

In 2016, Nigeria made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government launched a National Social Protection Program which provides cash transfers to extremely poor households on the condition that their children are enrolled in school. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons implemented standard operating procedures for investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases, and established an anti-human trafficking training center. However, children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in quarrying granite and gravel, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and armed conflict. The legal framework has inconsistencies regarding child labor, and the minimum age for work is below international standards. Child labor enforcement data is also not publicly available, and social programs are not sufficient to address the scope of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Nigeria engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in quarrying granite and gravel, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and armed conflict.(1-5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Nigeria.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	31.1 (13,924,739)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	76.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	26.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		76.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.(6)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2011.(7)

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
Agriculture	Production of manioc/cassava, cocoa, rice, and tobacco (4, 8-11)
	Herding livestock (12)
	Fishing, activities unknown (13)
Industry	Mining and quarrying granite and gravel (1, 3, 4, 9, 14)
	Artisanal gold mining and processing (4, 9, 15-19)
	Harvesting sand (9)
	Construction, including making bricks and carrying construction materials (4, 13)
Services	Domestic work (3, 4, 13, 20, 21)
	Collecting money on public buses, and automotive repair (3, 12, 21, 22)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and scavenging (3, 4, 13, 20-25)
	Use by state armed groups for domestic work, to carry loads, and to act as messengers and guards (26, 27)

Nigeria

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5, 13, 21, 28, 29)
	Forced begging, domestic work, street vending, textile manufacturing, mining and quarrying gravel and granite, and labor in agriculture, including in cocoa, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5, 13, 30-32)
	Use in illicit activities for armed groups, sometimes as a result of forced recruitment, including participating in extortion, armed robbery, and drug trafficking (11, 21-23)
	Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (2, 5, 33-35)

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In northern Nigeria, many families send children from rural to urban areas to live with Islamic teachers, known as *mallams*, and receive a Koranic education. These children, known as *almajiri*, may receive lessons, but teachers often force them to beg on the streets and surrender the money they collect.(23, 36) Furthermore, these children are highly vulnerable to recruitment by Boko Haram.(37)

Benin City, the capital of Edo state, is a major human trafficking hub in Africa.(38, 39) Girls from Nigeria are trafficked to North Africa and Europe for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.(5, 39-43) In 2016, there was an increase in child trafficking for sexual exploitation, particularly to Europe.(12, 40, 43) Children from West African countries experience forced labor in Nigeria, including in granite mines.(5) Children from Benin and Niger are subjected to forced labor, including forced begging, by corrupt *mallams*.(36, 44, 45) Children from Benin are also exploited in domestic and agricultural work; Togolese children are forced to work in agriculture.(31, 46)

Children as young as age 8 are recruited, and sometimes forced, to participate in armed conflict with various groups, including ethnic militia organizations, criminal gangs, extremist groups, and partisan political organizations, such as party youth wings.(23, 47-49) Boko Haram forcibly recruited and used child soldiers during the reporting period.(2, 5, 27, 35) Reports indicate that children were recruited to participate in combat operations and act as spies, porters, and cooks.(26, 27) There was an increase in the use of young girls to carry out suicide bombings.(2, 33) The terrorist group also subjected girls to forced labor and sexual servitude.(5, 26, 27) Limited research found that the Nigerian military used children rescued or arrested during Boko Haram military operations for domestic work, to carry loads, and to act as messengers and guards.(26, 27) The Nigerian military also conducted on-the-ground coordination with elements of the Borno state government-funded Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a non-state self-defense militia involved in fighting Boko Haram. Research found that the CJTF continued to recruit and use children, possibly by force, to supervise checkpoints, conduct patrols, spy, and apprehend suspected insurgents.(26, 27, 50, 51) The Government of Nigeria has officially prohibited the recruitment and use of child soldiers.(50, 51)

An estimated 1.8 million people were internally displaced in northeast Nigeria, of which 1 million were children under age 18.(52) During the reporting period, reports indicated that children were trafficked from internally displaced persons (IDP) camps for labor and sexual exploitation, and girls were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in the camps.(5, 53-55) Research found that children in IDP camps are also at risk of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation when they leave the camps unaccompanied to work.(50)




While most public schools in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, began reopening in February, the Borno State Government announced that 512 primary schools, 38 secondary schools, and two tertiary institutions had been destroyed in the state.(56, 57) Some school buildings are still being occupied by displaced people seeking shelter from the conflict.(50) Furthermore, government armed forces occupied schools in their campaign against Boko Haram.(57)

