



BLOOD DIAMOND: WHAT THIS CLASSIC MOVIE STILL TEACHES US ABOUT CHILD LABOUR, DECENT WORK, BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS

Anfal Al Alawi¹ 

1. Independent Researcher, HSE Projects Lead, Oman Energy Sector, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.
Email: ans.alalawi@gmail.com

Article Information:

Article Type:
Commentary

Manuscript Received:
26 July 2026

Final Revision Received:
24 August 2026

Published Online:
15 September 2026

Keywords:

Blood Diamond, Child Labour, Decent work, Business and Human Rights, Human rights due diligence, Responsible business conduct, Global supply chains, Occupational safety and health, Oman.

This commentary revisits the 2006 film Blood Diamond as a lens through which to examine continuing challenges relating to child labour, decent work, and business and human rights. Set against the Sierra Leone Civil War, the film illustrates how armed conflict, poverty, weak governance, and global demand for valuable natural resources can combine to expose children and workers to coercion, violence, hazardous work, and other serious human rights abuses. Drawing on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Labour Organization Conventions Nos. 138 and 182, the ILO Decent Work Agenda, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and relevant Sustainable Development Goals, the commentary connects the film's central themes to contemporary legal and policy debates. It considers the persistence of child labour despite extensive international standards, and argues that legal prohibition alone cannot ensure effective protection without education, social protection, labour inspection, accountable institutions, and sustained implementation. The commentary also examines Oman's evolving legal and institutional framework on child protection, labour rights, social dialogue, occupational safety and health, and responsible business conduct. At the international level, it identifies continuing gaps between international commitments and their implementation, particularly in conflict-affected areas and complex global supply chains where responsibility may become fragmented. The paper argues that governments and businesses must move from commitment to accountability by strengthening enforcement, human rights due diligence, responsible sourcing, supply-chain transparency, worker voice, access to remedy, and international cooperation. Ultimately, Blood Diamond remains relevant because it reveals the human cost hidden behind commercial value and reminds all actors that sustainable development must place human dignity, safety, and fundamental rights at its centre.

Cite this article: Anfal Al Alawi (2026). Blood Diamond: What This Classic Movie Still Teaches Us About Child Labour, Decent Work, Business & Human Rights. The Journal of Sustainable Development, Law and Policy. Vol. 18:2. 725-750. DOI: 10.4314/jsdlp.v18i2.28.



© The Author(s)

Publisher: Institute for Oil, Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development (OGEES Institute), Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Blood Diamond (2006), a movie I first watched many years ago, is set during the Sierra Leone Civil War in 1999.¹ The movie explores the complex relationship between conflict, natural resources and the global diamond trade. It raises important questions about how valuable commodities can enter international markets despite being linked to human suffering and exploitation. Although the events portrayed took place more than two decades ago, the issues they raise continue to shape contemporary discussions on child labour, decent work and responsible business conduct. This article reflects upon the key lessons from the movie drawing upon key instruments in international law, including the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). This commentary argues that, despite the development of extensive international labour and human rights standards, the protection of children and workers ultimately depends on effective national implementation, accountable institutions and responsible business conduct throughout global supply chains. It proceeds in seven sections. Following this introduction, Section II examines the lessons of *Blood Diamond* concerning child labour in light of international child rights and labour standards. Section III considers Oman's legal and institutional approach to child protection and labour regulation. Section IV connects the film's themes to contemporary policy debates and examines them through the lens of the ILO Decent Work Agenda. Section V explores Business and Human Rights, responsible sourcing and human rights due diligence, including their relevance to Oman, and identifies continuing gaps in international law and implementation. Section VI provides legal and policy recommendations for governments, businesses and other stakeholders. Section VII concludes by reflecting on the film's continuing relevance to the protection of human dignity, workers' rights and sustainable development.

1 “*Blood Diamond* is a 2006 American war drama film directed and co-produced by Edward Zwick and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly and Djimon Hounsou.” See Wikipedia, *Blood Diamond* < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_Diamond >

II. CHILD LABOUR: LESSONS FROM BLOOD DIAMOND

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as every human being under the age of 18 years.² Children are entitled to special protection because they are still developing physically, mentally and socially. Accordingly, international and national legal frameworks seek to protect children from economic exploitation, hazardous work and other practices that may compromise their health, safety, education, wellbeing and future opportunities.³ One of the most striking aspects of *Blood Diamond* is the way children are portrayed. The film depicts children not as individuals protected by law, but as victims of armed conflict who are systematically exploited for economic gain. Their experiences illustrate how conflict can strip children of their fundamental rights, exposing them to exploitation at a stage of life when they should instead be protected, educated and supported.

They are not only separated from their families and communities but are also deprived of education, a safe childhood and opportunities for healthy development. Instead, they are exposed to violence, exploitation and hazardous working conditions that threaten their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing. The film serves as a powerful reminder that protecting children is not only a human rights obligation but is also fundamental to achieving decent work, sustainable development and inclusive economic growth. The children portrayed in *Blood Diamond* are compelled to work in an environment characterised by coercion, physical danger, psychological trauma and the constant threat of death. The conditions depicted clearly fall within the worst forms of child labour prohibited under international labour standards, rather than lawful, age-appropriate work permitted under carefully regulated conditions. Child labour must therefore be distinguished from limited and age-appropriate

2 International Labour Organization. (1973). Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). International Labour Organization.

