in cultural, educational, and environmental factors. Addressing these root causes requires a comprehensive strategy that tackles the structural dimensions of the problem. Recognizing the urgency of child labor as a threat to individual security, the International Labor Organization (ILO) launched the ACCEL Africa project, which aims to accelerate the elimination of child labor across six African countries, including Egypt. This research adopts a descriptive design and relies on literature-based analysis to evaluate the social protection strategies implemented under the ACCEL initiative. These include cash transfer programs, microcredit income-generation initiatives, and public employment schemes, all of which focus on promoting socio-economic rights as a pathway to reducing child labor. Key interventions also include integrating financial assistance with the education system, advancing financial inclusion, and expanding employment opportunities for individuals of productive age. While these strategies have contributed to strengthening local institutional capacity, the study finds that structural challenges – such as cultural resistance and limited coordination among stakeholders – continue to hinder the effectiveness of implementation. The findings highlight the need for a more integrated and culturally sensitive approach to fully realize the goals of child labor eradication in Egypt.

Keywords: ACCEL Africa; Egypt; Social Protection Intervention; Child Labor.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji implementasi intervensi perlindungan sosial yang ditujukan untuk mengatasi pekerja anak di Mesir pada periode 2018 hingga 2024. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan



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fenomenologis untuk menggali akar permasalahan pekerja anak yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor budaya, pendidikan, dan lingkungan. Untuk mengatasi persoalan ini secara menyeluruh, dibutuhkan strategi komprehensif yang menyasar dimensi struktural dari permasalahan tersebut. Menyadari urgensi pekerja anak sebagai ancaman terhadap keamanan individu, Organisasi Perburuhan Internasional (ILO) meluncurkan proyek ACCEL Africa yang bertujuan mempercepat penghapusan pekerja anak di enam negara Afrika, termasuk Mesir. Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif dan dianalisis secara kualitatif melalui studi pustaka untuk mengevaluasi strategi perlindungan sosial yang diterapkan dalam inisiatif ACCEL. Strategi tersebut meliputi program bantuan tunai, proyek peningkatan pendapatan berbasis mikro-kredit, dan skema pekerjaan publik, yang kesemuanya berfokus pada pemenuhan hak-hak sosial ekonomi masyarakat sebagai jalur efektif untuk mengurangi pekerja anak. Intervensi utama mencakup integrasi bantuan keuangan dengan sistem pendidikan, promosi inklusi keuangan, dan perluasan kesempatan kerja bagi usia produktif. Meskipun strategi-strategi ini telah berkontribusi dalam memperkuat kapasitas kelembagaan lokal, studi ini menemukan bahwa hambatan structural seperti resistensi budaya dan lemahnya koordinasi *multistakeholders*, masih menjadi tantangan utama dalam keberhasilan implementasinya. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya pendekatan yang lebih terintegrasi dan sensitif terhadap konteks budaya untuk mencapai tujuan penghapusan pekerja anak secara optimal di Mesir..

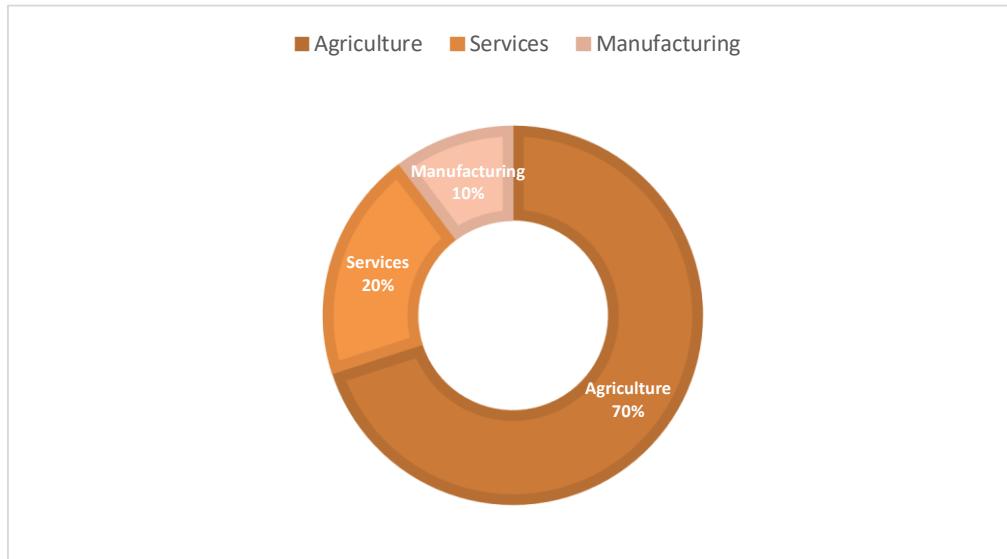
Kata Kunci: ACCEL Afrika, Mesir, Intervensi Perlindungan Sosial, Pekerja anak

