

In 2019, Nigeria made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government launched two new state-level task forces to combat human trafficking in Delta and Ondo states. Children engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in quarrying granite, artisan mining, commercial sexual exploitation, and armed conflict, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The Child’s Right Act has only been adopted by 25 out of Nigeria’s 36 states, leaving the remaining 11 states in northern Nigeria with legal statutes that do not meet international standards for the prohibition of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit activities. In addition, the minimum age for work in the Labour Act does not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy, which does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age to work. Furthermore, the number of labor inspectors does not meet the ILO’s technical advice for the size of Nigeria’s workforce, and social programs do not address all relevant sectors.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Nigeria engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in quarrying granite, artisanal mining, commercial sexual exploitation, and armed conflict, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-4) 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	47.5 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	76.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	39.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		73.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020.(5)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5, 2020.(6)

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 (2,7)
	Fishing, activities unknown (8)
	Herding livestock (7)
Industry	Mining and quarrying of granite and gravel (2)
	Artisanal gold mining and processing (1,7,9)
	Harvesting sand (9)
	Construction, including making bricks and carrying construction materials (2,7)
Services	Domestic work (2,7,10-12)
	Collecting money on public buses, washing cars, and automotive repair (7,10,11,13)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and scavenging (2,7,10,11,13,14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,7,10,12,16,17)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in begging; domestic work; street vending; textile manufacturing; mining and quarrying gravel, granite, and gold; and labor in agriculture, including in cocoa, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,7,12,18,19)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict and in non-conflict support roles (4,20,21)

‡ 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 and receive a Koranic education. These children may receive lessons, but teachers often force them to beg on the streets and surrender the money they collect. (12,22) Furthermore, these children are highly vulnerable to recruitment by Boko Haram, which continued to forcibly recruit and use child soldiers in combat and support roles, as well as for suicide bombers and concubines. (23)

Benin City, the capital of Edo state, is a major human trafficking hub in Africa, but increased enforcement efforts may have caused some human trafficking rings to shift their focus to other areas of southern Nigeria. (24-26) Girls from Nigeria are sent to North Africa and Europe for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (26-31) Children from West African countries experience forced labor in Nigeria, including in granite and gold mines. (4,18)

In 2019, despite notable military advances and proclamations of Boko Haram’s defeat by government forces, the group remained a security threat, with escalating attacks forcing over 30,000 people out of Nigeria’s Northeastern regions. (34,35) These attacks have contributed to the displacement of over 2 million people, of which 56 percent were children. (24,29,36) Some girls, particularly unaccompanied minors, were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and military barracks, often by members of the Nigerian military, the CJTF, and other camp security personnel in exchange for food. (4,24,26,29,32,37-41)

Although free and compulsory education is federally mandated by the Education Act, little enforcement of compulsory education laws occurs at the state level. School fees are often charged in practice, and the cost of materials can be prohibitive for families. (7) When families experienced economic hardship, the enrollment of boys was typically prioritized over the enrollment of girls. Other barriers to education include a lack of teachers, sexual harassment, inadequate sanitation facilities, and fear of abduction or attack by Boko Haram while at school, particularly for girls in the northeastern part of the country. (7,11,24,29,42) Furthermore, schools may be used to house IDPs or occupied by government armed forces in their campaign against Boko Haram and the Islamic State-West Africa. (25,37,43) Almost 1,400 schools have been destroyed since 2009, and more than 57 percent of schools in Borno State were closed in the 2017/2018 school year due to violence in the area, leaving about 3 million children without access to education. (25,37)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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	✓

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

Convention	Ratification
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Nigeria’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	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 (44,45)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 59 (5) and (6) of the Labour Act; Sections 28, 29, and 277 of the Child’s Right Act (44,45)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Sections 59-61 of the Labour Act; Sections 28 of the Child’s Right Act; Section 23 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (44-46)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 13, 22, and 24-25 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Sections 28 and 30 of the Child’s Right Act (45,46)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Section 13 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Sections 30 of the Child’s Right Act (45,46)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 13-17 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Section 23 of the Cybercrimes Act; Sections 30 and 32 of the Child’s Right Act (45-47)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act; Sections 25-26 and 30 of the Child’s Right Act (45-47)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 28 of the Armed Forces Act; Section 34 of the Child’s Right Act (45,48)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (46)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Sections 2 and 15 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child’s Right Act (45,49)
Free Public Education	Yes		Sections 2-3 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child’s Right Act (45,49)

* No conscription (48)

The Child’s Right Act (CRA) codifies the rights of children in Nigeria and must be adopted and implemented by each state to become law in its territory. However, only 25 of the 36 states have adopted and implemented the CRA, leaving the 11 remaining states in northern Nigeria with legal statutes that do not meet international standards for the prohibition of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. In these 11 states, laws prohibiting child trafficking do not criminalize both domestic and international trafficking or trafficking for the purpose of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation; the offering of a child for prostitution is not criminally prohibited; and there is no prohibition against the use of children in illicit activities. (45-47)

Furthermore, the CRA upholds certain portions of the Labour Act which are not in compliance with international child labor standards. This includes Section 59, which sets the minimum employment age at 12, in contradiction to the CRA, which only permits children under age 18 to engage in light work for family

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members. (44,45) Furthermore, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (44,45,49)