3 International Labour Organization. (1999). Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). International Labour Organization; see also International Labour Organization. (2025). 2024 Global Estimates of Child Labour in figures. The estimates report nearly 138 million children in child labour, including 54 million in hazardous work.

activities that do not interfere with a child's education, health or development. Rather, it refers to work that deprives children of their childhood, dignity and potential or that is physically, mentally, socially or morally harmful.

The international legal response to child labour has evolved through the development of complementary human rights and international labour standards. Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognises the right of every child to be protected from economic exploitation and from work that is likely to be hazardous, interfere with their education, or be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. The CRC is complemented by two fundamental International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. *The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)* establishes the minimum age for admission to employment and seeks to ensure that children are not engaged in work that undermines their education or development. The *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)* requires States to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency, including slavery, forced or compulsory labour, child trafficking, the recruitment of children for armed conflict, and hazardous work likely to harm their health, safety or morals.

The experiences of children portrayed in *Blood Diamond* illustrate that child labour is rarely an isolated labour issue. Rather, it reflects the interconnected nature of multiple sustainable development challenges. The exploitation of children depicted in the film is closely associated with armed conflict, poverty, forced displacement, the collapse of education systems, weak institutions, trafficking, and the exploitation of valuable natural resources. These interconnected factors directly undermine the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 particularly Target 8 on ending child labour in all its forms and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).⁴

4 United Nations General Assembly, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Doc A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015), Sustainable Development Goals 1, 4, 8, particularly Target 8.7, and 16, available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/70/1> (accessed 23 August 2026).

The experiences of children portrayed in *Blood Diamond* illustrate that child labour is rarely an isolated labour issue. Rather, it reflects the interconnected nature of multiple sustainable development challenges. The exploitation of children depicted in the film is closely associated with armed conflict, poverty, forced displacement, the collapse of education systems, weak institutions, trafficking, and the exploitation of valuable natural resources. The international legal framework was further strengthened through the adoption of the *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)*. The Convention requires States to take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency. These include slavery and practices similar to slavery, child trafficking, forced or compulsory labour, the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, and hazardous work likely to harm a child's health, safety or morals.

The children portrayed in *Blood Diamond* could fall within several of these categories simultaneously. Their involvement in diamond mining is inherently hazardous due to the physical risks associated with excavation, the use of unsafe tools, exposure to violence, and the complete absence of occupational safety and health measures. Where children are compelled to work under armed control or the threat of violence or punishment, their circumstances may also constitute forced labour. Furthermore, where children are abducted, recruited or used by armed groups, such conduct engages international prohibitions relating to the recruitment and exploitation of children in armed conflict. The film therefore illustrates that a single child may experience multiple and overlapping violations of international labour and human rights standards, rather than a single form of labour exploitation.

Despite significant progress in the development of international legal and policy frameworks, child labour has not been eliminated. The latest ILO–UNICEF Global Estimates indicate that approximately 138 million children remain in child labour worldwide, including 54 million engaged in hazardous work.⁵ Although these figures represent a substantial decline

5 International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2024, Trends and the Road Forward* (ILO and UNICEF 2025), Executive

compared with previous decades, they demonstrate that the international community did not achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8 which called for the elimination of child labour in all its forms by 2025.

The persistence of child labour demonstrates that the existence of international legal standards alone is insufficient to guarantee protection. Effective implementation requires strong national legislation, adequate labour inspection systems, access to quality education, social protection, poverty reduction measures, responsible business conduct and sustained international cooperation. Without effective implementation and accountability, legal commitments risk remaining aspirations rather than becoming meaningful protection for vulnerable children.

The continued existence of child labour also highlights that this challenge extends beyond labour regulation. It reflects broader failures in governance, economic development, social protection, education, peacebuilding and responsible business practices. Blood Diamond illustrates how these interconnected failures can create an environment in which the exploitation of children becomes normalised, reinforcing the need for integrated solutions that address both the root causes and the consequences of child labour.

The continued persistence of child labour has generated renewed international momentum. From 11 to 13 February 2026, the Government of Morocco hosted the Sixth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour in Marrakech. The Conference brought together governments, employers' and workers' organisations, international organisations, civil society, businesses, academia, as well as children and young people to strengthen global efforts towards the elimination of child labour. It concluded with the adoption of the Marrakech Global Framework for Action against Child Labour, which seeks to accelerate implementation efforts and maintain the elimination of child labour as a global priority through 2030 and beyond.

The Marrakech Global Framework recognises that international legal standards alone are insufficient without effective implementation. It

Summary, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/child-labour-global-estimates-2024-trends-and-road-forward>.

therefore calls for sustained political leadership, stronger institutions, effective enforcement, adequate financing and greater accountability. The Framework also emphasises universal access to quality education, comprehensive social protection, decent work and fair incomes for adults, responsible business conduct, and coordinated multi-stakeholder action across governments, businesses, workers' organisations and civil society. In doing so, it builds upon the *Durban Call to Action* (2022) while recognising that many previous commitments have yet to be fully implemented.