Although free and compulsory education is federally mandated by the Education Act, little enforcement of compulsory education laws occurs at the state level.(12) School fees are often charged, and the cost of materials can be prohibitive for families.(12, 13, 58) Access to education is further hindered by a lack of teachers and inadequate sanitation facilities, particularly for girls.(12) Many families favored the enrollment of boys over girls in elementary and secondary school.(13, 59)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Nigeria 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). However, gaps exist in Nigeria's legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	12	Section 59(1) of the Labour Act; Sections 28 and 29 of the Child's Right Act (60, 61)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 59(6) of the Labour Act; Sections 28 and 29 of the Child's Right Act (60, 61)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Sections 59–61 of the Labour Act; Section 28 of the Child's Right Act; Section 23 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (60-62)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 13, 22, 24, and 25 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Sections 28 and 30 of the Child's Right Act (61, 62)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 13 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Section 30 of the Child's Right Act (61, 62)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 13–17 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Sections 30 and 32 of the Child's Right Act; Section 23 of the Cybercrimes Act (61-63)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Sections 25, 26, and 30 of the Child's Right Act (61, 62)
Minimum Age for Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Section 28 of the Armed Forces Act; Section 34 of the Child's Right Act (61, 64)
Non-state Compulsory	No		Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (62)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Sections 2 and 15 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child's Right Act (61, 65)
Free Public Education	Yes		Sections 2 and 3 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child's Right Act (61, 65)

* No conscription (64)

Nigeria

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

The Federal Child’s Right Act (CRA) codifies the rights of children in Nigeria and must be ratified by each state to become law in its territory.(11, 61) To date, 23 states and the federal capital territory have ratified the CRA; of the remaining 13 states, 12 are in northern Nigeria.(11, 20)

The laws in Nigeria regarding minimum age for employment are inconsistent. The CRA states that the provisions on young people in the Labour Act apply to children under the CRA, but also that the CRA supersedes any other legislation related to children.(61) The CRA restricts children under age 18 from any work except light work for family members; however, Section 59 of the Labour Act, which is in force in all 36 states, sets the minimum employment age at 12.(60, 61, 66) The Labour Act also permits children of any age to do light work alongside a family member in agriculture and domestic work.(60, 67) Furthermore, the minimum age protections in the Labour Act do not apply to children who are self-employed.(60, 67)

Although the Labour Act forbids the employment of youth under age 18 in work that is dangerous to their health, safety, or morals, it does not establish types of hazardous activity that are prohibited to children under 18.(60) The National Steering Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor developed a report in 2013 that identified hazardous child labor in Nigeria; however, the Government has not yet determined by law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children.(4, 67)

In Zamfara state, the *Shari’a* Penal Code, the moral code and religious law of Islam, defines an offender as anyone who “does any obscene or indecent act in a private or public place, or acts or conducts himself/herself in an indecent manner.” This language may cause children forced into commercial sexual exploitation to be treated as offenders instead of victims.(68)

Although the CRA criminalizes using, procuring, and offering a child in the production and trafficking of drugs, the 13 states that have not yet ratified the CRA have no legislation in place to criminalize this activity.(61)

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). However, gaps in labor law and criminal law enforcement remain and some enforcement information is not available.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Labor Inspectorate, Ministry of Labor and Employment (MLE)	Deploy labor inspectors across 36 state labor offices and the federal capital territory to enforce federal child labor laws.(11, 69)
National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP)	Enforce laws against human trafficking and exploitative labor.(11) Coordinate with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development and state governments to provide child victims with social services and reunite trafficked children with their families.(11) In 2016, developed and implemented standard operating procedures for investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. With donor support, also established an anti-human trafficking training center.(70)
Nigeria Police	Enforce all laws prohibiting forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Support MLE and collaborate with NAPTIP on human trafficking enforcement.(11)
Nigeria Immigration Service	Collaborate with NAPTIP to enforce laws against child trafficking.(11)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Nigeria took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	660 (71)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Dedicated Inspectors	Unknown	Unknown
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	Unknown
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (71)	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections	Unknown	Unknown
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	Unknown
Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (71)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (36)	Unknown

No labor inspectors are available to conduct inspections on seafaring vessels.(72) The Labour Act states that children ages 15 and older may work onboard these vessels and, therefore, children are unprotected by the country's enforcement framework.(60) Research did not find mechanisms to enforce existing protections for children who perform street work.(73) Enforcement of child labor laws remains challenging due to the lack of resources for inspections.(12, 74)

The Ministry of Labor and Employment (MLE) refers cases of children that are gravely in danger to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP); however, research found no other referral mechanisms between MLE and social welfare services.(36)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2016, criminal law enforcement agencies in Nigeria took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (70)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (75)	Yes (70)
Number of Investigations	42 (76)	89 (77)
Number of Violations Found	516 (75)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	2 (76)	10 (77)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (5)

In 2016, NAPTIP conducted 89 investigations of the worst forms of child labor in domestic work. The Government rescued 412 children from the worst forms of child labor, 382 children from domestic work, and 30 girls from commercial sexual exploitation.(77)