INTRODUCTION

Egypt is the 14th most populous country in the world with an estimated over 98 million inhabitants. Overpopulation has led to the threat of poverty, causing a decrease in household income (Khamis, 2017). The underlying factor for the emergence of the phenomenon of child labor stems from poverty and is supported by several other factors, such as environmental, cultural, and educational factors. Environmental factors are often found in rural areas, such as the Upper Egypt area, which is characterized by inadequate public facilities to encourage child development. Children who have this fate are forced to work to make ends meet (Elsayed, 2024). Cultural factors in the case of child labor are based on the normalization of child labor practices that come from their parents, who encourage children to work immediately (Elsayed, 2024). In addition, the educational factor is related to the low education of parents, which can affect children's inability to develop knowledge (Ghafar, 2021).

Egypt is labeled as the best textile producer in the world where cotton as the main ingredient of textiles is the main export commodity that contributes the largest foreign exchange (International Labour Organization, 2023). Based

on the Egyptian national survey agency, Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics in Egypt (CAPMAS) conducted in the period 2021 to 2022, it was identified that child labor is most prevalent in the agricultural sector at 70% with a total of 112 million (CAPMAS, 2021).



Graph 1. Percentage distribution of children (aged 5-14 years) working in various economic sectors

Source: (UNICEF, 2021)

The circle of modern slavery in agriculture is found in the planting and harvesting stages of the production process. At this stage, underage workers are required to pick plants that have passed the harvesting period manually or by hand without protection. Thus, child laborers involved in this sector are exposed to risks that harm their physical (health), mental, and well-being (University of Nottingham Rights Lab, 2019).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines child labor as the contribution of children to work that deprives them of education, rights, and mental and physical health. The urgency of handling child labor is one of the principles behind the establishment of the ILO, which was found at the first International Labor Conference, one of which discussed the importance of the effectiveness of regulating the contribution of children in industrial work (International Labour Organization, 2019). In tackling child labor in Egypt, the ILO worked with the Egyptian government to create a framework called the National Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Egypt and Support the Family 2018-2025. Based on the National Action Plan, in 2018 the ILO launched the Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Africa (ACCEL Africa) program which aims to accelerate the elimination of child labor with 6 target countries, one of which is Egypt. The implementation of this project collaborates with all contributing stakeholders, one of which is the

Dutch government sending financial assistance to the ILO for the ACCEL project as much as 23,500,000 EUR (International Labour Organization, 2019).

This research is based on the concept of social protection initiated by Hennessy that three social protection strategies, namely cash transfers, microcredit income-generation projects, and public employment schemes as important interventions to address child labor (Hennessy, 2023). The cash transfer strategy is aimed at reducing income poverty by providing intensive to households; the cash transfer is divided into conditional and unconditional schemes. These cash transfer mechanisms can reduce children's involvement in work through encouraging their education system (Hennessy, 2023).