The priorities identified in the Marrakech Framework reinforce the central message illustrated throughout *Blood Diamond*: eliminating child labour requires far more than legal prohibition alone. It demands coordinated action to address the structural conditions that enable children's exploitation, including poverty, conflict, weak governance, inadequate education systems and irresponsible business practices.

The children portrayed in the film are vulnerable not simply because legal prohibitions are absent, but because the institutions responsible for protecting them have collapsed. Schools are inaccessible, families are displaced, armed groups operate with impunity, labour inspection and law enforcement mechanisms are absent, and the diamond supply chain continues to generate economic value despite severe human rights abuses occurring at the point of extraction.

The film therefore reinforces the central message of the Marrakech Global Framework: eliminating child labour requires far more than legal prohibition alone. It demands effective governance, functioning education systems, comprehensive social protection, decent work for adults, strong labour market institutions, accountable public authorities and responsible business conduct throughout global supply chains. Ultimately, *Blood Diamond* reminds us that protecting children requires addressing not only the symptoms of exploitation but also its underlying social, economic and governance-related causes.

The momentum generated by the Marrakech Global Framework was further reinforced during the 2026 World Day Against Child Labour through the global campaign “Red Card to Child Labour: From

Marrakesh to Action.” The campaign called upon governments, employers' and workers' organisations, businesses and civil society to translate the commitments made in Marrakech into concrete national action. It reaffirmed that every child has the right to education, protection, dignity and the opportunity to realise their full potential. More importantly, the campaign emphasised that ending child labour requires collective responsibility and sustained action rather than one-off commitments, reinforcing the principle that implementation not the adoption of legal standards alone is the key to lasting change.

III. OMAN'S LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

The priorities reflected in the Marrakech Global Framework are also consistent with the direction taken by the Sultanate of Oman in strengthening its national labour and child protection framework. Oman has ratified the ILO's two fundamental child labour conventions, namely the *Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)* and the *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)* and has incorporated these commitments into its domestic legal framework through the *Child Law (Royal Decree No. 22/2014)* and the *Labour Law (Royal Decree No. 53/2023)*.⁶ Together, these legal instruments establish safeguards for children, prohibit hazardous and exploitative forms of child labour, and reinforce the protection of children's rights in accordance with international labour standards.

The priorities reflected in the Marrakech Global Framework are also consistent with the direction taken by the Sultanate of Oman in strengthening its national labour and child protection framework. Oman has ratified the ILO's two fundamental child labour conventions the *Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)* and the *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)* and has incorporated these commitments into its domestic legal framework through the *Child Law (Royal Decree No. 22/2014)* and the *Labour Law (Royal Decree No. 53/2023)*. Together, these legal instruments establish safeguards for

6 International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, 'Ratifications for Oman', including the *Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)* and the *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)*; Sultanate of Oman, *Child Law*, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014; Sultanate of Oman, *Labour Law*, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 53/2023.

children, prohibit hazardous and exploitative forms of child labour, and reinforce the protection of children's rights in accordance with international labour standards.

Oman's approach reflects the interaction of several preventative factors: a statutory minimum working age, restrictions on hazardous work, access to education, child-protection mechanisms and the criminalisation of trafficking and exploitation. Together, these measures contribute to the prevention of child labour and strengthen the protection of children within Oman's formal labour market.

Continued implementation of Oman's legal safeguards can be supported through labour inspection, reliable national data, accessible reporting mechanisms, public awareness and coordination among labour, education, social-development and law-enforcement authorities.

Oman's legal and institutional safeguards provide an important foundation for protecting children from prohibited or hazardous work. Continued vigilance remains important as economic and social conditions evolve. Effective prevention therefore requires continuous monitoring, regular labour inspection, public awareness, reliable data collection and close coordination among the relevant national authorities.

IV. LINKING THE MOVIE TO PRESENT-DAY POLICY

Although *Blood Diamond* is set during the Sierra Leone Civil War in the 1990s, its portrayal of children remains highly relevant to the contemporary child labour agenda. The film illustrates how the exploitation of children becomes possible when armed conflict, weak governance, poverty, commercial interests and the demand for valuable natural resources converge. While international law has evolved considerably since the period depicted in the film most notably through the universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the adoption of successive global action frameworks serious challenges remain.

