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# Navigating Towards 2030:

## A Comprehensive Approach to Eliminating Child Labor in Jordan



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The policy paper provides a comprehensive examination of the widespread issue of child labor in Jordan, which affects approximately 70,000 children between ages 5 and 17. The paper explores the diverse areas in which child labor is practiced, such as agriculture, domestic work, and street vending, among others.

Key reasons fueling child labor in Jordan include lack of quality education, poverty, family separation, unawareness about the dangers of child labor, and ineffective regulatory oversight. The paper underlines that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation by increasing the number of school dropouts and thus exposing more children to labor risks.

Despite Jordan's legal steps to counter child labor, enforcement remains weak, and a considerable number of children continue to endure exploitative work conditions. International organizations and NGOs have made commendable progress in battling child labor, but the problem remains significant.

The policy paper examines critical determinants of child labor in Jordan, which include poverty, weak market regulation, gender roles, lack of education access, and migration status. Each determinant is discussed in detail, pointing to the multi-faceted nature of the child labor issue. For example, poverty forces low-income families to rely on their children's income, often at the cost of their education and well-being. Similarly, access to education is curtailed by multiple barriers, and migration exposes children to exploitative work conditions due to lack of social and economic support systems. Furthermore, social norms and gender roles in Jordan push male children into the workforce and keep females at home, fulfilling domestic duties that may qualify as child labor. The weak enforcement of market regulations facilitates exploitative practices.

The paper also analyzes the severe impact of child labor on children's physical and mental health and its long-term implications for economic growth and sustainable development. Child labor detrimentally affects a child's physical growth, exposes them to hazardous conditions, and increases their susceptibility to various diseases. It also leads to psychosocial issues, including feelings of inferiority, loneliness, and depression. At the macro level, child labor negatively influences long-term economic growth by impacting factors such as human capital accumulation, fertility, health, technical change, income inequality, and gender inequality.

**Based on our findings, we recommend:**

1. *The Ministry of Social Development of Jordan should promote school enrollment and quality education through conditional cash transfers.*
2. *The Jordanian government should promote free vocational training for parents with children engaged in child labor.*
3. *The Jordanian government should provide health care services for child laborers*
4. *The Jordanian Government should incorporate aspects of child labor into its monitoring and evaluation data sets.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Child labor is an issue of considerable global magnitude, affecting an estimated 1 in 10 children [1]. This pernicious practice subjects children to unsafe and detrimental work, severely hindering their education, overall well-being, and both physical and mental development. A staggering 160 million children worldwide are believed to be ensnared in child labor. The determination of whether a particular form of work constitutes child labor hinges on several factors, including the child's age, the type and conditions of the work, the hours involved, and the conditions under which it takes place. Due to its association with excessive working hours, paltry wages, perilous working environments, and the denial of fundamental rights such as access to education and healthcare, child labor is broadly recognized as a form of child abuse [2].

In addition to its immediate harmful effects, child labor is a multifaceted societal issue with far-reaching implications. Children are often compelled into labor due to an intricate web of factors, including poverty, limited access to education, cultural traditions, or exploitation by unscrupulous employers. It manifests in various forms: from working in agriculture, mining, construction, and manufacturing, to engaging in domestic service, and even informal sectors like street vending and begging [2]. The ramifications of child labor are manifold, posing both physical and psychological threats. It is also linked to significant socio-economic consequences, obstructing children from attending school, curtailing their educational opportunities, and thereby perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty that engulfs not just the individual but also the wider community [3]. The children engaged in labor are often denied the chance to gain the necessary skills and knowledge that could lift them out of poverty, further exacerbating the socio-economic disparities within a society.

The objective of this study is to present an all-encompassing analysis concerning the prevalence, causes, and impacts of child labor in Jordan. Our exploration delves deep into the fundamental factors that contribute to this pervasive issue, highlighting the roles of poverty, insufficient or absent educational opportunities, and the nuances of migration status. We also strive to identify the various manifestations of child labor that are widespread in Jordan. Beyond mere identification, this research dissects the multifaceted consequences that child labor imposes, considering its detrimental effects on child health and development, as well as its economic impact on both family and national scales. In the end, the study offers a suite of thoughtful recommendations and potential solutions to tackle the issue of child labor in Jordan. This includes proposed policy interventions and the provision of support mechanisms for vulnerable children and families, thereby paving a path towards alleviating this societal concern.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Jordan has been one of the countries dealing with this pressing issue with many children being forced to work in dangerous and exploitative conditions. There are approximately 70,000 child laborers in Jordan, between the ages of 5 and 17. Jordanians make up approximately 80 percent of child laborers, while the remaining 15 percent are Syrian, with the majority being boys [4]. The children in child labor work are often engaged in various occupations, including agriculture, domestic work, street vending, commercial sexual exploitation, various car mechanics, loading and unloading, cleaning, blacksmithing, carpentry, sewing and begging, with agriculture being the most prominent one [4;5].

Lack of access to quality education, poverty, separation of children from their families, lack of awareness of the risks and effects of child labor, and lack of oversight of sectors like agriculture have been reported as common causes for the issue in Jordan [3]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures increased child labor in Jordan.

Children without access to the internet and remote learning facilities have often been compelled to leave their education prematurely, thereby making them susceptible to child labor. It is essential to acknowledge the multitude of challenges non-Jordanian children encounter, especially those hailing from countries such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia.[4].

