# Bahrain

# Minimal Advancement

In 2013, Bahrain made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government issued an updated list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children. Although the problem does not appear to be widespread, children are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation. Minors working in family enterprises are exempt from some provisions of the Labor Law. In addition, the Government has not conducted research to determine the extent and nature of the worst forms of child labor in the country. Furthermore, the Government has no policies or coordinating mechanisms to address all worst forms of child labor, nor does it have programs to address child labor in domestic service.

# Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

Children in Bahrain are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, although there is no evidence to suggest that this problem is widespread.([1](#_ENREF_1)) Data on key indicators on children’s work and education are not available from the sources used in this report.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Working children, ages 5 to 14:** | Unavailable |
| **School attendance, ages 5 to 14 (%):** | Unavailable |
| **Children combining work and school, ages 7 to 14 (%):** | Unavailable |
| **Primary completion rate (%):** | Unavailable |

*Source for primary completion rate: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.*([2](#_ENREF_2))

*Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis, 2014.*([3](#_ENREF_3))

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** |
| Services | Street begging\* ([4](#_ENREF_4)) |
| Domestic service\* ([5](#_ENREF_5)) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Commercial sexual exploitation\* ([1](#_ENREF_1)) |

\* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182

There is no evidence that the Government has conducted or participated in research to determine the extent to which children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor.([1](#_ENREF_1))

# Legal Framework on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Bahrain 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 has established relevant laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Standard** | **Yes/No** | **Age** | **Related Legislation** |
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 15 | Article 50 of the Labor Law; Article 24 of Law No. 36 of 2012, Promulgation of the Labor Law in the Private Sector ([6](#_ENREF_6), [7](#_ENREF_7)) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Article 51 of the Labor Law; Article 27 of Law No. 36 of 2012, Promulgation of the Labor Law in the Private Sector ([6](#_ENREF_6), [7](#_ENREF_7)) |
| List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children | Yes |  | Ministerial Order No. 23 of 2013 ([8](#_ENREF_8)) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes |  | Article 13 of the Constitution ([9](#_ENREF_9)) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes |  | Article 1 of the Law to Combat Trafficking in Persons; Law ([10](#_ENREF_10), [11](#_ENREF_11)) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes |  | Articles 324–325 of the Penal Code; Article 39 of Law No. 37 of 2012 Promulgating the Child Law ([12-14](#_ENREF_12)) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes |  | Article 59 of Law No. 37 of 2012 Promulgating the Child Law ([14](#_ENREF_14)) |
| Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment | N/A\* |  | ([15](#_ENREF_15)) |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service | Yes | 18 | Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict ([1](#_ENREF_1), [15](#_ENREF_15)) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 15 | Education Act No. 27 ([4](#_ENREF_4)) |
| Free Public Education | Yes |  | Article 7 of the Constitution ([9](#_ENREF_9)) |

\* No conscription or no standing military.

In 2013, the Government issued an updated list of hazardous occupations that are prohibited to children.([8](#_ENREF_8))

Minors working in enterprises that employ only family members are exempt from the Labor Law, leaving them vulnerable to hazardous work.([7](#_ENREF_7)) The Penal Code states that any person who relies on prostitution or immorality for his or her livelihood will be punished with imprisonment.([12](#_ENREF_12), [13](#_ENREF_13)) This prohibition may enable the prosecution of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

The Government has issued Ministerial Orders requiring employers to maintain employment contracts for any domestic workers.([16](#_ENREF_16), [17](#_ENREF_17)) The 2012 private-sector labor law extended some provisions, such as annual leave, to domestic workers.([6](#_ENREF_6), [7](#_ENREF_7), [18](#_ENREF_18), [19](#_ENREF_19))

# Enforcement of Laws on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organization/Agency** | **Role** |
| Ministry of Labor (MOL) | Enforce child labor laws along with Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA). Share information with LMRA on child labor cases, including through systems for referring cases to the judiciary when warranted.([1](#_ENREF_1)) 24 MOL labor inspectors investigate labor law violations, including violations of child labor laws.([1](#_ENREF_1)) |
| LMRA | Enforce child labor laws with the MOL. LMRA inspectors may also perform labor inspections, particularly concerning foreigners’ work permits and working situations.([20](#_ENREF_20), [21](#_ENREF_21)) |
| Ministry of the Interior | Enforce criminal laws that prohibit the worst forms of child labor in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD), the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, and the Office of the Public Prosecutor, as needed. Through the Criminal Investigation Directorate, oversee a 12-person unit that investigates potential cases of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.([1](#_ENREF_1)) |

