

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

In conjunction with UNESCO, the Government of Oman participated in the Education For All 2000 Assessment.³²⁸² Through its Basic Education Initiative, the Ministry of Education is also working to increase net enrollment among children and improve the education curriculum through 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; training to support the national education reform process; and monitoring learning achievements of students in grades 7 through 10.³²⁸³ As of the 2003–2004 academic year, 288 of the 1,020 public schools in Oman are implementing the Basic Education program, with 40 schools added each year. Of the 288, 152 have completed Phase I (grades 1–4), 107 have completed Phase II (grades 5–10), and 29 have completed both phases.³²⁸⁴

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, the ILO estimated that less than one percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Oman were working.³²⁸⁵ The Sultanate of Oman prohibits children under the age of 15 from working and child labor is not known to exist in any formal industry.³²⁸⁶

Education is free but not compulsory for all children ages 6 to 18.³²⁸⁷ 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.³²⁸⁸ In order to achieve the goal of education for all, the government provides free transportation to and from school.³²⁸⁹ In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 72.3 percent (70.8 percent for girls and 73.7 percent for boys). The net enrollment rate for that year was 64.7 percent (64.5 percent for girls and 64.8 percent for boys).³²⁹⁰ Attendance rates are not available for Oman. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.³²⁹¹

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Oman Labor Law of 2003 establishes the minimum age for employment at 15 years. A minor is defined as anyone aged 15 to 18.³²⁹² The employment of minors is permitted between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., and

³²⁸² 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; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/oman/contents.html>.

³²⁸³ UN, *Youth at the United Nations: Country Profiles on the Situation of Youth- Oman*, UN, [online] 2001 [cited June 24, 2003]; available from <http://esa.un.org/socdev/unyin/countrys.asp?countrycode=om>.

³²⁸⁴ U.S. Embassy- Muscat, electronic communication to USDOL official, March 1, 2004.

³²⁸⁵ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

³²⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Oman*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18285.htm>.

³²⁸⁷ UNESCO, *EFA Country Report: Oman*.

³²⁸⁸ Electronic communication from Labor Officer to USDOL official, March 1, 2004.

³²⁸⁹ UNESCO, *EFA Country Report: Oman*.

³²⁹⁰ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

³²⁹¹ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

³²⁹² *Royal Decree no. 35/2003: Oman Labour Law*, (May 3, 2003).

minors are prohibited from working overtime, during holidays, or on official days of rest.³²⁹³ In addition, child laborers cannot be compelled to stay at the workplace beyond their specified working hours, with a maximum of 6 hours per day mandated by the law. A company employing minors is required to post the following items for display in the workplace: a copy of the regulations pertaining to non-adult workers; a schedule of work hours, periods of rest, and weekly holidays; and a list of minors employed.³²⁹⁴ The Ministry of Manpower is responsible for enforcing child labor laws.³²⁹⁵ 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.³²⁹⁶

Bonded child labor is prohibited by law and it is not recognized as a problem.³²⁹⁷ The penal code assigns a penalty of at least five years imprisonment for individuals found guilty of enticing a minor into an act of prostitution.³²⁹⁸ Trafficking in persons is not prohibited by law; however, there were no official reports of trafficking incidents in the country.³²⁹⁹

The Government of Oman has not ratified ILO Convention 138, but ratified ILO Convention 182 on June 11, 2001.³³⁰⁰

³²⁹³ Ibid.

³²⁹⁴ Ibid.

³²⁹⁵ Ibid.

³²⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Oman*, Section 6d.

³²⁹⁷ Ibid. The labor law does not apply to domestic service. See The Protection Project, "Oman," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children: A Country-by-Country Report on a Contemporary Form of Slavery* Washington, D.C., 2002; available from http://www.protectionproject.org/human_rights/countryreport/oman.htm.

³²⁹⁸ Government of Oman, *Article 220 of the Penal Code: Child Prostitution*, Interpol: Legislation of Interpol member states on sexual offences against children, [cited May 6, 2003]; available from <http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLaws/csaOman.asp>.

³²⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Oman*, Section 6f.

³³⁰⁰ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [online database] [cited June 16, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newcountryframeE.htm>.