The microcredit income-generation projects strategy is aimed at household income-generation projects, which are related to improving family businesses through credit loans. The public employment scheme strategy is a scheme that guarantees employment for low-skilled workers that includes training, awareness sharing, booklet distribution, and so on (Hennessy, 2023). So based on this, the author formulates the research objective is how the implementation of social protection for child labor in Egypt in 2018-2024.

The author reviewed several literatures as a basis for research references. The first reference is a study by Elsayed entitled *Breaking the cycle of child labor in Egypt*, which aims to reveal the social and economic factors that influence the high rate of child labor in Egypt. The study found that factors such as low family income and broken family relationships significantly contribute to the phenomenon of child labor (Elsayed, 2024). The second reference comes from Fouad et al., who examined occupational injuries in children aged 5-17 years old working in Egypt through a national survey. The results showed that 87.3% of child laborers experienced work-related injuries, posing serious health risks (Fouad, Amer, Abdellatif, & Elotla, 2022).

The third reference by Mwapaura et al. discusses barriers to child protection service provision in Zimbabwe, caused by human rights violations and socio-economic dynamics. The study concludes that revitalizing child protection services requires resource support, particularly from the government (Mwapaura, Nyabeze, Kabonga, & Zvokuomba, 2022). Finally, Forrester-Jones et al. examined social protection policies in Egypt aimed at reducing poverty and conflict. However, complex socio-political dynamics led to social divisions. This study concluded that social protection can be an effective intervention if it involves harmonizing various stakeholders and paying attention to socio-economic discrimination against minority groups (Forrester-Jones, Jawad, Zaki, & Ismail, 2025).

The strategy implemented to protect child labor in Egypt under the ACCEL project aims to eradicate child labor from its roots. The author assumes that for the social protection strategy to be applied in the long term, harmonization between stakeholders and local institutions is needed, considering that the main factor of child labor arises from poverty, especially in residential or rural areas. A possible obstacle to the application of social protection strategies in Egypt is the limited scope given that most child laborers are in the informal sector.

METHOD

The type of research used by the author is descriptive research with qualitative analysis techniques. Descriptive research aims to explain existing phenomena in writing (Sukmadinata, 2015). The data collection technique in this research was obtained using the literature study method from secondary data in the form of official websites, journal articles, annual reports, and news that accommodate issues related to child labor. The author chose the sources because of their relevance and credibility in the articles. The author selected sources with a period of time from 2015 to 2024. The data collected was then analyzed using qualitative methods to understand complex phenomena in depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

ACCEL Africa Project

The challenge in solving the problem of child labor is the normalization of cultural factors. The potential for child laborers to be exposed to hazardous work is high due to the lack of a platform for them to communicate freely between families, as well as no formal monitoring system by employers and government. ACCEL Africa is implementing a system that moves away from project-based downstream interventions towards systems strengthening to address the root causes of child labor through social protection, social finance, and education and skills development (United Nations Global Marketplace, 2023).

The relevance of poverty to child labor is obvious. Poor households are more likely to engage children in work at the expense of their education to meet basic needs. Relevant social protection instruments in bringing progress include cash transfer strategies, micro-enterprise credit loan strategies, and public works scheme strategies. Cash transfer schemes are interventions that directly target children, this relates to conditional cash transfer schemes that have school attendance requirements. Meanwhile, credit loan strategies and public

works schemes do not directly target child laborers but contribute to reducing the root causes of child labor prevalence, namely parents or those of productive age (International Labour Organization, 2017).

The ACCEL program aims to accelerate the elimination of child labor in selected supply chains. The project addresses three interrelated components: partnerships and knowledge sharing among global supply chain actors, empowerment and representation, and public policy and good governance. The project adopted systems strengthening to address the root causes of child labor. The ACCEL project contributes in two phases from 2018-2024, the first phase starts from 2018 to 2022 and the outreach of the program runs until 2024 (International Labour Organization, 2017).