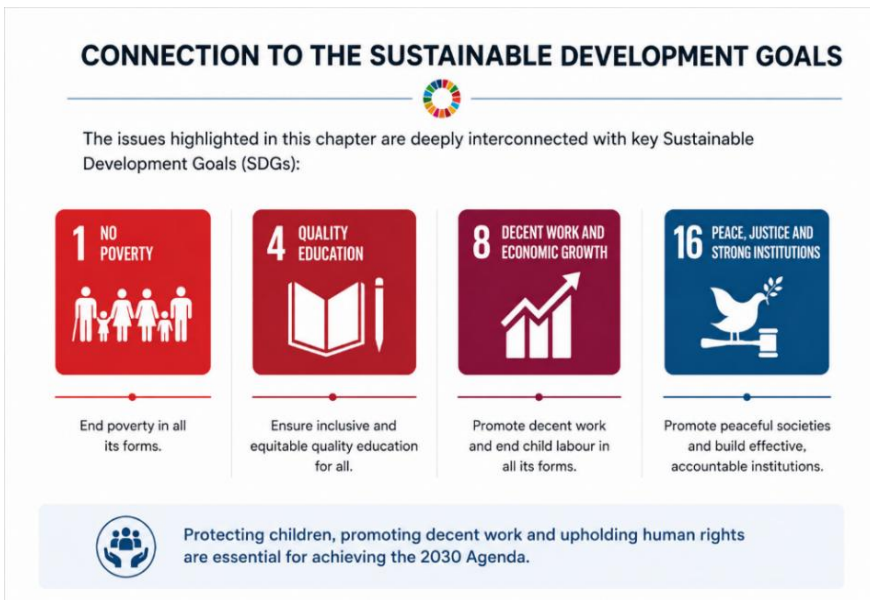
The latest ILO–UNICEF Global Estimates indicate that approximately 138 million children remain in child labour worldwide, including 54

million engaged in hazardous work.⁷ These figures demonstrate that legal progress, while essential, has not yet translated into universal protection. They also reinforce a central message emerging from *Blood Diamond*: protecting children requires far more than legal prohibition alone. It demands effective governance, quality education, social protection, responsible business conduct, accountable institutions and sustained international cooperation.

Ultimately, the film reminds policymakers, businesses and society that the elimination of child labour depends not only on stronger laws, but on the consistent implementation of those laws and the collective commitment to protect every child's rights, dignity and future. The continuing relevance of *Blood Diamond* lies in its powerful illustration of the human consequences of implementation failure. The film reminds policymakers, businesses and the wider international community that commodities entering global markets may carry human rights risks extending far beyond the immediate workplace. Protecting children therefore requires far more than the adoption of national labour laws or international legal standards. It depends on their effective implementation, responsible sourcing, supply chain transparency, access to quality education, comprehensive social protection, accountable institutions, and meaningful corporate respect for human rights.

Viewed through this lens, *Blood Diamond* is not merely a film about conflict diamonds; it is a compelling reminder that the elimination of child labour requires a holistic approach that integrates human rights, decent work, responsible business conduct and sustainable development. These same principles provide a natural transition to the second lens of this commentary: Decent Work.

7 International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2024, Trends and the Road Forward* (ILO and UNICEF 2025), 8–9, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/child-labour-global-estimates-2024-trends-and-road-forward>.



4.1 The Lens of Decent Work: Lessons from Blood Diamond

While *Blood Diamond* is often examined through the lenses of child labour and armed conflict, the film also provides a powerful illustration of what occurs when the principles of decent work are entirely absent. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as productive work performed in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. It encompasses not only freely chosen employment, but also respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, safe and healthy working conditions, social protection, fair treatment and opportunities for meaningful social dialogue.

Viewed through this lens, *Blood Diamond* portrays far more than a series of isolated workplace failures. Rather, it depicts the complete collapse of the conditions necessary for decent work, where labour is characterised by coercion, violence, exploitation and the systematic denial of workers' rights. The film therefore provides a compelling case study of how the

absence of decent work undermines not only occupational safety and health, but also human dignity, social justice and sustainable development.

1. Employment Creation

The first pillar of the ILO Decent Work Agenda is employment creation, which promotes access to productive and freely chosen employment. Decent work begins with the opportunity to enter employment voluntarily under lawful and fair conditions that respect workers' freedom, dignity and fundamental rights.⁸ *Blood Diamond* presents the complete opposite. Employment in the film is neither freely chosen nor created through legitimate economic opportunity. Instead, work is imposed through coercion, violence and armed control. Rather than providing sustainable livelihoods, employment becomes a mechanism of exploitation, survival and economic gain within a conflict economy. The film therefore illustrates that employment alone cannot be regarded as decent work unless it is freely chosen, lawfully regulated and grounded in respect for human dignity.

2. Rights at Work

The second pillar of the Decent Work Agenda concerns rights at work, which encompass the fundamental principles and rights recognised by the International Labour Organization. These include the elimination of child labour and forced labour, freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation, and the right to a safe and healthy working environment. Together, these rights establish the minimum legal and ethical standards necessary to protect workers' freedom, dignity and equality.

Blood Diamond portrays the systematic denial of each of these rights. Child labour and forced labour are central to the film's narrative, with both children and adults compelled to mine diamonds under the constant threat of violence. Workers are denied the freedom to organise, establish

8 International Labour Organization, ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (ILO 2008), Part I(A)(i); International Labour Organization, Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), art 1(2), available at: <https://normlex.ilo.org>

representative organisations or engage in collective bargaining, leaving them without any meaningful voice or protection. Discrimination is equally evident, as vulnerable communities particularly children are disproportionately exploited within a conflict-driven economy. Rather than recognising workers as rights holders, the film portrays labour as a commodity controlled through coercion, fear and violence, demonstrating the complete absence of rights at work.