The government of Jordan has taken steps to address the issue of child labor, including the adoption of legislation to protect children from exploitation and abuse. However, enforcement of these laws is often weak and insufficient to fully address the extent of child labor, since many child laborers continue to work in exploitative conditions, such as construction, agriculture and street vending [4].

Many international organizations and NGOs are also working to combat child labor in Jordan by raising awareness of the issue, providing support to vulnerable families, and advocating for policy changes. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to ensure that all children in Jordan are able to enjoy their rights to education, health, and protection from exploitation.

## **2.1 DETERMINANTS OF CHILD LABOR**

Child labor is a global concern with a multifaceted origin. It encompasses economic, political, social, and cultural aspects that are shared across the globe affecting both children and their families. Several studies [6; 7] have identified poverty [8], migration, weak market regulation, gender and access to education as the main determinants of child labor in Jordan. As a result, understanding each dimension present in the world, especially in Jordan, is critical to effectively address and elaborate potential policy recommendations from a multi-sectoral approach.

### **2.1.1 Poverty**

Poverty impacts families' ability to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and education for their children. Therefore, low-income families are forced to rely on the income of children, often at the expense of their education and well-being. In many cases, children in developing countries or high-income countries with unequal income distribution, such as Jordan, are pushed to work as a result of poverty [9]. Due to low wages from parents, high unemployment rates for adults, unexpected illness of a caregiver, and the need to survive on a daily basis, poor families generally depend on their children to carry the financial responsibility, predisposing them to child labor [1]. It is worth noting that poverty is intertwined with many elements. Low quality education and access, strict gender roles, and high migration rates have the potential to replicate, perpetuate and accentuate poverty, making it difficult for children to escape from this unfortunate cycle.

### **2.1.2 Access to Education**

Lack of access to education limits opportunities for children, making them more vulnerable to exploitation. Although child education in Jordan is given quite the importance, having achieved its target of universal access to primary education with 97% of children in school and maintaining gender parity in education since 1979, there is still not sufficient progress and requires more quality investment, since children with disabilities and refugees have not benefited from this equally [10].

There are many barriers that prevent children in Jordan from accessing a quality education from an early age. School-aged children from local and migrant low-income families are unable to afford school fees expenses such as tuition, transportation, and related supplies. Overcrowded classrooms, bullying, and unskilled teachers are common obstacles in providing quality education in public schools leading to a high level of dropout. There are also reports of verbal harassment among school girls that contribute to school absenteeism and even dropouts.

In addition to the existing barriers, some refugees may encounter an additional obstacle: the lack of valid documentation required for school enrollment. In Jordan, primary education may not always be accessible to older children [especially girls] because they may need to start working early on and/or give into the prospect of early marriage to meet their families' short-term needs [11].

### **2.1.3 Migration**

Migration increases the risk of child labor, as displaced families may lack social and economic support systems. More than 600,000 Syrian refugees were hosted in Jordan by 2021, with a 40–46% chance of becoming protected cases [12]. This is concerning since children who have been forcibly displaced from their homes are more likely to drop out of school and enter the labor force at a young age [13]. Immigrant children face loss of family income due to death, family separation or displacement from home. The desperate situation created by humanitarian crises puts refugee children at an increased risk of being exposed to dire working conditions [14]. Despite the fact that Jordanian labor authorities issued or renewed many work permits to Syrian refugees by the end of 2019, most professions remained closed to them, forcing them to continue working in the informal sector, making it difficult to provide financial support for their families on a daily basis [15].

### **2.1.4 Social Norms and Role of Gender**

In Jordan, cultural expectations mandate that male adolescents are expected to work in order to become responsible men and demonstrate their worth to their families [16]. In addition to this, poor quality of education has been linked to inadequate academic performance, violence, and harassment in boys leading to higher school dropout rates. All these factors significantly contribute to male children being pulled into the child labor force [1]. Girls may be kept at home due to concerns about their safety, gender-specific roles or early marriage. Due to traditional reasons, girls are expected to assume domestic duties such as caring for family members like their siblings, spouses and parents and take on additional household duties [17]. In some cases, these duties might extend to a level where it becomes their main and only activity in life, stripping them from the opportunity of pursuing school and thus, fulfilling the criteria for child labor.

### **2.1.5 Deficiencies in the Implementation of labor Market Regulations**

The implementation of market regulation is weak, which allows for exploitative practices, such as low wages and hazardous working conditions, to go unchecked. Children are frequently employed as a low-cost workforce that is more tolerant of abuse than adults, primarily in Jordan's agriculture and retail trade sectors [18]. COVID-19 lockdown restrictions worsened already existing workplace abuses such as physical and verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and many others [15].

Despite the effort of many labor agencies, both in the international and national panorama, child labor continues to be a pressing issue. Jordan has taken different steps to address and eradicate child labor, however, many gaps within the system impede them from effectively enforcing labor laws. Some of the gaps identified include a low number of available inspectors [4], as compared to the ILO recommendation of 1 inspector per 15,000 workers [19] to successfully identify, follow up and promptly implement labor law regulations. The agricultural sector is often overlooked because it is still considered an informal sector despite being formalized in 2000, thus demonstrating how regulations remain poorly implemented [11].

## **2.2 IMPACTS OF CHILD LABOR**

The ILO defines child labor as the 'work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; or interferes with their schooling by: [i] depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; [ii] obliging them to leave school prematurely; and [iii] requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work [19]. Child labor has severe negative impacts on the well-being of children and their physical, mental, emotional and sexual health, often leading to substantial economic consequences. Furthermore, this section focuses on the consequences of child labor on the long-term economic growth and sustainable development of the country.