Multi-stakeholder Strategy in ACCEL project

Various programs organized by ILO to reduce the level of child labor in Egypt, in order to carry out the objectives of the ACCEL project, ILO collaborate with several stakeholders. Development partners of important projects ILO not only collaborate with the Egyptian and Dutch governments in the ACCEL program but also prioritize the role of local governments, such as Ministries as the alignment of the conceptual framework. The Egyptian government established 14 childcare centers in several provinces guided by the Ministry of Social Solidarity can contribute to limiting child labor while helping to ease the burden of workers out there. Similar facilities are managed by local institutions as psychological services, health care, and child education programs. The Ministry of Manpower collaborates with the World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF, and ILO to combat child labor through education by enrolling children back into primary education and providing service facilities. In addition, the Ministry of Manpower organizes training programs through international standard training workshops (International Labour Organization, 2018).

The Ministry of Education and Technical Education or MOETE guides the course of the Dual Education System (DES) as a technical form of vocational education. The aim of this concept is to equip the workforce through vocational skills that integrate them in the labor market (Gelin, 2021). MOETE issued two decrees in 2021, firstly Decree 11 regarding the regulations and standards of DES service providers and Ministerial Decree 215 publishing the list of hazardous child labor. DES orientation sessions provided consultation services to 500 inter-company trainers to 220 companies that provided opportunities for 3000 apprentices. A total of 452 workers in the cotton supply chain in the four provinces of Fayou, Sharkia, Behera and Alexandria received this training.

ACCEL facilitated schools where training involved teachers, supervisors and Regional Units of Dual System (RUDS) to monitor students' awareness of their rights and communicate their obstacles during training (International Labour Organization, 2023).

The Ministry of Justice is working on the justice aspect for child offenders and victims of the worst forms of labor. It began by organizing a number of workshops with legal stakeholders, developing guidelines for handling juvenile crimes, establishing a judicial system to monitor crimes either committed by or against children, and establishing a child psychosocial consultation office. In this aspect of justice, the ILO works with employers' and workers' organizations to achieve social justice and decent work (International Labour Organization, 2018).

ACCEL realizes that in addressing child labor, it is necessary to eradicate the root causes of child labor, which focuses on empowering workers such as the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) Efforts through organizing training for a total of 20 trade union members by focusing on strengthening the role of trade unions in promoting gender equality in the workplace and adopting Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in a workshop for more than 200 young women at ILO Cairo and funded by the Dutch government (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Cash transfer strategy

Based on Hennessy's ideas, the cash transfer strategy has two schemes: conditional and unconditional. These schemes have the objective of increasing income by providing incentives to households. Hennessy analyzed that cash transfer schemes provided directly to beneficiaries would contribute to reducing children's involvement in work (Hennessy, 2023). Some implementation of social protection interventions is reflected in several Takaful and Karama programs. The Takaful and Karama programs are guided by the ILO assisted by a loan from the World Bank and implemented by the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) initiated the Takaful and Karama conditional cash transfer program since 2015. Takaful and Karama Program consists of the word Takaful which means solidarity in Arabic, which is a family income support program in the form of conditional cash transfers to reduce poverty. The word Karama in Arabic means dignity, this program is an unconditional income sub-program and targets beneficiaries with disabilities, poor people including the elderly and/or poor orphans. The Takaful and

Karama programs work together with the World Bank to fund this program in Egypt to the tune of US\$390.05 million (World Bank, 2019).

The Takaful program targets poor households with children by providing cash transfers to household representatives with the expectation that the funds can be allocated to the children's education so that they do not need to work. Takaful applies conditions to beneficiaries in terms of health and education with the aim of family members' welfare (UNICEF, 2019). Takaful's beneficiary criteria prioritize the attendance of children, especially those aged 6-18 years old, on school days by 80% and regular health monitoring for mothers and children under 6 years old (Ministry of Social Solidarity Egypt, 2017).

