

In 2020, Oman made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In December 2020, the Royal Oman Police stood up a dedicated counter-trafficking in persons unit for responding directly to reports of human trafficking and implementing anti-trafficking best practices within the Royal Oman Police. In August 2020, the Ministry of Labor created its own dedicated counter-trafficking in persons unit under its Inspection Department. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a specialized trafficking in persons office in March 2020. Although research is limited, there is evidence that small numbers of children in Oman engage in child labor, including in fishing and selling items in kiosks. Government policies do not address all forms of child labor and the Ministry of Labor is not represented on the National Committee on Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or the National Child Protection Committee.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that small numbers of children in Oman engage in child labor, including in fishing and selling items in kiosks. (1-3) The law limits children's work to a family business. (4) Table I 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 I. 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 (%)		100.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (5)

Source for all other data: Data were unavailable from ILO's analysis, 2021. (6)

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 (1,3)
	Fishing, activities unknown (1-3)
Services	Selling food items in kiosks, including fish† and grilled meat† (1)

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

On March 15, 2020, the Omani Government suspended in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Education provided virtual learning to students while classroom learning was suspended. (3) The government built the capacity of more than 200 social workers and psychiatrists to provide social and psychological support to children during the pandemic, and disseminated virus-prevention awareness material, including videos in sign language. (7) The 2020–2021 school year began in November 2020 and the government continued to provide distance learning options for families and students who did not wish to return to the classroom. (3)




MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Limited evidence suggests that children with disabilities may face barriers to accessing education because some school buses are not wheelchair accessible. In addition, the government has not allocated resources to enable relevant ministries and schools to provide equal educational services to intellectually disabled students. (8,9) However, the Ministry of Education continues to support schools and education programs for intellectually disabled students. These services accommodate students with special needs such as motor, sight, hearing, and mental disabilities. (7) Since 2005, the Ministry of Education has implemented a program to integrate students with special needs into primary schools. (7)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

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	15	Article 75 of the Labor Law (10)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 76 of the Labor Law; Article 45 of the Child Law (10,11)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 76 of the Labor Law; Ministry of Manpower Order 217/2016 (10,12)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1–2 and 9 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking; Article 3 bis of the Labor Law (10,13)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1–2 and 9 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking (13)
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 (13,14)
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 (11,15)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Article 55 of the Child Law (11)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 55 of the Child Law (11)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 1(f) and 55 of the Child Law (11)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 36 of the Child Law (11,16)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 13 of the Basic Law; Article 36 of the Child Law (11,17)

* No conscription (18)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (18)

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 enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	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. (19) In 2020, the government merged the Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Civil Service, National Training Fund, and National Center for Employment to create the new MOL. (3) In addition, in August 2020, MOL created a dedicated counter-trafficking in persons unit under its Inspection Department. (3,7)
Ministry of Social Development (MOSD)	Enforces the Child Law, including by receiving complaints and referring cases to the Royal Oman Police and the Office of the Public Prosecutor. (19)
Royal Oman Police	Monitor and enforce the Child Law, including its provisions related to child labor; and refer cases to the Office of the Public Prosecutor. (19) In December 2020, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) stood up a dedicated counter-trafficking in persons unit for responding directly to reports of human trafficking and implementing anti-trafficking best practices within the ROP. (7)
Office of the Public Prosecutor	Prosecutes human trafficking and sexual exploitation cases in court with assistance from the Royal Oman Police. (19,20)
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. (19,21)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Oman took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including labor inspector refresher courses.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (22)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (22)	303 (7)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (10,11,23)	Yes (10,11,23)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (22)	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown (22)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (22)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	5,629 (4)	Unknown (3)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (22)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (22)	0 (3)
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 (22)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (22)	Unknown (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (22)	Yes (22)

MOL conducts yearly inspections of all private institutions and re-inspections of workplaces found to be in violation of labor laws. Labor inspections are also conducted following a complaint. (24) If a violation is found, the institution is given a set period of time to address the problem. If an institution fails to address the violation, the case may be referred to the judiciary where penalties can be assessed. (24) In 2020, MOL responded to

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

22,580 labor complaints and financial disputes. Labor authorities settled 9,057 cases and referred 7,602 cases to judicial authorities for adjudication, with 5,921 cases still pending. (7) MOL did not find any child labor violations in responding to these complaints. (7) Moreover, a MOL official stated in early 2020 that he had not reviewed an inspection report indicating child labor in over a decade of service. (3)

The government did not provide information on labor inspectorate funding, the exact number of labor inspections conducted or whether targeted inspections were conducted for inclusion in this report, but officials reported that the number of labor inspections surpassed 8,000. (7)

MOL can refer cases of child labor to the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) if the child is under the minimum age for work. MOL and MOSD can also coordinate with the Royal Oman Police to shelter child victims and refer suspected violators for criminal investigation. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, 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	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (22)	Yes (3)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (22)	Unknown (3)
Number of Investigations	0 (22)	0 (3)
Number of Violations Found	0 (22)	0 (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (22)	0 (3)
Number of Convictions	0 (22)	0 (3)
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 (22)	Yes (3)

In March 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a specialized trafficking in persons office. (3)

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 MOL from the National Child Protection Committee.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Child Protection Committee	Consists of representatives from the Ministries of Social Development, Health, and Education and the Royal Oman Police. Oversees regional committees, which are responsible for coordinating intervention with children who are victims of abuse, neglect, or other related issues, and works with UNICEF on several projects related to child intervention. (3) MOL is not represented. (3) In the second quarter of 2020, regional child protection committees handled 179 cases of child abuse in Oman and placed victimized children in the MOSD-run protective services shelter in Muscat. (7)
National Committee on Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	Led by the MOSD Under Secretary and consists of representatives from government and private organizations concerned with children's rights. Submits proposals to achieve the Convention's principles and follows up on the UN body's comments and recommendations. (7) MOL is not represented. (7) In 2020, the National Committee on Implementing the UN CRC participated in the first Gulf Cooperation Council conference on autism, organized workshops on child protection, and provided health, educational, and social services to children. (7)
National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking	Oversees the National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking. Includes the Royal Oman Police and 12 other state agencies, 2 more than the previous reporting period. (3,19) Active in 2020. (3)

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 coverage of all forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking (2018–2020)	Aimed 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 former Ministry of Manpower (consolidated along with other ministries into MOL in 2020), ROP, MOSD, and other agencies, to follow up on cases of human trafficking. (3,25) Established specialized human trafficking units in the Court of Appeals in Muscat and in the above-mentioned ministries. Regulated domestic work and allowed for inspection of homes upon receipt of complaints from domestic workers. (25) Provided annual training to government agencies and private companies on countering human trafficking. (25) In 2020, the Government of Oman funded training on human trafficking, identified and provided protective services to trafficking victims, and hosted a forum on Oman's efforts to combat human trafficking with labor-sending countries. (7)

Although the Government of Oman has adopted the National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking, it does not have a comprehensive policy to address all forms of child labor, including in farming and fishing.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, which cover the main sectors in which 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. (21) Active in 2020. (3)

† Program is funded by the Government of Oman

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 labor inspectors, training, and number of labor inspections conducted.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that refresher courses are provided for criminal investigators.	2019 – 2020
Coordination	Ensure that the Ministry of Labor participates in the National Child Protection Committee and the National Committee on Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	2016 – 2020
Government Policies	Develop a national policy to address all forms of child labor that occur within Oman, including in farming and fishing.	2013 – 2020
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2020
	Ensure that all children have equal access to education, including children with disabilities.	2011 – 2020

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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