### **2.2.1 Children's Well-being**

- **Child Labor's Impact on Physical Health**

According to research carried out in Jordan, the length of working hours and the monthly income of a child can impact their height and weight [21]. The increased physical activity that comes with work needs more nutrients to make up for the additional calorie consumption, especially during periods of rapid growth such as puberty. Concerning nutritional status, working in non-sedentary sectors such as agriculture and construction was associated with lower height and weight [22].

If the child's income is needed to supplement the household income, there may not be enough calories available to support normal growth [21].

The prevalence of physical diseases is significantly higher among children engaged in child labor. The majority of these children work in vehicle maintenance and services, and are subjected to long working hours, hazardous chemicals, and physical exhaustion [23]. The National Child labor Survey of Jordan [2016] found that working children are exposed to dust and fumes [18%], fire, gas and flames [6%], extreme cold or heat [10%], dangerous tools [8%], chemical and pesticides [2%], among other conditions from unhealthy work environments. These working conditions put them at risk of developing negative health impacts, such as poor nutrition, stunted physical growth, work-related illnesses, musculoskeletal pain, HIV infection, infectious diseases, tuberculosis, and eye strain [24].

- **Child Labor's Impact on Mental Health**

Children subjected to labor often suffer from psychosocial problems, which include feelings of loneliness and depression, and inability to maintain social relations at home [23]. Working children are exposed to various forms of abuse such as verbal, physical, and sexual. A study focusing on the experiences of abuse found that many times, the abusers are usually the employers or the “older boy” in charge [25]. In Jordan, working children are exposed to being constantly shouted at (12%), repeatedly insulted (5%), beaten and physically hurt (2%) [17]. The derogatory insults and speech with sexual connotations often stirred feelings of inferiority and helplessness causing them to exhibit low self-esteem, poor performance and feel small in stature [25]. To cope with the psychological burden, working children seek risky behaviours such as smoking, usage of recreational drugs [marijuana and hashish] or non-prescribed drugs [23].

- **Child Labor's Impact on Long-term Economic Growth and Development**

Several researchers find that poverty is the main determinant of child labor. As a consequence, children get involved in the labor market, to increase the household income in the short run [26]. If in the short term, the decision to involve children in the workforce could seem to have a positive impact at the family level (an increase in the household income), in the long run, the outcomes damage the domestic economy. The long-term repercussions of child labor are far-reaching, primarily due to the denial of formal education to these children [26]. Without access to education, they are deprived of the opportunity to develop essential academic skills, which significantly hinders their prospects of securing higher-paying employment in the future.

Galli (2001) finds six different channels through which child labor affects growth in the long run (see also 27).

**1. Human capital accumulation:** As children get excluded from schooling, human capital accumulation is affected negatively. Human capital is important for growth as it is a fundamental element that promotes productivity and innovation [26; 28]. Additionally, by dropping out of school early, children do not learn competencies and skills that would be necessary to enter more remunerative jobs later in their lives [29].

**2. Fertility:** The mechanism through which fertility affects growth is that as child labor distorts the real cost of having children [26], fertility increases. On long-term growth, high fertility rates have a negative impact because it reduces income [27;30].

**3. Health:** Health problems caused by child labor, mainly psychosocial and physical ailments can impact productivity in the labor force.

**4. Investment and technical change:** Child labor can decrease technological change, and as a consequence negatively impact economic growth [26]. Since child labor increases the availability of unskilled labor that is relatively cheap, industries are less incentivized to invest in innovation (relatively more expensive) [26]. Thus, child labor indirectly affects manufacturing productivity, technological progress and output growth in the long run.

**5. Income inequality:** Different from the short run, child labor increases income inequality. This is because it reinforces negative mechanisms such as low education and high fertility that both affect individual income. In fact, children involved in the workforce are and will stay as low-skilled laborers that are generally paid less. Moreover, high fertility and child labor will incentivise larger shares of low-skilled laborers, affecting the distribution of income downwards.

**6. Gender inequality:** Boys and girls are involved in different kinds of jobs, and the latter are generally more engaged in home and care activities. Thus, they might create bias in the distribution of gender between the different kinds of jobs.

- **Child Labor's Impact on the Adult labor Market**

Since child labor is often paid poorly, it can increase adult unemployment. With the availability of cheap labor (children), for the same job, employers would prefer hiring children, thus leaving more adults without employment [26]. Additionally, the presence of children in the labor market will increase wages as well. This is possible because, employers, having the possibility to substitute adults with children with low wages, will push adults to start accepting relatively lower wages, leading to an overall decrease in salaries [26; 29].

- **Child Labor's Impact on Foreign Direct Investment**

Foreign direct investments (FDIs) are generally high when the country offers a stable and profitable environment. In case of political instability or violation of human rights, the investments entering the country will likely be less. In the case of child labor, there are two main reasons why it does not attract FDI. First, child labor decreases the price of labor, making the country more intensive in the product that requires a lot of labor (labor-intensive goods) [26]. FDI flows are higher in capital-intensive industries, which are more productive, thus more profitable [31]. Second, a negative reputation may hinder FDI inflows in the country [29]. For instance, violating or not participating in human rights conventions may prevent investors from deciding to devote FDI in the country [32].