Takaful beneficiaries receive a monthly cash transfer of 325 EGP (Egypt Pound) with a maximum of 3 children per household. The details of the cash transfer are categorized based on the age of the children, i.e. children aged 0-6 years get an incentive of 60 EGP, children who are at primary school age get an incentive of 80 EGP, children who are at preparatory level get an incentive of 100 EGP, and children who are at secondary level get 140 EGP. The Karama program or unconditional cash transfer targets specific poor household members every month, namely to people with disabilities, poor orphans, and the elderly. Elderly and disabled beneficiaries receive an incentive of 450 EGP, while orphans receive an incentive of 350 EGP (World Bank, 2018).

The program's segmentation reach covers 10% of Egypt's total population of 4.67 million registered households as of December 2023. The results of this program identified 63% of Takaful beneficiaries and 37% of Karama beneficiaries. The cash transfer scheme provided to the beneficiaries especially the Takaful program will contribute to the reduction of children's involvement in employment. This is due to the Takaful beneficiary criteria that require 80% school attendance especially for children aged 6-18 years who are vulnerable to being employed.

Microcredit strategy-income generation project

A contributing factor to the prevalence of child labor is the parents themselves as adults. Often parents as business owners in the agricultural sector or small-scale businesses employ their children and do not even pay them for the hours they work. Such actions are taken by entrepreneurs to reduce production costs and because children are easy to control. Microcredit income-generation projects are measures that focus on increasing household income (Hennessy, 2023). This strategy is implemented through education on credit lending to microenterprises coupled with access to financial services.

ACCEL initiated the GET Ahead Program, a financial inclusion program that enables the spread of access to financial services to hard-to-reach consumers, especially in rural areas. GET Ahead Program is used to introduce credit schemes to poor families by facilitating their access to financial markets. In this program ACCEL collaborates with two financial institutions and the Egyptian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (MSMEDA). These stakeholder partnerships are used to encourage individuals to manage their business finances, including accessing loans and non-financial services (International Labour Organization, 2023).

MSMEDA provides essential technical information on establishing small businesses and information on applying for microloans to fund their businesses. The realization of this program resulted in small businesses from the loans to 65 micro-enterprises, small income-generating projects established in labor-intensive, such as the sale of household appliances and sewing shops (International Labour Organization, 2023). In the first half of 2021, it is known that MSMEDA successfully financed 87.7 thousand micro-enterprises that increased employment (Egypt Today, 2023). MSMEDA allocations from 2021 to 2024 managed to create 3.1 million job opportunities aimed at several provinces in Upper Egypt (Mounir, 2024).

Public employment scheme strategy

This scheme aims to guarantee employment for low-skilled workers. Hennessy identified that the public employment system will work effectively if it goes hand in hand with employment security (Hennessy, 2023). This relates to the multi-stakeholder cooperation achieved by the ILO for the ACCEL project, especially the cooperation with government agencies and local NGOs in Egypt. The programs launched under this scheme include training and workshops that are organized based on the integration between the ILO and relevant companies.

GET Ahead Program is primarily an entrepreneurship training program to develop basic numeracy skills. The program prioritizes farmers to develop financial literacy and improve their knowledge of financial services. The GET Ahead training program has two main partners, the Cotton Research Institute (CRI) and the National Council for Women (NCW). CRI is the national institute responsible for cotton cultivation research and it has a network of cotton farmers and cooperatives. NCW is the national body responsible for ensuring gender equality for women and it has a network of rural community leaders across Egypt (International Labour Organization, 2023).

ACCEL delivered training involving a total of 520 cotton farmers from five provinces consisting of 353 women and 167 men. In addition, trainees received awareness-raising sessions on the risks of child labor and the potential for work without child labor (International Labour Organization, 2023). By raising awareness about child labor, this will strengthen NCW's role as an advocate for Egyptian legal policies related to crime laws, gender discrimination, and so on (Samir, 2021). Thus, through the GET Ahead numeracy and financial literacy training program, it can reduce the prevalence of child labor even though it does not directly target them but parents or adults. Awareness-raising sessions related to child labour need to be widely disseminated to reduce the culture of normalization.