3. Social Protection

The third pillar of the ILO Decent Work Agenda is social protection, which seeks to ensure that workers are provided with safe and healthy working conditions, access to occupational health services, adequate welfare provisions and protection against work-related risks. Social protection extends beyond financial security; it encompasses the legal, institutional and workplace measures designed to safeguard workers' lives, health, wellbeing and dignity throughout their working lives.

Blood Diamond portrays the complete absence of these protections. Workers operate in extremely hazardous environments without any form of occupational safety and health (OSH) management. There is no evidence of hazard identification, risk assessment, worker training, safe systems of work, personal protective equipment (PPE), emergency preparedness, access to medical care or even the most basic welfare provisions. Workers are also exposed to violence, intimidation and severe psychological trauma, demonstrating that workplace risks extend far beyond physical hazards.

The psychological consequences portrayed in the film are equally severe. Continuous exposure to armed conflict, forced labour, violence and the constant threat of death places workers at significant risk of developing long-term mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression. Yet the film depicts no access to occupational health services, psychological support, rehabilitation or any form of psychosocial protection, illustrating the complete absence of a system designed to protect workers' physical and mental wellbeing.

The movie illustrates the complete absence of even the most fundamental elements of workplace risk management and occupational safety and health (OSH):

- No hazard identification or risk assessment processes
- No measures to eliminate or control workplace hazards
- No safe systems of work, supervision, or worker training
- No emergency preparedness or emergency response arrangements
- No occupational health, welfare, or basic worker support provisions
- No protection from violence, abuse, or psychosocial harm
- No personal protective equipment (PPE) as the last line of defence.

From an occupational safety and health perspective, these are not isolated shortcomings but evidence of the complete absence of an effective occupational safety and health management system. The film demonstrates how the absence of social protection exposes workers to foreseeable and preventable physical and psychological harm, undermining not only their health and safety but also their dignity and fundamental human rights.

In high-risk sectors and conflict-affected environments, social protection is therefore far more than a regulatory requirement or an employee benefit; it is an essential safeguard for preserving life, health, wellbeing and human dignity. As recognised by the ILO, effective social protection and safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental components of decent work and contribute directly to sustainable development and respect for human rights.

4.Social Dialogue

The fourth pillar of the ILO Decent Work Agenda is social dialogue, which promotes communication, consultation and cooperation among workers, employers and governments. It encompasses freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining,

workers' participation in decisions affecting their employment and access to effective grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms. Social dialogue enables workers to raise concerns, negotiate working conditions and seek remedies where their rights have been violated.

Blood Diamond depicts the complete absence of these mechanisms. Workers have no opportunity to organise, elect representatives or engage in collective bargaining. There are no grievance mechanisms through which they can report abuse, challenge unsafe working conditions or seek an effective remedy for violations of their rights. Instead, control is maintained through fear, intimidation and violence, leaving workers with no voice, no representation and no meaningful participation in decisions affecting their employment or working conditions.

The film further illustrates that the absence of social dialogue undermines not only workers' rights but also the prevention of occupational risks and labour exploitation. Without mechanisms for worker participation, consultation or grievance reporting, unsafe practices remain unchallenged, abuses go unreported and opportunities for continuous workplace improvement are lost. Effective social dialogue therefore serves not only as a fundamental labour right but also as a key component of good governance, decent work and sustainable business practice.

The film illustrates the absence of the key elements of social dialogue:

- No freedom of association or worker representation.
- No collective bargaining or negotiation.
- No grievance mechanisms or access to remedy.
- No worker participation in workplace decisions.
- No communication or consultation between workers and those exercising authority over them.

The absence of social dialogue demonstrates that respecting labour rights requires more than legal recognition alone. Without effective governance, accountability and accessible mechanisms for worker participation, labour rights cannot be exercised or enforced in practice. The film illustrates how the absence of worker voice enables exploitation, unsafe working

conditions and human rights abuses to persist without challenge or remedy.

Viewed from this perspective, social dialogue extends beyond employment relations and becomes an essential element of responsible governance and human rights protection. This provides a natural bridge to the Business and Human Rights framework, which recognises that both States and business enterprises have distinct but complementary responsibilities to prevent, mitigate, address and remedy adverse human rights impacts throughout business operations and global supply chains.

4.2 Decent Work in the Omani Context

The principles of decent work illustrated through Blood Diamond are also reflected in the continuing development of Oman's national labour framework. The Labour Law (Royal Decree No. 53/2023) provides a modern legislative foundation for employment relationships and incorporates several dimensions closely aligned with the ILO Decent Work Agenda, including workers' rights, occupational safety and health (OSH), worker protection, collective labour relations and social dialogue.

Worker protection is particularly evident in the occupational safety and health provisions of the Labour Law. Article 104 requires employers to inform workers of occupational hazards, provide appropriate information on preventive measures and take the necessary precautions to protect workers from workplace risks. More broadly, the Labour Law establishes provisions relating to workplace conditions, worker welfare, occupational safety and health, and the protection of workers from occupational hazards, reinforcing the principle that productive employment must also safeguard workers' health, safety, dignity and wellbeing.