## **2.3 JORDAN'S POLICY ON CHILD LABOR**

### **2.3.1 Legal Framework and Jordanian National Plans**

Goal No. 8 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SGD) calls for sustainable, inclusive, and decent work for all. Target 8.7 specifically urges measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labor [58]. Jordan has ratified three international conventions to address child labor, including the ILO Convention N° 139 and Recommendation N° 146 (1973, ratified in 1999); ILO Convention N° 182 and Recommendation N° 190 (1999, ratified in 2001); and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989, ratified in 2006). The latter mandates States Parties to enact legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from economic exploitation. As a state party of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Jordan is committed to protecting and taking care of children's well-being and ensuring that institutions, services and facilities take the responsibility to safeguard all children [20].

In Jordan, the labor Law N° 8 of 1996 sets the minimum age for employment in any economic activity as 16 years, except for certain activities such as artistic performances, sports, or light work that poses no threat to their health and safety (Art. 73). This law also prohibits hazardous work for children under 18 years of age (Art. 74). Employers who violate these regulations face penalties, including fines and imprisonment [33].

Since 2011, the Kingdom of Jordan adopted a comprehensive policy to combat child labor, the National Framework to Combat Child labor (NFCL, 2012-2016). This policy aimed to monitor child labor and foster the collective action of key stakeholders. The main outcomes achieved by this initiative were the creation of a National Committee to implement the issue, a web-based database on child labor housed in the Ministry of labor, the National Child labor Survey, and the implementation of the NFCL in all 12 governorates. Jordan has also developed several plans to address child labor in various sectors, such as the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child labor in Jordan (2018-2022), Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (2018-2022), and the Plan of Action to Eliminate Child labor in Tourism in Petra (2015).

Additionally, they had implemented several key social programs such as the MOSD Child labor Unit; Non-Formal Education Centers; Program to End the Worst Forms of Child labor in Zarqa and Amman; among others. However, the scope of these programs does not fully address the extent of the problem, including the worst forms of child labor in agriculture, construction and street vending [34].

In June 2022, the Council of Ministers approved the National Strategy to Reduce Child labor 2022-2023, followed by an action plan. This strategy has three primary axes: harmonising national legislation with international standards, preventing and protecting child labor, and improving governance and partnership with relevant entities. The Ministry of labor is the main government agency responsible for the strategy, in coordination with other entities such as the National Council for Family Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Health provides comprehensive health services, including preventive, curative, and emergency services to children and their families in the areas where they work.

The Government of Jordan is currently revising the National Framework to Combat Child labor (NFCL) 2011-16 and the child labor monitoring system (CLMS), which brings together the Ministry of labor, the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education to coordinate the identification and referral of child labor cases. There is a need to pilot the CLMS to assess its relevance to municipal-level initiatives and to demonstrate that a coordinated approach of services adds value to the goal of eliminating child labor [17].

## 2.4 BEST PRACTICES ON TACKLING CHILD LABOR

Historically, tackling the problem of child labor has most commonly involved implementing legislation governing the minimum age of employment. However, the effectiveness of such legal measures can be seriously hampered when faced with fragile institutions, limited human resources, and the pressing economic need that drives families to seek employment for their children (35). These challenges are further exacerbated by an understaffed labor inspectorate and the informalization of the labor market, which together complicate enforcement and oversight.

In economically disadvantaged countries, children frequently become a critical part of family strategies for income generation (59, 60), making legislation even more difficult to apply. However, it's worth noting that when managed by a capable and committed administration, legal measures can indeed become powerful tools for change. Research on child labor indicates that the most effective method to combat child labor is by implementing a mixture of legislation and economic incentives [35]. Weiner (1991) argued that laws enforcing compulsory education tend to yield better outcomes compared to child labor laws alone [62]. An example of this approach is the Brazilian initiative, Bolsa Escola. This program offers a minor stipend to low-income families for each school-aged child, with the aim of promoting school attendance. Although the program shows an immediate boost in school attendance, the reduction in child labor appears to be a slower process, with the benefits accruing over the long term [61].

In order to tackle the issue of child labor effectively, it is imperative to consider the economic repercussions on families if their children cease to work. Consequently, when formulating programs or policies aimed at reducing child labor, the financial circumstances of these families must be carefully considered, such as offering financial aid to those families who keep their children in school. This prevents children from leaving school prematurely to support their families economically [26]. Alongside legislation and economic incentives, efforts should be expanded to include advocacy, mobilization, and empowerment of both children and their families.

Community-based oversight of school enrollment and attendance may prove more successful than inspections from the Ministry of Education. Several tripartite collaborations involving the government, private enterprise, and civil society have achieved positive outcomes in reducing child labor in Latin America. However, additional research is needed to ascertain whether these policies and interventions can be successfully replicated in other regions [36].

Other studies suggests that strategies such as bans, boycotts, and trade policies do not necessarily mitigate child labor; in the worst-case scenarios, they might even aggravate the problem. A singular approach of banning child labor fails to enhance children's welfare if their households cannot meet their basic needs without the child's earnings. Therefore, the eradication of child labor demands policy mechanisms that target its root causes [27].

Several authors [35; 36] assert that a blanket prohibition on child labor is both impractical and unfeasible to enforce in developing countries. However, a long-term strategy for reducing child labor is not only realistic but also essential to achieve educational and poverty reduction objectives. Fors (2010) further contends that policies designed to eradicate child labor must confront the underlying factors that contribute to its prevalence, including poverty, market flaws, and barriers to education.

