

Poor quality of education turns students into laborers

Officials estimate one in 10 children under 18 in Lebanon work
By Agence France Presse (AFP)

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TRIPOLI: It is early morning and eight-year-old Ibrahim Khodar Arja is already hard at work, his face and hands covered with dirt as he repairs a car at the [mechanics](#) shop where he works six days a week, 10 hours a day. Ibrahim should be at primary school but his job leaves him no time for that.



Like thousands of children across Lebanon he has joined a growing force of child laborers whose fate is as much dictated by their family's dire economic situation as by the country's turbulent politics.

Officials estimate that at least 100,000 children, or one in 10 up to 18 years of age, work in Lebanon, mainly in the agriculture sector or as mechanics as well as in jewelry workshops and sweatshops.

"The 10 to 15 age group is the most affected," Nabil Watfa of [the International Labor Organization](#) (ILO) office in Beirut told **AFP**. "But children as young as eight have also been noted to work.

"These kids, the majority of them boys, work handling chemicals, in garages, in metal-welding shops, carpentry, marble cutting and in farms where they are exposed to pesticides." Most of the child laborers hail from the northern regions of Akkar and Tripoli, where many families live below the poverty line.

Others work in the eastern Bekaa Valley and in the south of the country, where poverty is also endemic and the main industry is agriculture, including tobacco plantations.