These legislative developments are also consistent with the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to strengthen human capital, promote sustainable economic growth, enhance labour market competitiveness and improve social protection. Together, they demonstrate Oman's continued commitment to aligning its national labour framework with internationally recognised principles of decent

work while supporting inclusive and sustainable development.⁹ Social dialogue represents another important dimension of Oman's evolving labour framework. Oman has established a structured system of worker representation comprising workplace trade unions, sectoral general unions and the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFOW), whose first congress was held in February 2010. The establishment of the GFOW marked an important milestone in strengthening collective labour relations and promoting worker representation within the Sultanate.

The same year also marked a significant milestone in Oman's engagement with the ILO Decent Work Agenda. On 15 June 2010, Oman launched its first ILO Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) (2010–2013), becoming the second Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country, after Bahrain, to adopt a Decent Work Country Programme.¹⁰ The Programme identified social dialogue as one of its core priorities, reflecting the shared commitment of the Government of Oman, employers and workers to strengthening labour market governance, promoting decent work and aligning national labour policies with international labour standards.

The ILO Decent Work Country Programme (2010–2013) was jointly signed by representatives of the Government, employers and workers, reflecting the principle of tripartism, which lies at the heart of the ILO's approach to labour governance. The Programme identified strengthening social dialogue as one of its three strategic priorities, alongside enhancing social protection and promoting the application of international labour standards.

Oman's labour framework has continued to evolve through sustained cooperation with the ILO and successive national labour reforms. Key milestones include the promulgation of the Labour Law (Royal Decree

9 Sultanate of Oman, Oman Vision 2040 (2020), national priorities on 'Education, Learning, Scientific Research and National Capabilities', 'Labour Market and Employment', 'Economic Diversification and Fiscal Sustainability', and 'Well-being and Social Protection', available at: <https://www.oman2040.om>

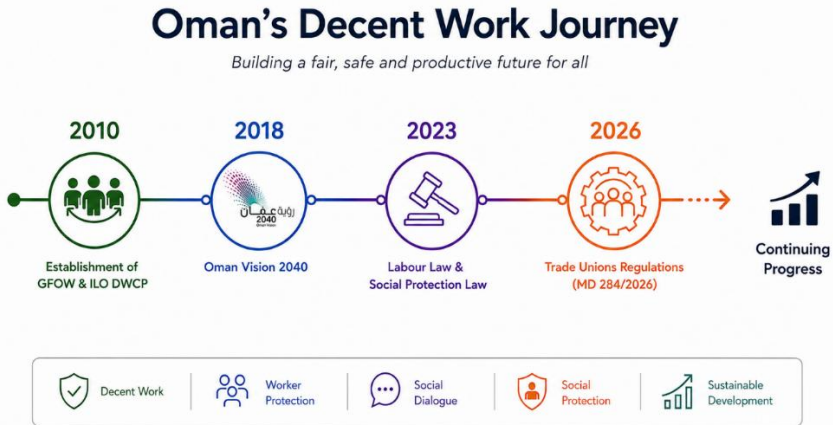
10 International Labour Organization, Decent Work Country Programme for the Sultanate of Oman 2010–2013 (ILO Regional Office for Arab States 2010); International Labour Organization, 'Oman Becomes the Second GCC Country to Adopt a Decent Work Country Programme' (15 June 2010).

No. 53/2023), the Social Protection Law (Royal Decree No. 52/2023) and, more recently, Ministerial Decision No. 284/2026, which introduced updated regulations governing workplace trade unions, sectoral general unions and the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFOW). Together, these reforms have strengthened the legislative framework for worker representation, collective labour relations, social protection and constructive partnership between workers and employers.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that decent work and social dialogue are not recent concepts within the Sultanate of Oman but form part of a continuing process of institutional development and labour market reform. They also illustrate Oman's ongoing efforts to align its national labour framework with international labour standards while supporting the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040, including sustainable economic development, human capital development and inclusive labour market governance.

These developments are further reinforced by Oman Vision 2040, which identifies Labour Market and Employment and Well-being and Social Protection among its national priorities. The Vision recognises that sustainable economic development depends upon a productive workforce supported by effective social protection, high-quality employment opportunities and an improved quality of life. Significantly, it articulates the aspiration of achieving "a decent and sustainable life for all," reflecting principles that closely align with the ILO Decent Work Agenda.

Viewed through this lens, Oman Vision 2040 demonstrates that decent work extends beyond employment creation alone. It encompasses safe and healthy working conditions, social protection, respect for workers' rights, meaningful social dialogue and inclusive economic participation. The Vision therefore illustrates how international labour principles can be translated into long-term national development priorities that place human dignity and worker wellbeing at the centre of sustainable economic growth.



V. BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: FROM CONFLICT DIAMONDS TO RESPONSIBLE SUPPLY CHAINS

Blood Diamond illustrates that human rights abuses rarely occur in isolation. The exploitation of children, forced labour, unsafe working conditions and the absence of worker protection are interconnected within a broader business ecosystem driven by the demand for valuable natural resources. Although the events portrayed in the film take place during the Sierra Leone Civil War, the issues it raises remain highly relevant to contemporary business practice. Modern global supply chains continue to face risks of labour exploitation, human trafficking, child labour and unsafe working conditions, particularly in conflict-affected and high-risk areas. The evolution of the Business and Human Rights (BHR) agenda reflects the growing recognition that governments alone cannot prevent these abuses. Businesses also have an independent responsibility to respect human rights throughout their operations, business relationships and value chains. This responsibility is reflected in internationally recognised frameworks such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, and emerging Human

Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) legislation. Together, these frameworks require businesses to identify, prevent, mitigate and, where appropriate, remedy adverse human rights impacts linked to their activities and supply chains.

Viewed through this lens, *Blood Diamond* is more than a story about conflict diamonds. It serves as a compelling case study demonstrating why responsible sourcing, supply chain transparency and human rights due diligence have become essential components of modern business practice. The film reminds us that businesses must look beyond the final product and recognise the human cost that may exist behind complex global supply chains.

Consumers also play an important role in promoting responsible business conduct. A product may derive its value from its quality, rarity or commercial appeal, but its true value should also be measured by the dignity, rights, health, safety and wellbeing of the people involved in its production. Ethical purchasing decisions and growing demand for responsibly sourced products can strengthen corporate accountability and encourage businesses to uphold internationally recognised labour and human rights standards.

5.1 Business and Human Rights in the Omani Context

In Oman, responsible business conduct operates within an evolving legal and institutional framework governing commercial activity, investment, employment, worker protection and consumer rights. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) plays a central role in developing and regulating the business and investment environment, including the legislative and regulatory frameworks governing commercial activities. Oman's Commercial Companies Law (Royal Decree No. 18/2019) provides an important legal foundation for corporate governance and business operations, while the Consumer Protection Law (Royal Decree No. 66/2014) establishes legal safeguards governing the relationship between businesses and consumers. This framework extends beyond commercial regulation. Oman's Labour Law (Royal Decree No. 53/2023) establishes protections governing employment relationships, workers' rights and occupational safety and

health, while the Law Combating Human Trafficking (Royal Decree No. 78/2025) provides an additional layer of protection against exploitation, including practices associated with forced labour and other serious human rights abuses. Together, these legislative frameworks demonstrate how responsible business conduct intersects with labour protection, worker welfare, human dignity and corporate responsibility. The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) also forms part of this broader institutional landscape by representing the private sector and facilitating engagement between businesses and government. Its role should be understood as supporting and representing the business community rather than acting as the primary regulator of corporate compliance. This distinction is important because responsible business conduct depends upon cooperation among government institutions, businesses, employers, workers and civil society.

From a Business and Human Rights (BHR) perspective, however, legal compliance should be regarded as the starting point rather than the endpoint of responsible business conduct. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) call upon businesses to respect human rights and undertake appropriate human rights due diligence (HRDD) to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for adverse human rights impacts connected with their operations, supply chains and business relationships. This requires companies to look beyond their immediate operations and assess risks associated with contractors, suppliers, recruitment practices, sourcing arrangements and other business relationships. For Oman, this presents an opportunity to build upon its existing labour, commercial and social protection frameworks by further integrating Business and Human Rights principles, responsible sourcing and human rights due diligence into corporate governance and supply chain management. Such an approach would complement Oman's broader aspirations for sustainable and responsible economic development under Oman Vision 2040.

Ultimately, the lesson from Blood Diamond is particularly relevant to modern business. Corporate responsibility does not begin when a product reaches the consumer; it begins with the people, communities and working conditions behind its production. Responsible business conduct therefore

requires businesses to understand not only what they sell, but also how value is created throughout their supply chains.



5.2 Gaps in International Law and Implementation

The development of international labour and human rights standards has significantly strengthened the protection of workers and children. International instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct provide an important international framework for addressing child labour, forced labour, unsafe working conditions and adverse human rights impacts associated with business activities. Nevertheless, *Blood Diamond* illustrates a fundamental reality: the existence of international standards does not, by itself, guarantee effective protection.

The effectiveness of international law ultimately depends on implementation at the national level. One of the most significant

challenges therefore lies in the gap between international commitments and effective enforcement. This challenge is particularly evident in conflict-affected and high-risk areas, where governments may have limited institutional capacity to enforce labour legislation, conduct workplace inspections, provide social protection or protect communities from armed groups and exploitation. Consequently, children and other vulnerable workers may remain exposed to serious human rights abuses even where international legal protections formally exist.

A further challenge arises from the complexity of modern global supply chains. Raw materials frequently pass through multiple intermediaries, processors, traders and jurisdictions before reaching the final consumer. This fragmentation can make it difficult to identify where human rights abuses occur, attribute responsibility and ensure accountability. The journey of diamonds portrayed in *Blood Diamond* illustrates how severe exploitation occurring at the point of extraction can become disconnected from the finished products entering international markets.