## 3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** *The Ministry of Social Development of Jordan should promote school enrollment and quality education through conditional cash transfers.*

In Jordan, education possesses significant potential to counteract child labor. Early and consistent enrollment in schooling, along with high-quality education, equips children with the resources needed to escape forced labor, empowering them to become productive and successful individuals [37]. To achieve this, it's essential to invest in the country's future – the children – through strategies ensuring both positive outcomes and sustainability, such as conditional cash transfers.

Conditional cash transfers serve as a valuable tool to boost school enrollment rates among impoverished families. Several studies [38; 39; 40; 41] have found that these transfers can effectively decrease child labor by providing families with a monetary supplement that raises their income to a level that eliminates the need for children to abandon school. Typically, these programs mandate that families must ensure their children attend school to receive the cash transfer [27]. Such initiatives have already achieved promising results in regional countries such as Lebanon and Turkey [38; 41]. In fact, conditional cash transfers have proven beneficial not only in reducing child labor (with an 88% decrease reported in Turkey, 38), but also in increasing school enrollments, as well as elevating household and food expenditures [41].

Another outcome that can be promoted using cash transfer is quality of schooling. Indeed, quality of education is another factor that when improved can promote the reduction of child labor [27]. This is because, if the school can guarantee better perspectives, like higher income, better job, the families are less incentivized to push their children in the workforce. Thus, improving the quality of education may decrease the share of child labor. Rossi and Rosati (2007) find that school quality programmes improved not only school enrollment but also decrease child labor in Mexico. To further encourage education quality, Hanushek (2004) suggests to improve teacher quality, as it is the main element to improve student performance. To do so, it should promote an active selection of the teacher and setting standards for the requirement to be hired. Another policy that could be adopted is to create professional development programs and in-service training [42].

Conditional cash transfer programs are considered a holistic intervention with the potential to contribute to many SDGs., including Goal No. 1 (no poverty), Goal No. 4 (quality education), Goal No. 5 (gender equality), Goal No. 8 (decent work and economic growth), and Goal No. 10 (reduced inequalities). Additionally, cash transfer programs have the potential to reduce school dropouts because children will no longer be forced to contribute financially to the household (45), thus contributing to social and human capital development.

The successful execution of cash transfer programs requires a series of processes to ensure the feasibility of the design, implementation, and oversight. The Ministry of labor, in partnership with local governments, community leaders, businesses, and other key stakeholders, must ensure that cash transfers meet specific criteria to assist those most in need. Eligibility criteria should be established by governments based on a baseline of extreme poverty, unmet basic needs, and the presence of school-aged children in the household. The financial incentive offered must be adequate to cover the basic needs of impoverished households, thereby ensuring that children remain in school rather than leaving to supplement family income through work.

These cash transfers will be provided to qualifying households under certain conditions, such as proof of regular school attendance by school-aged children and routine healthcare check-ups, with the long-term goal of fostering social and human capital development. Both education and health are interrelated and crucial for children's success, given that a student in poor health is likely to experience hindered educational progress and heightened risk of social and economic disparities, as well as behavioral issues [43]. Proof of regular school attendance is typically demonstrated through monthly records from the child's enrolled school. Healthcare check-ups should, among other considerations, encompass a complete immunization schedule appropriate for the child's age.

It is essential that this financial incentive is widely communicated across the country, particularly in communities where poverty and child labor are prevalent. This will ensure that the primary target population can avail of these benefits. The Jordanian government must take steps to widely publicize this incentive, through advertisements across various media platforms, as well as through community leaders and critical sectors such as public schools and community health centers.

Given that the Ministry of Social Development already operates a data collection platform for impoverished families, they must ensure that programs directed towards them are monitored and evaluated as intended. Additionally, involving a segment of the population in the monitoring and evaluation process is crucial.

This not only promotes adult employment but also engages the community in the process and helps them understand the importance of maintaining organization and transparency for the sustainability of the program.

Beneficiaries will receive cash transfers via a prepaid card issued by banks, which they can use to withdraw money from ATMs, or pay in stores both physically and online using a pin. Should beneficiaries fail to comply with the conditions of the incentive program without a valid justification, the card will be deactivated. This procedure ensures the incentive's objectivity, transparency, and sustainability.

## **Pastel Analysis**

### ***Political Feasibility***

Jordan has demonstrated a sustained commitment to reducing child labor over the years, implementing various measures that have received commendation from international organizations, including the International Labor Organization (ILO) [45]. This political will, supported by various stakeholders, enables the continuity of such initiatives, making the proposal politically feasible.

### ***Administrative Feasibility***

Implementing this recommendation is administratively feasible, given that Jordan's Ministry of Social Development already possesses various mechanisms to identify and assess impoverished families. These include conducting surveys to facilitate the execution of social protection programs. Moreover, Jordan has previous experience implementing cash transfer programs, such as the National Aid Fund (NAF), which offers financial assistance to low-income individuals, including orphans, people with disabilities, and elderly individuals who meet the eligibility criteria. Collaboration with banks to distribute prepaid cards is considered an efficient and secure payment method for eligible families, as it eliminates the need for rural families to commute to urban areas to withdraw money directly from a bank. Moreover, prepaid cards minimize the risk of families being targeted by thieves, and in case of loss, physical cash can't be recovered.

