

In 2015, Bahrain made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government launched a multilingual hotline, which the public can use to report cases of human trafficking and abuse of migrant workers. Although the problem does not appear to be widespread, children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. The Government has not conducted research to determine the nature and extent of the worst forms of child labor in the country. Furthermore, the Government has not published information on its law enforcement efforts or established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts among government agencies and other stakeholders to address child labor, including its worst forms.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although the problem does not appear to be widespread, children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, in Bahrain.(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

Children	Age	Percent
Working (%)	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(2)

Data were unavailable from Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis, 2015.(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	Selling products on the street* (1)
	Domestic work* (1)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation* (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 of Bahrain has conducted or participated in research to determine the extent to which children are engaged in child labor, including its worst forms.(4)

In 2015, there were cases of children who had traveled to Bahrain with falsified documents to work as domestic workers.(1)

In Bahrain, citizenship is derived from the father. As a result, children of Bahraini mothers and non-Bahraini fathers may be stateless.(5) Stateless children lack legal documents, such as birth certificates, which prevents them from enrolling in school and having access to education.(7-9)




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II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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 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 24 of the Labor Law (10)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 27 of the Labor Law (10)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Articles 1 and 2 of Ministerial Order No. 23 of 2013 (11)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (12)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (12)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons; Article 39 of the Child Law (12, 13)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 59 and 68 of the Child Law; Article 30 of the Law on Hallucinogenic Substances and Drugs (13, 14)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 24 of the Defense Force Act (15)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 1 of the Education Act (16)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 7 of the Education Act (16)

* No conscription (15)

The minimum age protection in the Labor Law does not apply to children in certain sectors, such as domestic work.(10) However, some Government policies help prevent child labor in domestic work. For example, visa policies require that all individuals seeking to migrate to Bahrain for work be at least age 18. Similarly, children already in Bahrain as dependents of migrants cannot obtain work visas.(17)

Article 236 of the Penal Code penalizes commercial sexual exploitation. Because Article 32 of the Penal Code establishes the criminal responsibility age at 15, children ages 15 and older who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation may be liable as violating Article 236.(18, 19) However, it is standard practice in Bahrain in those situations for the children to be placed in a rehabilitation center and not be prosecuted.(17) Additionally, Articles 1.26 and 1.27 of Ministerial Order No. 23 of 2013 prohibit the employment of minors in bars and nightclubs, which are sectors particularly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.(11) This reduces children's vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation and the likelihood of prosecution.

III. 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 and Social Development	Enforce child labor laws, along with the Labor Market Regulatory Authority. Inspectors often take the lead role in initial mediation to resolve violations of the Labor Law.(1) Violations that are not resolved through mediation are referred to the Public Prosecutor's Office. Maintain a hotline to receive criminal complaints of child labor, including its worst forms.(1)
Labor Market Regulatory Authority	Issue work visas to ensure that individuals coming to Bahrain as migrant workers are at least age 18.(4) Enforce the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons.(1) In 2015, launched a multilingual hotline to assist migrant workers.(20)
Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior	Enforce criminal laws that prohibit the worst forms of child labor in coordination with the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs and Endowments, and the Public Prosecutor's Office, as needed. Oversee the 12-person Criminal Investigations Directorate that investigates potential cases of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(21) Refer any identified child victims of human trafficking or illicit activities to the Center for Child Protection.(4) Maintain a hotline to receive criminal complaints of child trafficking.(22)
Public Prosecutor's Office	Prosecute all crimes related to child labor and human trafficking.(23)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Bahrain took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	33 (4)	Unknown (1)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections	11,000 (4)	Unknown (1)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	Unknown
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (4)	Unknown (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	Unknown (1)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	N/A	Unknown (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (25)	Yes (25)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown

The Ministry of Labor and Social Development maintains a hotline to receive complaints on cases of child labor and child abuse. The hotline receives about 250 calls per year; however, it is not known how many of them were related to child labor.(1)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Bahrain took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	0 (22)	Unknown (1)
Number of Violations Found	0 (22)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	N/A	Unknown (1)
Number of Convictions	N/A	Unknown (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (4)

IV. 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 mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including all its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Committee on Combating Trafficking in Persons	Coordinate policies and laws to combat human trafficking and organize educational and outreach campaigns to raise awareness on trafficking in persons.(26) Led by the Labor Market Regulatory Authority, other members include representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs and Endowments, the Public Prosecutor, the Ministry of Information Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the <i>Shura</i> Council and the Council of Representatives' Affairs, and from NGOs.(1)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Bahrain has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2014–2015)	Supported the implementation of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons.(22)

Although the Government of Bahrain has adopted the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, research found no evidence of a policy to combat other worst forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Bahrain funded programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Child Protection Center†	Government center that provides treatment and counseling to child victims of abuse, including sexual exploitation.(27, 28) Receives referrals of child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation from the Ministry of the Interior.(4)
Social Welfare Dignity Home†	Government program that provided services to homeless persons and beggars, including children.(27) Closed in December 2015.(1)

† Program was funded by the Government of Bahrain.

The Government opened the Migrant Worker Service Center and Shelter for adult victims of human trafficking, and transferred trafficking victims from the *Dar al Aman* Center for Domestic Abuse to the new shelter.(29)

The National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking accepted submissions for a national awareness competition focusing on the fair treatment of domestic workers.(20) Although the Government has implemented programs to assist victims of human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and begging, research found no evidence of programs specifically aimed at protecting children engaged in domestic work.

VII. 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 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's minimum age provisions do not exclude children in certain sectors, including in domestic work.	2014 – 2015
	Ensure that the laws do not allow the prosecution of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.	2010 – 2015
Enforcement	Collect and make publicly available data on the labor inspectorate funding; the number of labor inspectors; the training system; the number of inspections and whether they were conducted at worksites or via desk review only; the number of child labor violations and penalties imposed and collected; whether routine, targeted, and unannounced inspections were conducted; and whether there is a reciprocal referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.	2009 – 2015
	Collect and make publicly available data on the training system for criminal investigators and the number of investigations, violations, prosecutions, and convictions.	2013 – 2015
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor, including all its worst forms, such as commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2015
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2015
Social Programs	Conduct a comprehensive study of children's activities to determine the extent to which children are engaged in or at risk for involvement in child labor, including the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2015
	Ensure universal access to education, particularly for stateless children.	2010 – 2015
	Develop programs to address the issue of child domestic work.	2014 – 2015

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