Law enforcement agencies in Bahrain took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

***Labor Law Enforcement***

Ministry of Labor inspectors received some training from the ILO on international standards on child labor.([1](#_ENREF_1)) Research did not reveal information on funding levels of any agencies responsible for labor law enforcement, number of inspections, and number of child labor law violations found or citations issued.

***Criminal Law Enforcement***

The Ministry of the Interior’s Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) investigated cases of trafficking of children for commercial sexual exploitation. The Office of the Public Prosecutor investigated cases of trafficking referred from CID and LMRA, though it is not clear whether any of those cases involved children.([1](#_ENREF_1)) No information on the number of cases investigated, violations found, citations issued, or prosecutions pursued was found.

# Coordination of Government Efforts on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Although the Government has established the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking, research found no evidence of coordinating mechanisms to combat other forms of child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

**Table 6.** **Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Coordinating Body** | **Role & Description** |
| National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking | Coordinate trafficking policies and organize educational and outreach campaigns to raise awareness on trafficking in persons.([22](#_ENREF_22), [23](#_ENREF_23)) |

The National Committee on Childhood protects children’s rights and promotes the educational, social, cultural, and psychological development of children.([4](#_ENREF_4), [24](#_ENREF_24)) In 2013, the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking finalized its work plan for 2013–2014.([25](#_ENREF_25), [26](#_ENREF_26))

# Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Research found no evidence of any policies to address child labor, including its worst forms.

# Social Programs to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2013, the Government of Bahrain funded programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

**Table 7. Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Description** |
| Dar al Aman Shelter\*‡ | NGO-run shelter provides legal, medical, and psychological services for victims (including children) of trafficking, labor exploitation, and commercial sexual exploitation.([11](#_ENREF_11), [13](#_ENREF_13)) |
| Child Protection Center\*‡ | Government center that provides treatment and counseling to child victims of abuse, including economic exploitation.([4](#_ENREF_4), [27](#_ENREF_27)) |
| Social Welfare Dignity Home\*‡ | Government program that provides services to homeless persons and beggars, including children.([4](#_ENREF_4)) |
| Toll-Free Hotline\*‡ | MOSD hotline that receives calls on reported cases of child abuse and child labor.([1](#_ENREF_1), [28](#_ENREF_28)) |

\* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Bahrain.

The MOSD’s hotline for reporting suspected cases of child labor has primarily been used to report suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse of children.([23](#_ENREF_23), [28](#_ENREF_28)) It is unknown how many complaints were received, or how many were related to child labor. Despite the programs listed in Table 7, research found no evidence of programs specifically aimed at protecting children engaged in domestic service.

# Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Bahrain (Table 8).

**Table 8. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including Its Worst Forms**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Suggested Action** | **Year(s) Suggested** |
| Laws | Ensure there are protections against hazardous work for children in family businesses. | 2012 – 2013 |
| Ensure that child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are not prosecuted under the Penal Code. | 2010 – 2013 |
| Enforcement | Make data on child labor law enforcement publicly available. | 2009 – 2013 |
| Coordination | Establish a mechanism to coordinate government efforts to combat child labor. | 2009 – 2013 |
| Government Policies | Develop a national plan of action to address the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and domestic service. | 2009 – 2013 |
| Social Programs | Assess the impact that existing programs may have on child labor. | 2013 |
| Gather the number of complaints made to the MOSD hotline and disaggregate the number of complaints to discern how many of them relate to child labor. | 2013 |
| Develop programs to address the issue of children working in domestic service. | 2010 – 2013 |
| Conduct research to determine the scope of children’s involvement in the worst forms of child labor in Bahrain. | 2010 – 2013 |

1. U.S. Embassy- Manama. *reporting, January 20, 2014*.

2. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary. Total*. [accessed February 10, 2014]; <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Pages/default.aspx?SPSLanguage=EN>. Data provided is the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary school. This measure is a proxy measure for primary completion. For more information, please see the “Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section of this report.