### ***Social Feasibility***

Jordan has successfully implemented and managed various social programs before, which suggests a certain level of capacity and infrastructure. Additionally, there is a recognized need to address issues of poverty and social inequality in Jordan, which conditional cash transfers could potentially help address. Therefore, we consider this recommendation as socially feasible.

### ***Technological Feasibility***

Over the past few years, Jordan has embarked on a digital transformation journey with a primary focus on the social and economic development of the country. This strategy includes the collection and improvement of data infrastructure [44]. Implementing this project would necessitate data collection and monitoring of the cash transfers' progress. The prepaid card will be registered through an online platform, facilitating data collection. Furthermore, the dataset allows for monitoring and evaluating the program. Jordan's commitment to digitalization and data utilization underscores the **technological feasibility** of this recommendation.

### ***Economic Feasibility***

Jordan recently expanded its cash transfer allocation from JOD 100 million to JOD 240 million, representing 0.7% of its GDP, with support from the World Bank. Given that such programs are already factored into Jordan's government budget, the recommendation is **economically feasible**.

### ***Legal Feasibility***

The recommendation also holds **legal feasibility**, given that Jordan, as a UN member state, has ratified international treaties and conventions aimed at reducing child labor. These include the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Jordan's enactment of legislative measures showcases its political will and commitment to safeguarding children's rights [46, 47].

**Recommendation 2:** *The Jordanian government should promote free vocational training for parents with children engaged in child labor.*

This strategy aims to amplify household economic opportunities and reduce reliance on income generated by child laborers. Vocational training has demonstrated efficacy in various regions worldwide as a measure to counteract the root causes of child labor. For example, in Bangladesh, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, successful vocational training initiatives have targeted mothers of child laborers, resulting in heightened levels of household income [48]. In Jordan, the Ministry of labor oversees a Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) that imparts training in skilled, semi-skilled, and craft skills to students aged 16 and above. The VTC offers vocational training and apprenticeship programmes [49]. The proposed policy emphasizes expanding its enrollment, particularly to parents of child laborers – with a focus on mothers, offering free training to ensure accessibility and appeal to the crucial target demographic. Therefore, this recommendation concentrates on providing industry-specific skills to enhance the prospects of obtaining employment and securing stable work opportunities within the formal labor market.

The Jordanian government should first pinpoint technical skills that are in high demand in the labor market and subsequently develop bespoke training and educational materials for these parents. The skills offered should encompass a diverse range of vocational abilities to accommodate various interests and aptitudes, while aligning with the current labor market's requirements. This strategy can effectively bridge the existing gap between vocational training and labor market demands, whilst simultaneously offering parents the opportunity to increase their income. Supporting evidence indicates that vocational training significantly equips job seekers with new skills, leading to increased earnings [50]. Hence, by offering cost-free training, parents may be more inclined to participate in the training and further develop their skills. This policy can be executed concurrently with the cash transfer policy, as the financial support bolsters the training's effectiveness and mitigates the financial burden on the parent [49].

To guarantee the targeted reach of this initiative, it's essential to establish criteria for enrolment into vocational training programs, such as stipulating a low household income. Training can utilize existing facilities, which currently encompass 35 institutes dispersed throughout all governorates, with an additional 43 designated training sites available [57]. This approach ensures optimized utilization of existing infrastructure to enhance productivity outcomes and increase household income. Moreover, establishing satellite training centres can be beneficial for reaching remote regions.

The policy's success hinges on collaborative efforts with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses that possess the necessary expertise, resources, and infrastructure to execute the program as planned. Strategic partnerships ought to be formed to maintain affordable training costs and ensure policy sustainability. Further, to promote awareness and secure adequate enrolment of participants, it is vital to engage community leaders in this initiative and utilize various media platforms for advertising. Lastly, these courses and training sessions should ideally be delivered in-person and supplemented with career guidance via digital platforms at the training centres, thereby smoothing the transition from training to employment.

Through this policy, adults can gain the requisite knowledge and skills to secure suitable employment opportunities, subsequently reducing the demand for child labor. This change could, in turn, increase the income available to the household, putting adults in a better position to afford the direct and indirect costs of children's education. Our proposal aims to raise household income to a sufficient level where children are no longer obligated to work to contribute to family survival.

## **PASTEL ANALYSIS**

### ***Political feasibility***

According to the economic Modernization Vision, the government has plans to develop vocational and technical education curriculum, and reinvent specialisations to future professions, which demonstrates the **political will** to strengthen the vocational and technical sector [52].

### ***Administrative Feasibility***

We consider this recommendation **administratively feasible** as it can capitalise on established infrastructure and training centres that are currently in place. By leveraging these existing resources and administrative capacity, the implementation of this recommendation can be carried out smoothly, without requiring significant additional investments or the establishment of new facilities and manpower.

### ***Social Feasibility***

We regard this policy as **socially feasible**, as it provides a platform for adults to acquire new skills and elevate their earning potential, thereby empowering them to adequately cater to the needs of their families and children. Ensuring the availability of guidance throughout the training and job search processes, coupled with recognition of awarded certifications, can foster community support and establish trust in the initiative. Collaboration with community leaders can be particularly beneficial;

their advocacy efforts, combined with their inherent trust within the community, can inspire and encourage community members to actively participate in and take ownership of the training. This approach cultivates trust, ultimately leading to increased enrollment numbers and more successful policy implementation.

### ***Technological Feasibility***

The recommendation is **technologically viable** as it leverages the existing infrastructure.