Nigeria

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

NAPTIP coordinates with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development and state governments to provide social services to child trafficking victims through the National Referral Mechanism; however, research did not find a referral mechanism for children found in other worst forms of child labor.(11) Children are not excluded from the Terrorism Prevention Act’s penalty of life imprisonment for assisting in acts of terrorism, and criminal law enforcement authorities continued to detain children for their or their parent’s alleged association with Boko Haram.(78-80)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinate efforts to combat child labor. Led by MLE, comprises representatives from seven governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, NGOs, ILO, and UNICEF.(11, 81)
Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons	Coordinate child labor issues related to human trafficking. Chaired by NAPTIP.(11)
State Steering Committees on Child Labor	Guide state-level implementation of the National Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.(81) Established in Akwa Ibom, Delta, Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo states.(82)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor[‡]

Policy	Description
National Policy on Child Labor	Aims to eliminate child labor in Nigeria by 2020.(83)
National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor in Nigeria (2013–2017)	Provides the roadmap for implementation of the National Policy on Child Labor in Nigeria.(81)
NAPTIP Strategic Plan (2012–2017)	Provides a framework for mobilizing NAPTIP and all stakeholders involved in combating human trafficking within Nigeria and internationally.(84)

[‡] The Government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.(85, 86)

Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Policy on Child Labor and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2016, the Government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor[‡]

Program	Description
Decent Work Country Program II (2015–2018)	ILO-implemented project in coordination with the Government that aims to combat child labor, including its worst forms. Aims to build Government capacity to conduct child labor surveys and establish community-based child labor monitoring systems.(59)
UNICEF country program (2014–2017)	Donor-funded program in coordination with the Government to ensure children associated with armed groups, including those in detention facilities, receive reintegration services.(87-89)
NAPTIP Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims [†]	Government-funded program that operates nine shelters in Nigeria, with a total capacity of 313 victims. Shelters provide legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training, business management skills, and family reunification.(5)
National Social Protection Program*	\$302 million World Bank-funded program implemented by the Government that aims to provide youth with skills and vocational training, provide primary school students with daily meals, and offer monthly cash transfers to extremely poor households on the condition that their children are enrolled in school.(90)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor[†] (cont)

Program	Description
Safe Schools Initiative	Donor-funded program implemented by the Government and international organizations that aims to provide remedial education and pilot 10 safe education facilities in northeast Nigeria in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states.(91, 92) By April 2016, 213,985 internally displaced and vulnerable children were enrolled in schools.(93)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Nigeria.

‡ The Government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.(94)

In 2016, NAPTIP incorporated human trafficking instruction into Nigeria's national public school curriculum.(70) Research found no evidence of programs to specifically address children engaged in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, forced labor, and illicit activities. Although Nigeria has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs, including those that target child soldiers, is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.

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 Nigeria (Table 11).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Increase the minimum age for regular work to at least 14, in accordance with international standards; ensure that national legislation on minimum age for work is consistent and that all children, including those who are self-employed, are protected; and ensure that provisions related to light work conform to international standards.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that the types of work determined to be hazardous for children are prohibited by law or regulation for all children under age 18.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that states that apply Shari'a as the penal code do not penalize child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that using, procuring, and offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs are criminally prohibited in all states.	2015 – 2016
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016
	Amend the Terrorism Prevention Act to prohibit the punishment of children found engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment for armed conflict.	2016
Enforcement	Publish information on the Labor Inspectorate's funding, number of labor inspectors, training of labor inspectors and criminal investigators, number and type of labor inspections conducted, and complaint mechanisms between law enforcement and social service providers, as well as the number of violations found and prosecutions initiated.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws.	2016
	Ensure that child labor inspections occur on seafaring vessels and that a mechanism exists for enforcing existing protections for street children.	2010 – 2016
	Establish referral mechanisms between Nigeria's law enforcement and social service agencies for all children found during labor inspections and criminal investigations.	2013 – 2016
	Cease the practice of detaining children associated with armed groups and refer these children to social service providers.	2015 – 2016
	Ensure that the Nigerian Security Forces do not exploit children that are rescued or arrested during military operations.	2016
Government Policies	Take steps to implement the National Policy on Child Labor and National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor.	2014 – 2016

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure an adequate number of trained teachers and provide sufficient educational infrastructure for children, particularly girls, to access schools. Remove all armed groups and forces from schools and compounds.	2015 – 2016
	Ensure that all states adopt programs to offer free education and expand existing programs that provide funds to vulnerable children, especially girls, to cover school fees and the cost of materials.	2014 – 2016
	Establish and expand programs that prevent and remove children from child labor in agriculture, armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, forced labor, and illicit activities.	2009 – 2016

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