

Oman

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

The ILO estimated that less than one percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Oman were working in 2000.³⁰³⁰ Child labor is not known to exist in any formal industry, but children are known to work in family businesses, particularly in the agricultural and fisheries sectors.³⁰³¹

Education is free but not compulsory for all children ages 6 to 18 years.³⁰³² A new educational system introduced in the Muscat Governorate makes education compulsory through grade 10. Due to budgetary constraints, however, this system will gradually be adopted nationwide over the next 10 to 15 years.³⁰³³ In order to achieve the goal of education for all, the government provides free transportation to and from school.³⁰³⁴ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 82.9 percent (82.2 percent for girls and 83.7 percent for boys). The net enrollment rate for that year was 74.5 percent (74.9 percent for girls and 74.1 percent for boys).³⁰³⁵ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Oman.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Oman Labor Law of 2003 sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years. A minor is defined as anyone age 15 to 18 years.³⁰³⁶ The employment of minors is permitted between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., and minors are prohibited from working overtime.³⁰³⁷ In addition, working children cannot be compelled to stay at the workplace beyond their specified working hours, with a maximum of 6 hours per day mandated by law. A workplace employing minors is required to post the following items for display: a copy of the regulations pertaining to non-adult workers; a schedule of work hours, periods of rest, and

³⁰³⁰ A 2000 labor force survey found that 0.1 percent Omani children ages 10 to 14 years old were economically active. See LABORSTAT, *Oman: 1A-Total and economically active population by age group (Thousands)*, Geneva, [Database] 2004 [cited September 9, 2004]; available from <http://laborsta.ilo.org>.

³⁰³¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Oman*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27935.htm>.

³⁰³² UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Reports- Oman*, prepared by Ministry of Education Planification and Education Information, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, 1999, Part II.1; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/oman/contents.html>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Oman*, Section 5.

³⁰³³ U.S. Embassy- Muscat official, email communication to USDOL official, March 1, 2004. Prior to hiring a young person, employers typically require documentation that indicate a child has completed basic education through grade 10. See U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *unclassified telegram no. 1449*, August 23, 2004.

³⁰³⁴ UNESCO, *EFA Country Report: Oman*, Section II, 3.2.1.

³⁰³⁵ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

³⁰³⁶ Royal Decree 35/2003, *Royal Decree no. 35/2003: Oman Labour Law*, (May 3, 2003), Part II, Employing Minors. According to the Ministry of Manpower, regulations stipulate children under 18 should not work in hazardous occupations. See U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *unclassified telegram no. 1449*.

³⁰³⁷ *Oman Labour Law*, Part II, Employing Minors.

weekly holidays; and a list of minors employed.³⁰³⁸ The Ministry of Manpower is responsible for enforcing child labor laws in the formal sector.³⁰³⁹ While restrictions on youth employment are generally followed, enforcement often does not extend to some small family enterprises, particularly in the agricultural and fisheries sectors. The Ministry of Social Development employs social workers responsible for monitoring the informal, family-based economy for signs of exploitive child labor. The government has not reported finding any such abuse.³⁰⁴⁰

Bonded child labor is prohibited by law and it is not recognized as a problem.³⁰⁴¹ The Penal Code assigns a penalty of at least 5 years imprisonment for individuals found guilty of enticing a minor into an act of prostitution.³⁰⁴²

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Oman participated in a UNICEF sponsored conference in June 2004 that emphasized child protection and the reduction of child illiteracy and abuse. Participants included members of the Consultative and State Councils, members of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Royal Oman Police, and local NGOs.³⁰⁴³

The Government of Oman, through the Ministry of Education, is working to increase net enrollment among children and improve the education curriculum. The Basic Education Program provides support for the development and implementation of an educational management database for policy planning; curriculum reform in math, science, and life skills for grades 1 through 10. The initiative will provide training to support the national education reform process and monitor learning achievements of students in grades 7 through 10.³⁰⁴⁴ As of October 2004, 352 public schools in Oman were implementing the Basic Education program.³⁰⁴⁵

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138		
Ratified Convention 182	6/11/2001	✓
ILO-IPEC Member		
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

³⁰³⁸ Ibid.

³⁰³⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Oman*, Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *unclassified telegram no. 1449*.

³⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁰⁴² Government of Oman, *Article 220 of the Penal Code: Child Prostitution*, Interpol: Legislation of Interpol member states on sexual offences against children, [cited May 17, 2004]; available from <http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLaws/csaOman.asp>.

³⁰⁴³ UNICEF is partnering with the Ministry of Social Development to establish an educational management database in which data on school enrollment and attendance is disaggregated. See U.S. Embassy- Muscat, *unclassified telegram no. 1449*.

³⁰⁴⁴ UN, *Youth at the United Nations: Country Profiles on the Situation of Youth- Oman*, UN, [online] 2000 [cited May 17, 2004]; available from <http://esa.un.org/socdev/unyin/countrya.asp?countrycode=om>.

³⁰⁴⁵ Ministry of National Economy, *Statistical Yearbook, October 2004*; available from <http://www.moneoman.gov.om/123/education/8-19.htm> There are a total of 1,022 public schools. An additional 40 schools will be added to the program each year. See U.S. Embassy- Muscat official, email communication, March 1, 2004.