### ***Economic Feasibility***

Jordan has already different vocational training that can be used to target the areas in which child labor is prevalent. The recommendation is **economically feasible** because the government of Jordan does not need any investment to create a new programme. Instead, the government can use programmes that already exist and on the basis of the required skills, to focus on the selected population. Though there are elements of operational cost included in the set up of satellite centres, the long-term benefits of providing such training outweighs such costs.

### ***Legal Feasibility***

Jordan has demonstrated its commitment to end child labor through the ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the Worst Forms of Child labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Jordanian labor Law No. 8 (1996) prohibits the employment of children under 16 years of age for non-hazardous work, and under 18 years in hazardous occupations. The policy recommendation is in line with the national initiatives and international laws that aims to tackle child labor, which ensures **legal feasibility**.

**Recommendation 3:** *The Jordanian government should provide health care services for child laborers*

Jordan can address child labor from a health perspective, ensuring that children engaged in labor are protected, receive necessary healthcare services, and have the opportunity to lead healthy lives in accordance with the SDG 3 that calls for promotion of well being and healthy lives for all and more specifically SDG 3.8 that aims to achieve a universal health coverage. While the government works towards the eradication of child labor in a country where it is prevalent, it is imperative to concurrently implement policies that aim to prevent injuries, harm, and potential fatalities among children engaged in child labor.

Jordan should improve access to quality healthcare services for all children, including those involved in child labor. Jordan is a country that devotes around 9% of the country's GDP on health care which is high compared to countries with similar economies but there is a lack of attention to primary care [56]. Areas with a high prevalence of child labor should be identified by the Ministry of labor, Central Inspection Directorate [4] and health centres or mobile clinics should be brought directly to these communities to establish and guarantee children in child labor have easy access to healthcare services. The policy should aim to improve shortages of staffing, equipment and medicines in these parts of the country to improve public confidence and accessibility to child laborers. Medical facilities should offer comprehensive care to child laborers. This includes not only preventive care and vaccinations, but also treatments for illnesses or injuries. Crucially, these facilities should address the emotional and mental health issues that often stem from the children's labor experiences, thereby providing a holistic approach to their health and well-being.

Social health protection policies, particularly social assistance programs, are essential in ensuring free or affordable access to early childhood development interventions and healthcare services for children. There should be an emphasis on leveraging existing mechanisms such as the Zakat and National Aid Fund to deliver social health protection tailored specifically for children engaged in child labor. Studies from countries like Guatemala, Pakistan, and Kenya underscore the protective impact of such programs, resulting in reduced child labor rates and associated health issues [55]. To realize this goal, a comprehensive social health protection approach should be established, with a primary emphasis on primary healthcare. Furthermore, the implementation of these policies can be enhanced by supplementary cash transfers to boost access to crucial health services [53].

The Jordanian government should implement comprehensive health education programs targeting child laborers and their families to promote healthy behaviors. Drawing inspiration from countries like Ethiopia, where health extension workers (HEWs) have successfully provided community-based primary care in rural areas with high child labor prevalence [54], Jordan can raise public awareness about the immediate and long-term adverse health effects of child labor. Emphasis should be placed on protecting children's health rights and highlighting the significance of preventive care through early detection and intervention to mitigate potential health risks and complications. Implementing such programs has demonstrated a reduction in child labor incidence and associated injuries.

The government should promote collaborative efforts between the Ministry of labor, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Health to incorporate child labor-related health concerns into healthcare policies and practices. Establish a program that fosters coordination and information-sharing among labor inspectors, healthcare providers, and social services to comprehensively prevent child labor and address associated health issues in those already engaged in labor. By enforcing stringent health and safety standards in workplaces employing children, this initiative will protect their physical and mental well-being effectively [56].

## **PASTEL ANALYSIS**

### ***Political Feasibility***

The Jordanian government is committed to alleviating child labor and promoting the well-being of children [4]. This recommendation is **politically feasible** as it aligns with public health concerns surrounding children's health. It advocates for program change at the highest levels of government highlighting its alignment with national development priorities and the importance of child welfare. It promotes engagement with key stakeholders, including government officials, policymakers, and community leaders, to build consensus and garner political support for the policy.

### ***Administrative Feasibility***

This policy proposal outlines an **administratively feasible** approach to enhance the health of children in child labor in Jordan, considering the country's administrative capacities and potential challenges. Focusing on primary health care ensures that services are easily accessible to children in child labor and their families, reducing barriers and improving healthcare utilization rates. The policy utilizes existing healthcare facilities and resources to promote an adequate workforce and upgrade and equip the facilities to meet the healthcare needs of children in labor minimizing the need for significant infrastructure development.

### ***Social Feasibility***

We consider this policy as **socially feasible** as it promotes the development of culturally sensitive educational materials. Moreover, it includes important stakeholders (employers, parents, local communities, community leaders, religious institutions, and civil society organizations) to raise awareness about child labor-related health issues and the importance of supporting child laborers' health.

### ***Technological Feasibility***

The recommendation is **technologically viable** as it leverages the existing infrastructure.

### ***Economic Feasibility***

While Jordan allocates a substantial portion of its budget to healthcare, any expansion of the existing health infrastructure could prove challenging for numerous economies, Jordan included. Hence, we deem this policy as **moderately feasible** from an economic perspective.

### ***Legal Feasibility***

The policy recommendation aligns well with both national laws and international conventions pertaining to child rights and universal health coverage. These legal frameworks safeguard the rights and well-being of children, thereby ensuring the **legal feasibility** of the proposed policy.