The Business and Human Rights framework has sought to address these challenges by encouraging businesses to identify, prevent, mitigate and, where appropriate, remedy adverse human rights impacts throughout their operations, business relationships and supply chains. However, significant differences remain between jurisdictions regarding the legal obligations imposed on companies to undertake human rights due diligence (HRDD). In many contexts, the effectiveness of international frameworks continues to depend heavily upon national implementation, corporate commitment and effective enforcement mechanisms.

The persistence of child labour demonstrates the consequences of these implementation gaps. The latest ILO–UNICEF Global Estimates indicate that approximately 138 million children remain in child labour worldwide, including 54 million engaged in hazardous work. These figures demonstrate that international standards, while essential, must be supported by effective institutions, labour inspection systems, access to quality education, social protection, decent employment opportunities for adults and responsible business conduct.

Ultimately, the central challenge is not simply the absence of international standards, but the ability to translate those standards into meaningful protection on the ground. Blood Diamond illustrates the human consequences of implementation failure, showing how weak governance, limited accountability and irresponsible business practices can reinforce one another. Those positioned at the beginning of global supply chains often bear the greatest human cost while remaining the least visible to the final consumer. This implementation gap provides one of the strongest justifications for continued international cooperation, stronger national institutions and more effective corporate respect for human rights.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Addressing the challenges illustrated in Blood Diamond requires coordinated action by governments, businesses, international organisations, workers, civil society and consumers. International labour and human rights standards provide an essential foundation, but their effectiveness ultimately depends on how they are implemented, monitored and enforced in practice.

First, strengthen national implementation and enforcement. Governments should ensure that international labour and human rights commitments are effectively incorporated into national legislation and supported by well-resourced labour inspectorates, competent enforcement authorities, accessible grievance mechanisms and effective remedies. Particular attention should be given to conflict-affected and high-risk environments where institutional capacity may be limited.

Second, strengthen human rights due diligence across global supply chains. Businesses should move beyond compliance within their direct operations and identify human rights risks associated with suppliers, contractors, recruitment practices, sourcing arrangements and other business relationships. Human rights due diligence should include effective risk identification, prevention, mitigation, monitoring and transparent reporting, with particular attention to child labour, forced labour, occupational safety and health, and other vulnerable groups.

Third, promote responsible and transparent sourcing. Businesses operating in sectors dependent on minerals and other high-risk commodities should strengthen supply chain traceability and supplier accountability. Companies should understand not only where their materials originate, but also the conditions under which they are produced.

Fourth, address the root causes of labour exploitation. Eliminating child labour and forced labour cannot be achieved through legal prohibition alone. Governments and development partners should continue investing in quality education, social protection, decent employment opportunities for adults, poverty reduction and resilient communities. These measures reduce the structural vulnerabilities that allow exploitative labour practices to persist.

Fifth, strengthen worker voice and access to remedy. Workers should have safe, accessible and effective mechanisms through which they can raise concerns, report unsafe conditions and seek remedies without fear of retaliation. Freedom of association, social dialogue, worker representation and effective grievance mechanisms remain essential components of both decent work and responsible business conduct.

Finally, strengthen international cooperation and knowledge exchange. Global supply chains operate across national borders, and the human rights challenges associated with them cannot be addressed by governments or businesses acting alone. Greater cooperation among governments, international organisations, businesses, employers' and workers' organisations and civil society can support stronger implementation, shared learning and more consistent expectations for responsible business conduct.

Ultimately, moving forward requires a shift from commitment to implementation and from compliance to accountability. The lessons of Blood Diamond demonstrate that protecting human dignity throughout global supply chains requires more than international standards on paper. It requires governments capable of enforcing them, businesses willing to apply them throughout their value chains, workers empowered to exercise

their rights and consumers prepared to consider the human impact behind the products they purchase.

VII. CONCLUSION: WHY BLOOD DIAMOND STILL MATTERS

Although Blood Diamond is set during the Sierra Leone Civil War, its lessons extend far beyond a single conflict or industry. The film demonstrates how child labour, forced labour, unsafe working conditions, weak governance and irresponsible business practices can become interconnected, creating conditions in which vulnerable workers and communities are exposed to exploitation. Addressing these challenges therefore requires more than action by any single actor; it depends on effective regulation and enforcement, responsible business conduct, meaningful worker participation, international cooperation and greater accountability throughout global supply chains.

Examined through the lenses of Child Labour, Decent Work and Business and Human Rights, the film highlights the importance of protecting children, safeguarding workers' rights and promoting responsible business conduct throughout global supply chains. It demonstrates that decent work is not simply about having employment, but about ensuring freedom, dignity, safety, equality, protection and opportunity. Likewise, responsible business conduct requires companies to look beyond the final product and consider the human and social conditions under which value is created.

Blood Diamond is therefore more than a film about conflict diamonds. It is a powerful reminder that behind every product, service and business relationship are people whose dignity, health, safety and fundamental rights must never become secondary to commercial value.

As governments, businesses, workers, civil society and consumers continue working towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the lessons of Blood Diamond remain highly relevant. Ultimately, progress should be measured not only by the value we create, but by how effectively we protect the people whose work, dignity and rights make that value possible.