The ILO collaborates with the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) through the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The objective of the cooperation is related to the empowerment of employment opportunities through gender equality. The realization of empowering employment opportunities is marked by the launch of a booklet called A Decent Employment and Apprenticeship in Arabic. The booklet contains information on the definition of child labor and child work, what constitutes the worst forms of child labor, legal considerations on child work and apprenticeship, and how child work and apprenticeship patterns at the enterprise level. The booklet is distributed to enterprises as a mandatory procedure to support the elimination of child labor at the root, the procedure enables employers to identify violations of recruiting child labor in their facilities (International Labour Organization, 2021).

This partnership between the ILO and FEI produced the booklet as a compliance of national and international labor standards. Mainstreaming of national inspections on child eradication is implemented based on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). The integration between FEI and ILO stakeholders is realized in the booklet product as a form of raising awareness of the private sector regarding the risk of recruitment of child labor.

The Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) Program was implemented in 2019 with the urgency that most jobs in Egypt are microenterprises (International Labour Organization, 2021). SIYB is the largest global business management training program that helps small-scale businesses start and grow their businesses (International Labour Organization, n.d.). SIYB provides a specially developed training package for small-scale business owners, which consists of four stages of business development from Generate Your Business Idea (GYB) to Expand Your Business (EYB) (International Labour Organization, 2021).

The SIYB program provides training to business startups and entrepreneurs to achieve productivity in their businesses. This training can change the role of young people as business owners, as young people are less likely to be employed than children. Undergoing this training allows youth to be integrated into business owners or a skilled workforce. A skilled workforce integrates youth into the workforce, reducing the potential for youth to fall into unemployment.

The Egyptian Dual Education System (DES) is a program launched by the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MOETE). In this case, ACCEL collaborates with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) in policy innovation in public facilities. GIZ supports the program through dual system governance, improving the quality of education and training in schools and training facilities, training teachers and trainers, supporting the expansion of the system, and increasing the number of students enrolled. Companies participating in DES are trained to protect children from child labor practices and shift to responsible business conduct (International Labour Organization, 2023).

The education system employs professional trainers to integrate child labor principles and rights in the workplace, occupational safety and health (OSH), and hazardous forms of child labor. These principles are regulated in the Minister of Education and Vocational Education Decree 111 of 2021 on contracts and apprenticeships that company owners must comply with in recruiting workers. This dual education system reconstructed by ACCEL and GIZ resulted in regulations regarding OHS conditions, apprenticeships, and schools for children as technical support to address the issue of child labor (International Labour Organization, 2023).

Better Work Program is a collaborative program between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) launched in 2020 within the framework of the ILO's Strengthening Labor Relations and their Institutions in Egypt (SLAIRE). Like the booklet produced in collaboration between the ILO and FEI, SLAIRE aims to promote effective implementation of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). Better Work is a program initiative that provides labor standards training to garment factories (Better Work Egypt, 2023). SLAIRE is committed to advancing freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining among Egyptian workers, thereby contributing to the development of a supportive and responsible corporate environment (International Labour Organization, 2023).

Better Work's 50 employer representatives were made aware of national and international labor laws governing child labor and apprenticeships through

their participation in the Industrial Seminar on Employment, Child Labor and Apprenticeship workshops that took place in Cairo and Alexandria in March 2021 (Better Work, 2023). The labor standard applied by Better Work Egypt is ILO Convention 138 regarding the minimum age for training and apprenticeship. Recruiters must document and keep records of all workers under the age of 18. Better Work Egypt supervises factory compliance using the Compliance Assessment Tool (CAT) to detect labor violations in factories (Better Work Egypt, 2023).

This Better Work program prioritizes the empowerment of companies that are suitable for the younger generation. Better Work is an implementation of the implementation of Ministerial Decree 111 of 2021 as described in the GIZ program aimed at garment factories. Through training or internship opportunities at Better Work Egypt is a form of decent vocational education opportunities. However, the supervision systems in factories that employ children under the age of 18 need to be regularly inspected to prevent the use of child labor.