**Recommendation 4:** *The Jordanian Government should incorporate aspects of child labor into its monitoring and evaluation data sets.*

It is crucial to compile a data set that can be employed to monitor and evaluate the initiatives and regulations of the Jordanian government. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a critical component in measuring the success of comprehensive social programs in Jordan that aim to eradicate child labor and enhance children's well-being. Key indicators serve as a vital tool for determining the effectiveness of Jordan's comprehensive social programs. To afford children who are working, or at risk of doing so, access to quality education, school enrollment rates are an essential measure of progress. Increased school attendance rates indicate improved educational opportunities, shield children from hazardous jobs, and pave the way for brighter long-term prospects. Hazardous child labor, as defined by the International Labor Organisation (ILO) in their Convention No. 182 (1999) refers to "work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children" [63]. The number of kids taken out of hazardous employment, the rise in school enrollment rates, the improvement in the welfare of vulnerable families, and the decline in poverty rates could all be considered among these indicators.

The Ministry of Social Development in Jordan can establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to gather relevant data on child labor, health outcomes, gender dynamics, and other pertinent issues. Moreover, it can closely track the progress of programs aimed at eradicating child labor. This can be achieved in collaboration with statisticians and other civil society stakeholders in the country, in order to continually evaluate the impact of interventions on children's health, gender equality, and overall well-being in relation to child labor and its effects. To accomplish this, it might be necessary to conduct focus groups, surveys, and interviews with a wide array of stakeholders, including children, families, community members, and relevant authorities.

The data collected can then be utilized to pinpoint areas for improvement, inform evidence-based policymaking, and adjust existing policies as required. In addition, gender-disaggregated data can be collected to identify potential enhancements in existing policies and aid in the creation of new ones. To gauge the effectiveness of interventions in meeting their objectives, it will be essential to conduct regular impact evaluations. This entails assessing the causal connection between treatments and the observed changes as well as contrasting the actual results with the anticipated results.

To acquire data on the efficacy of particular initiatives, impact evaluations may use a variety of procedures, including randomised controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs, or qualitative approaches.

## PASTEL ANALYSIS

### ***Political Feasibility***

We consider this policy as politically feasible. The Jordanian government has demonstrated a dedication to protecting children's wellbeing and has already taken steps to do so by passing legislation. There is a chance that extensive social programmes will be implemented with political support. In 2011, Jordan adopted a comprehensive policy on child labor, the National Framework to Combat Child labor (NFCL), which aims to tackle the issue throughout the Kingdom through systematic monitoring of child labor and collective action by key stakeholders, mainly the ministries of labor, Education and Social Development [50].

### ***Administrative Feasibility***

We consider this policy to be **administratively feasible**. Implementing an M&E system requires setting up a framework, collecting data, and analyzing that data regularly. While it does require a commitment of resources (including personnel trained in M&E practices, funding for data collection and analysis, and time to review and adjust strategies based on the findings), these aspects typically fall within the administrative capabilities of a government. Moreover, many international organizations, like the International labor Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, provide resources and guidance to governments for setting up and maintaining M&E systems related to child labor. Governments can also collaborate with other stakeholders, such as non-profit organizations and research institutions, to share the responsibility of M&E.

### ***Social Feasibility***

There don't appear to be any clear impediments to the **social feasibility** of the recommendation.

### ***Technological Feasibility***

The Jordanian government has a proven track record of utilizing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for various projects. Thus, there are no apparent challenges with respect to the technological feasibility of this recommendation.

### ***Economic Feasibility***

We deem this policy as economically viable, particularly in light of Jordan's established priorities. The Jordanian government already allocates a considerable portion of its budget towards social development and healthcare, showcasing its dedication to human growth and welfare. Consequently, it is plausible to suggest that resources could be either repurposed or augmented to incorporate a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system specifically tailored for child labor issues.

### ***Legal Feasibility***

*The Jordanian government has a proven track record of utilizing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for various projects. Thus, there are no apparent challenges with respect to the legal feasibility of this recommendation.*

## 4. CONCLUSION

Child labor is a multifaceted global concern affecting millions of children across the globe. It hinders the fulfillment of basic rights such as access to education and healthcare. Several interrelated factors contribute to child labor, including poverty, inadequate access to education, migration patterns, prevailing social norms, and lax labor market regulations. The immediate impact on a child's well-being is severe, with far-reaching consequences influencing their adulthood, their communities, and their countries' economies.

Jordan, home to an estimated 70,000 child laborers, is one of the countries grappling with this significant challenge. Despite initial steps being taken to address the issue, there remains a considerable gap in the actual implementation and enforcement of relevant laws.

This policy paper aims to provide practical recommendations to tackle child labor in Jordan, offering valuable insights that could be applied in other countries facing similar predicaments. We put forth four recommendations centered on education, healthcare, and capacity building to safeguard the overall welfare of children.

Our first and second recommendations pertain to education. Empirical evidence suggests that insufficient access to education is a leading cause of child labor. We recommend the Jordanian government to encourage enrollment and enhance the quality of education through conditional transfers. Additionally, the government should provide complimentary vocational training for parents, thus equipping them with alternative livelihood options and minimizing the dependency on child labor.

Thirdly, it's imperative to ensure that children currently engaged in labor have access to necessary health services. Lastly, it's crucial to fortify the Jordanian Government's capacity to monitor and evaluate the adherence to children's rights.

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