3. UCW. *Analysis of Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Statistics from National Household or Child Labor Surveys*. 2014. Analysis received February 13, 2014. Reliable statistical data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics on children’s work in general are reported in this chart, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the “Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section of this report.

4. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. *Periodic Reports of States Parties due in 1999: Bahrain*. Prepared by Government of Bahrain, Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. March 25, 2010. <http://tb.ohchr.org/default.aspx>.

5. U.S. Department of State. "Bahrain," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2013*. Washington, DC; February 27, 2014; <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>.

6. Government of Bahrain. *Labour Law for the Private Sector, as amended*, No. 23, enacted June 16, 1976. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.home?p_lang=en>.

7. Government of Bahrain. *The Promulgation of The Labour Law in the Private Sector*, No. 36, enacted August 2, 2012. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/91026/105342/F265276925/BHR91026%20Eng.pdf>.

8. ILO NATLEX National Labor Law Database. *Ministerial Order No. 23 of 2013 determining the cases, circumstances and any other conditions, governing the employment of minors, and determining the occupations, industries and dangerous and hazardous works in which minors may not be employed or which may be harmful to their health, safety or ethical behavior in accordance with the various age stages.* ; accessed April 4, 2014; <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.home>.

9. Government of Bahrain. *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain*, enacted 2002. <http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ba00000_.html>.

10. Government of Bahrain. *Fighting and Combating Trafficking in Persons*, enacted [N.D.]. [source on file].

11. U.S. Department of State. "Bahrain," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2012*. Washington, D.C.; June 24, 2012; <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/192594.pdf>.

12. Government of Bahrain. *Penal Code and its Amendments*, enacted 1976. <http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default.asp?action=article&id=939>.

13. U.S. Embassy- Manama official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. March 30, 2011.

14. Government of Bahrain *Promulgating the Child Law*, No. 37 of 2012, enacted August 29, 2012. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_country=BHR&p_classification=04&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTRY>.

15. Child Soldiers International. *Louder than Words: An Agenda for Action to End State Use of Child Soldiers*. London; 2012. <http://www.child-soldiers.org/global_report_reader.php?id=562>.

16. ILO NATLEX National Labor Law Database. *Order No. 21 of 1994 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to specify the conditions and procedures to be observed in contracts concluded by employers with intermediaries for the procurement of non-Bahraini labour from abroad*; accessed March 7, 2014; <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_isn=40272>.

17. ILO NATLEX National Labor Law Database. *Ministerial Order No. 8 of 2005 with respect to a Model form of employment contract for domestic help and similar persons*; accessed March 7, 2014; <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_isn=72743>.

18. Human Rights Watch. "Bahrain," in *World Report 2013*; January 31, 2013; <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013>.

19. U.S. Department of State. "Bahrain," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2012*. Washington, DC; April 19, 2013; <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>.

20. U.S. Embassy- Manama. *reporting, February 1, 2010*.

21. U.S. Embassy- Manama. *reporting, February 22, 2012*.

22. U.S. Embassy- Manama. *reporting, March 3, 2010*.

23. U.S. Embassy- Manama official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. March 6, 2014.

24. Ministry of Social Development, National Commision for Childhood. *National Commission for Childhood*, Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of Social Development, [online] [cited April 4, 2014]; <http://www.social.gov.bh/node/1951>.

25. Bahrain News Agency. "National Committee-on-Combating-Human-Trafficking finalizes its work plan for both years 2013-2014." bna.bh [online] August 21, 2013 [cited 2014]; <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/576136>.

26. National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons. *The plan of the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons*. Manama, Government of Bahrain; 2014.

27. Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of Social Development. *Child Protection Centre*, Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of Social Development, [online] June 26, 2013 [cited April 4, 2014]; <http://www.social.gov.bh/node/348>.

28. U.S. Embassy- Manama. *reporting, February 20, 2013*.