Supporting Child Rights through Education, Arts, and Media (SCREAM) Program is a program that directly intersects with child labor. SCREAM aims to attract or prevent boys and girls from engaging in child labor by integrating them into the education system. SCREAM not only targets children, but also communities, especially parents, to advocate for children's right to freedom from hazardous work (International Labour Organization, 2024).

The SCREAM program mechanism is implemented through modules that are adapted based on child labor issues in each country. Modules adapted to the conditions of child labor in Egypt have been published since 2002, especially children working in the agricultural sector. The SCREAM Education Pack module contains the stages of advocacy for child laborers by forming groups such as FGDs to ask questions related to the real feelings felt by children. This education module combines educational approaches, art, and media as a forum for children's expression (International Labour Organization, 2024).

The SCREAM program also uses music media managed in a SCREAM Music Module as a form of advocacy for the elimination of child labor by involving children through concerts and songs in street theater performances (International Labour Organization, 2019). The media in SCREAM is used as a safe space artistic activities for children's freedom of aspiration and most importantly articulate their experience of working. In addition to music, media is used to campaign for the elimination of child labor through radio, television, and social media (International Labour Organization, 2024).

The initiative has empowered more than 3000 children at risk or already exposed to employment and more than 2200 parents underwent literacy and inclusion sessions as well as awareness sessions on the negative impacts of child labor. The program educates children about their rights, freedom from economic exploitation, encourages them to advocate for themselves, and seek help. The implementation of these sessions is not only used to promote child rights and child labor but also to encourage children to be more confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions, what kind of perceptions are embedded in their minds towards work and education. SCREAM completed sessions with 242 children and sessions with 192 parents and then held a graduation ceremony for each group that completed the program (International Labour Organization, 2024).

The SCREAM program reaches the source of child labor, the working children themselves. SCREAM can effectively empower children by targeting interventions to children about their rights. This empowerment is also used to change the social stigma in society regarding children's obligation to work from an early age. Socio-economic empowerment projects support the creation of a stable environment for children to thrive, gain knowledge and reduce children's contribution to work.

Analysis of the Success of Child Labor Protection Strategies in Egypt

The cash transfer strategy, especially the Takaful program, has had a significant impact in reducing children's involvement in work, judging by the predicted school attendance in the data below,

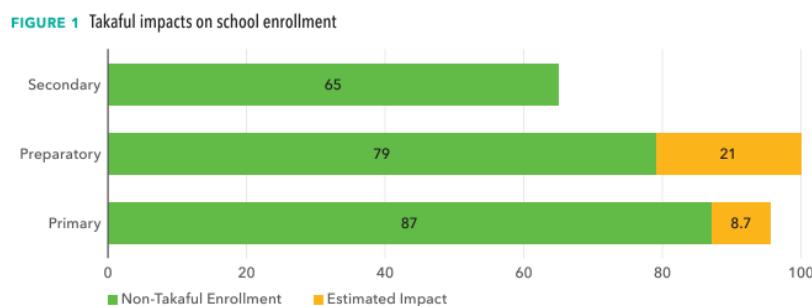


Figure 1 Estimated project of Takaful's education program

Source: (El-Enbaly, Elsabbagh, Gilligan, Karachiwalla, & Kurdi, 2023)

Based on the data presented, it is known that children in the child labor circle are in the age range of 6-15 years, namely primary school and preparatory or secondary school levels. Each school level increased substantially with primary school attendance increasing by 9% and preparatory school attendance increasing by 21% (El-Enbaly, Elsabbagh, Gilligan, Karachiwalla, & Kurdi, 2023). The authors assume this prediction to be a positive value due to the educational requirements implemented in the Takaful program. This prediction

of increased school attendance supports integration into the education system to reduce their involvement in employment (International Labour Organization, 2024). Thus, the author concludes that through Takaful's conditional social financial assistance has a significant impact in reducing child labor.

