

In 2018, Oman made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Sultan of Oman promulgated a new Penal Code that enhanced penalties related to commercial sexual exploitation of children. The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking signed an agreement with the Oman Lawyers Association to allow attorneys to represent victims of human trafficking on a pro bono basis. The Committee also launched and began implementing a new National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking and conducted awareness-raising activities. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Oman engage in child labor, including in fishing and selling items in kiosks. The government lacks a reciprocal referral mechanism between the labor inspectorate and social services.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Oman engage in child labor, including in fishing and selling items in kiosks. (1,2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Oman. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		107.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (3)

Source for all other data: Data were unavailable from ILO's analysis, 2019. (4)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (1)
	Fishing, activities unknown (1,2)
Services	Selling food items in kiosks, including fish† and grilled meat† (1)
	Begging† (5)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.




Limited evidence suggests that children with disabilities may face barriers to accessing education, because some school buses are not wheelchair accessible and there is a lack of resources to provide equal educational services to intellectually disabled students.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Oman has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 46 of the Child Law (9)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 76 of the Labor Law; Article 45 of the Child Law (9,10)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 76 of the Labor Law; Ministry of Manpower Order 217/2016 (10,11)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1–2 and 9 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking; Article 3bis of the Labor Law (10,12)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1–2 and 9 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking (12)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 1–2 and 9 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking; Articles 254–255 and 267–268 of the Penal Code (12,13)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 58 and 74 of the Child Law; Article 43 of the Law on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (9,14)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Article 55 of the Child Law (9)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 55 of the Child Law (9)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 1(f) and 55 of the Child Law (9)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Article 36 of the Child Law (9)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 13 of the Basic Law; Article 36 of the Child Law (9,15)

* No conscription (16)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (16)

In January 2018, a new Penal Code was adopted and entered into force, repealing the previous Penal Code of 1974. (13) The new Penal Code increased penalties for some crimes, including increases in prison time, and added the amount of fines. Changes include increasing prison time from 5 to 10 years for inciting a child to commit prostitution, and from a minimum of 3 months to a minimum of 1 year for earning a living from a third party's engagement in prostitution. (13,17)

III. Enforcement of Laws on Child Labor

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Manpower that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Manpower	Monitors and enforces child labor laws, conducts labor inspections, and shares information with the Royal Oman Police on labor and criminal law violations when penalties are pursued. (6)
Ministry of Social Development	Enforces the Child Law, including by receiving complaints and referring cases to the Royal Oman Police and the Office of Public Prosecutor. (6)
Royal Oman Police	Monitors and enforces the Child Law, including its provisions related to child labor, and refers cases to the Office of Public Prosecutor. (6)
Office of Public Prosecutor	Prosecutes human trafficking and sexual exploitation cases in court with assistance from the Royal Oman Police. (6,18)
Child Protection Committee	Protects children from exploitation, receives complaints and reports of child labor, and investigates reported cases to determine whether children are engaged in prohibited activities or whether working has negative effects on their health or education. (6,19)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Oman took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Manpower that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including penalty assessment authorization.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (16)	Unknown (20)
Number of Labor Inspectors	354 (16)	316 (20)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (21)	No (21)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (16)	Yes (20)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (16)	Yes (20)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	8,890 (16)	Unknown (20)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (16)	Unknown (20)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (16)	0 (20)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (16)	Yes (20)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (16)	Unknown (20)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (21)	Yes (20)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (16)	Yes (20)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (16)	Yes (20)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (22)	No (20)

In 2018, the Ministry of Manpower provided four refresher courses to inspectors, including on international labor standards and dispute resolution. A Ministry official stated that in Muscat governorate alone, the government conducted 3,593 labor inspections. (20)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (16)	Yes (20)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (23)	Yes (24)

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Number of Investigations	0 (8)	0 (20)
Number of Violations Found	0 (8)	0 (20)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (8)	0 (20)
Number of Convictions	0 (8)	0 (20)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (16,22)	Yes (20)

In 2018, the government, in cooperation with UNODC, provided training to approximately 150 government officials. The trainings covered issues such as the mechanisms to implement the Law to Combat Human Trafficking, and techniques to investigate human trafficking cases. (24) The government investigated 11 cases of alleged human trafficking, initiated 5 prosecutions, and convicted 15 individuals. However, none of the officially reported cases involved child victims of trafficking. (25)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the omission of the Ministry of Manpower from the National Committee on Implementing the UN CRC.

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Committee on Implementing the UN CRC	Led by the Ministry of Social Development, oversees the implementation of the UN CRC, including its provisions related to child labor and its worst forms. There are subcommittees in all 11 governorates. (6) Other members include three other state agencies. The Ministry of Manpower is not represented. (6) Research was unable to determine whether the National Committee on Implementing the UN CRC was active during the reporting period.
National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking	Oversees the National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking. Includes the Royal Oman Police and 10 other state agencies. (6) The Committee drafted the National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking, which was approved and adopted in March 2018. (23) In December 2018, the Committee signed an agreement with the Oman Lawyers Association to allow the Association to represent victims of human trafficking on a pro bono basis. (26)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking (2018–2020)†	Aims to raise awareness among migrant workers on their rights and responsibilities and to raise awareness on countering human trafficking through leaflets, posters, websites, and social media. Established a human trafficking task force, including representatives from the Ministry of Manpower, the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Social Development, and other agencies, to follow up on cases of human trafficking. Established specialized human trafficking units in the Court of Appeals in Muscat and in the above-mentioned ministries. Regulates domestic work and allows for inspection of homes upon receipt of complaints from domestic workers; and provides annual training to government agencies and private companies on countering human trafficking. (27) In 2018, the government began implementing the action plan and established the interagency task force. The government also began raising awareness of human trafficking through broadcasting television interviews with police and prosecution officials. (20) In March 2019, the Ministry of Manpower released a video in Arabic and English that clarified the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers. (24) Migrant workers have the right to obtain a labor card, receive monthly wages and overtime rates, and file a complaint if, for example, they do not receive their payments on time. Migrant workers are responsible for respecting the laws and social customs in Oman; they can work only for the employer for whom they are authorized to work and may not leave that employer. (28)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Although the Government of Oman has adopted the National Plan for Combatting Human Trafficking, research found no evidence of a policy to address all forms of child labor, including in farming and fishing.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, which cover the main sectors where child labor has been identified in the country (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Social Security Cash Transfer Program†	Provides assistance to children in low-income families, including educational services. (19) The program continued in 2018 and the Oman Human Rights Commission helped families who had previously faced problems receiving subsidies access services. (20)

† Program is funded by the Government of Oman

In December 2018, the Oman Human Rights Commission declared that 2019 will be the Year of the Child, placing emphasis on training children and teachers on the Child Law so that children are aware of their rights and less vulnerable to exploitation. (20)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Oman (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Collect and publish data on labor inspectorate funding, the number of inspections and those conducted at worksites, and whether targeted inspections were conducted.	2013 – 2018
	Authorize the inspectorate to assess penalties.	2017 – 2018
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor law enforcement and social services.	2014 – 2018
Coordination	Ensure that the National Committee on Implementing the UN CRC is able to carry out its intended mandate and that the Ministry of Manpower participates in the Committee.	2016 – 2018
Government Policies	Develop a national policy to address all forms of child labor.	2013 – 2018
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2018
	Ensure that all children have equal access to education, including the children of migrant workers and children with disabilities.	2011 – 2018

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