

In 2017, Bahrain made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate child labor. The Labor Market Regulatory Authority developed a handbook on the National Referral System for Victims of Trafficking in Persons and opened a shelter for victims. It also conducted training on human trafficking issues for all police officers. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Bahrain engage in child labor in domestic work and selling items on the street. The government has not conducted research to determine the nature and extent of child labor in the country. The law does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation of children.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Bahrain engage in child labor in domestic work and selling items on the street. (1; 2) Data on key indicators on children's work and education are not available from the sources used in this report (Table 1).

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		99.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (3)

Source for all other data: Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2018. (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
Services	Selling products on the street (1) Domestic work (1; 2)

The government has not conducted or participated in research to determine the extent to which children are engaged in child labor, including its worst forms. (5; 6)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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	✓

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (cont)

Convention	Ratification
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Bahrain’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 24 of the Labor Law (7)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 27 of the Labor Law (7)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1–2 of Ministerial Order No. 23 of 2013 (8)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (9)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 1 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons; Articles 39 and 44 of the Child Law; Articles 324–325 of the Penal Code (9; 10; 11)
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 (10; 12)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 24 of the Defense Force Act (13)
Non-state	Yes	18	Article 59 of the Child Law; Article 113 of the Penal Code (10; 11)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 1 of the Education Act (14)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 7 of the Education Act (14)

* No conscription (13)

The minimum age protection in the Labor Law does not apply to children in certain sectors, such as domestic work. (7)

The law does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation because offering and using children for prostitution and offering, procuring, and using children for production of pornography and pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. (10; 11)

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 operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development 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 and Social Development	Enforce child labor laws, along with the Labor Market Regulatory Authority. Take the lead in initial mediation to resolve violations of the Labor Law. (6) Refer violations that are not resolved through mediation to the Public Prosecutor’s Office. Maintain a hotline to receive criminal complaints of child labor, including its worst forms. (6)
Labor Market Regulatory Authority	Issue work visas to ensure that individuals coming to Bahrain as migrant workers are at least age 18. Enforce the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons. (6) Maintain a hotline to assist migrant workers. (6)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)

Organization/Agency	Role
Police Department of the Ministry of Interior	Enforce criminal laws that prohibit the worst forms of child labor. Oversee the 12-person Criminal Investigations Directorate that investigates potential cases of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (6) Refer any identified child victims of human trafficking or illicit activities to the Center for Child Protection. Maintain a hotline to receive criminal complaints of child trafficking. (6)
Public Prosecutor's Office	Prosecute crimes related to child labor and human trafficking. (6)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Bahrain took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown* (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	33 (2)	33 (6)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (15)	Yes (15)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (6)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	8,212 [†] (2)	Unknown
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	Unknown* (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (2)	0 (6)
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 (2)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (2)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (2)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (2; 16)	Yes (6; 16)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (6)

* The government does not publish this information.

[†] Data are from January 1, 2016, to October 30, 2016. (2)

In 2017, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development employed 33 labor inspectors. The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Bahrain's workforce, which includes approximately 831,600 workers. (17) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Bahrain would employ roughly 55 labor inspectors. (18; 19)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, 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	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown* (6)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	Yes (6)

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Number of Investigations	1 (2)	0 (6)
Number of Violations Found	0 (2)	0 (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (2)	0 (6)
Number of Convictions	N/A	0 (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (6)

* The government does not publish this information.

In 2017, the Labor Market Regulatory Authority, in cooperation with UN agencies, conducted training for all police officers on human trafficking. (6)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
Child Protection Center	Coordinate the efforts of five government ministries to address cases of child abuse, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Led by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. (2) In 2017, members of the Center met weekly. (6)
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. (20) Led by the Labor Market Regulatory Authority and comprising representatives from eight state entities and NGOs. (1) In 2017, the Labor Market Regulatory Authority developed a handbook on the National Referral System for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, which highlights the roles and responsibilities of government agencies and NGOs in combating human trafficking. (21)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has established policies to address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor, which cover the main sectors in which child labor has been identified in the country (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Child Protection Center†	Provide services, including educational and psychological services and, in extreme cases, placement in foster care, for children who have been subjected to abuse and negligence, including child laborers. (22; 23) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken under this program during the reporting period.
Expat Protection Center*†	Labor Market Regulatory Authority's shelter that provides services to the victims of human trafficking. (24) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken under this program during the reporting period.

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Bahrain.

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 Bahrain (Table 10).

Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

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 – 2017
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit and have criminal penalties for all aspects of commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2016 – 2017

Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish data on Labor Inspectorate funding and the number of inspections conducted, including at worksites.	2009 – 2017
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO technical advice.	2017
	Publish data on initial training for criminal investigators.	2013 – 2017
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor.	2009 – 2017
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2009 – 2017
	Implement activities under the programs of the Child Protection Center and the Expat Protection Center.	2017

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