Through the GET Ahead program, the ILO intervenes through the provision of financial services education facilities, which through credit loans will help reduce the financial burden and allocate their needs for business productivity (International Labour Organization, 2017). The author assumes that to eradicate child labor at its roots, parents of productive age are approached in the job training system so that parents do not need to involve children in work (International Labour Organization, 2017). However, the results obtained in the credit loan program in Egypt have not had a significant impact on the prevalence of child labor because it requires time and complex project resources (United Nations Global Marketplace, 2023).

The implementation of the public employment scheme strategy through a series of training programs, workshops, and awareness raising has encouraged a positive downward trend. The data below is a significant comparison of child labor rates between 2020 and 2023.

Table 1 Percentage comparison of the number of child laborers

	Total population of working children (%)
2020	4.9%
2023	3.6%

Source: (BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS, 2020) (BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS, 2023)

Based on the data presented, the author concludes that there is a downward trend in the number of workers in the 5-14 age range in 2020 of 4.9% to 3.6% in 2023. The success of the decline in child labor rates was triggered by Takaful's conditional social financial assistance and the provision of employment facilities for productive age. As the author assumed in the introduction, the obstacles in the application of this strategy are coordination between local authorities in managing policies and resource capacity.

Positive economic growth is judged by the increase in Egypt's GDP since facing the global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 experiencing fluctuations of around 3.55% affected by the pandemic. In 2022 it reached significant growth of around 6.7%, but in the following year 2023 it slowed down again to 3.8% until in the second quarter of 2025 an increase in GDP growth was recorded at 4.3% (World Bank Group, 2025). Egypt's economic uncertainty is due to the challenges of inflation and public debt, one of which includes budget funds diverted to social protection programs. The debt ratio used for social protection is projected to decrease after fiscal year 2024-2025 due

to primary surpluses and economic reforms (INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND, 2024). Egypt's economic reforms are achieved through fiscal discipline to stabilize public debt levels which will reduce the burden on the government including loans from the World Bank (Morsy, 2025).

By 2025 CAPMAS projects the estimated population of children at the primary school level aged 6-11 years to be around 15.1 million and at the preparatory school level (junior high school) children aged 12-14 years to be around 6.8 million (UNICEF, 2024). Increasing children's school attendance is closely linked to decreasing child labor rates in Egypt. Encouraging integration into the education system will reduce the workload of those who fall into the labor market. This will gradually break the cycle of child labor and promote the integration of education as a solution for children from poverty (UNICEF, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Child labor is a normalized phenomenon in rural Egyptian settings. Children are forced into the labor market to help meet household needs, so to eradicate this practice, social protection strategies are implemented in Egyptian society. Social protection interventions through cash transfer strategies generate positive value through the implementation of children's attendance requirements in Takaful schools, so that children can reduce their working hours in the informal sector. Intervention through credit loan program was not enough to generate significant impact due to the short duration of the program. Intervention through employment facilities led to significant prevalence results by comparing the number of child laborers between 2020 and 2023 decreased by 1.3%.

The comparison of child labor prevalence supports the author's argument that the implementation of social protection strategies in eliminating child labor contributes to reducing child labor rates. Existing programs encourage harmonization among local institutions to help manage low public awareness. The majority of child laborers are found in the informal sector, which is unable to guarantee their justice, thus requiring legislative reform. Social protection interventions in Egypt do not adequately explain how the monitoring process and the results of monitoring each program, which is a challenge of program implementation.

This research utilizes data quoted from reports to the official website of the ILO to complete the sentences in the research, so future research is expected to enrich the reference sources because the references of this research are far from qualified. In addition, the strategy initiated by Hennessy also discusses the

employment system in line with labor law while this research only briefly discusses labor standards. Research on the labor system that protects child labor in Egypt deserves further study.

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