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 the types of hazardous activity that are prohibited to children under age 18. (44,50) 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 yet to determine by law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (2,50) The Labour Act also permits children of any age to do light work in agriculture and domestic work if they are working with a family member. Furthermore, the minimum age protections in the Labour Act do not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy. (44,50) Lastly, children are not excluded from the Terrorism Prevention Act's penalty of life imprisonment for assisting in acts of terrorism. (51)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Labor Inspectorate, Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE)	Deploys labor inspectors across 36 state labor offices and the federal capital territory to enforce federal child labor laws. (7,29,52)
National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP)	Enforces laws against human trafficking and exploitative labor. Coordinates 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. (7,12,29) Operates hotlines for victims in Abuja and each zonal command center. (26)
Nigeria Police	Enforce all laws prohibiting forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Collaborate with NAPTIP on human trafficking enforcement. (7)
Nigeria Immigration Service	Collaborates with NAPTIP to enforce laws against child trafficking. (7)
State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking	Enforces the Edo State Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law as well as other laws prohibiting trafficking in persons, and investigates all cases of child trafficking and forced child labor. Includes an Investigation and Security Unit tasked with the prevention and detection of human trafficking cases. (53,54) As of March 2019, investigated 56 cases and filed charges in 20 cases. Also during this reporting period, the Delta and Ondo states established anti-trafficking forces as well. (26,53-55)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Nigeria took action to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of MOLE that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$506,755 (56)	\$475,600 (57)
Number of Labor Inspectors	1,164 (56)	1,415 (57)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (44)	Yes (57)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (56)	Yes (57)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	N/A (57)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (57)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	24,646 (56)	15,643 (57)
Number Conducted at Worksite	24,646 (56)	15,643 (57)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	438 (56)	3,937 (57)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	320 (56)	147 (57)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	316 (56)	147 (57)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (56)	Yes (57)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Yes (57)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (56)	Yes (57)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (56)	Yes (57)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (56)	Yes (57)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (56)	Yes (57)

Of the 15,643 inspections conducted in 2019, 2,415 were dedicated child labor inspections. A total of 1,263 children were removed from child labor situations. (57,58) However, enforcement of child labor laws remains challenging due to the lack of resources for inspections, and research did not find mechanisms to enforce existing protections for children in the informal sector. (57,59)

Although the Government of Nigeria increased the number of labor inspectors, the total number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Nigeria's workforce, which includes approximately 60 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Nigeria would employ about 4,005 labor inspectors. (60,61)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Nigeria took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes(56)	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Investigations	314 (26)	467 (57)
Number of Violations Found	72 (7)	3,937 (57)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	12† (62)	285 (57)
Number of Convictions	24† (62)	5 (57)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (57)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	(26) Yes	Yes (57)

† Data are from April 2018 to February 2019.

Criminal law enforcement authorities continued to detain children for their alleged association with Boko Haram, including girls who were victims. (4,25,29,37,38,59,63) Although the government released some of the children and referred them to social services providers, many remained in detention facilities for prolonged periods. (4,25,29,59,63)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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	Coordinates efforts to combat child labor. Led by MOLE, and comprises representatives from seven governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, NGOs, ILO, and UNICEF. (7) Research was unable to determine whether this body was active during the reporting period.
Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates child labor issues related to human trafficking. Chaired by NAPTIP. (7) Research was unable to determine whether this body was active during the reporting period.

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V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementing a new national child labor action plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
NAPTIP 2019 Plan of Action	Provides a framework for mobilizing NAPTIP and all stakeholders involved in combating human trafficking, with an emphasis on enforcement, prosecution, and provision of victim services. (64) Research was unable to determine whether this body was active during the reporting period.
National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism	Designed to end the recruitment and use of children by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Aims to promote the protection of children's rights, ensure that suspects under age 18 are treated in accordance with international law, and provide for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration for children previously associated with CJTF. (65-67) In 2019, CJTF conducted awareness-raising activities to prevent child recruitment and cooperated with Borno state officials and the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting during verification and screening procedures. (68)

Although the Government of Nigeria has adopted policies on human trafficking and the use of children in armed conflict, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor since the conclusion of the National Policy on Child Labor in 2017.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains in Africa (ACCEL Africa) (2018-2022)	ILO-sponsored regional project aimed at eliminating child labor in supply chains, with particular focus on those involved with the production of cacao, coffee, cotton, gold, and tea. Collaborates with global supply chain actors working in Africa on public policy, good governance, empowerment, representation, partnership, and knowledge sharing. (69)
NAPTIP Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims†	Government-funded program that operates 10 shelters in Nigeria, with a total capacity of 315 victims. Shelters provide legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training and business management skills. (4,12) Continued to provide services to victims in 2019. (26)
Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor	USDOL-funded project implemented by ILO to conduct research and develop new survey methodologies, improve awareness, strengthen policies and government capacity, and promote partnerships to combat child labor and forced labor. Additional information is available on the USDOL website. (70)
World Bank-funded Programs	Projects aim to improve access to education. Includes: National Social Safety Nets Project (2016–2022), a \$50 million project that aims to provide primary school lunches and offers conditional cash transfers based on children's enrollment; Nigeria Partnership for Education Project (2015–2019), a \$100 million project that aimed to improve access and quality of education in selected states, particularly for girls; and the Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) (2017–2022), a \$611 million project which aims to increase access to education for out-of-school youth and improve literacy. (71-73) In 2019, The National Social Safety Net Project continued working with their government partners to ensure that they would be able to start their activities in the upcoming year while the Nigeria Partnership for Education Project was able to work towards their project development objectives which included promoting school effectiveness and improved learning outcomes, increasing access to basic education for out-of-school children, and strengthening planning and management systems including learning assessment and capacity development. Highlights of the Nigeria Partnership for Education Project included awarding 13,705 school grants to pre-primary schools. (71,72) Finally, the Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) project selected approximately 20,000 schools for its intensive literacy program which would reach more than 1.2 million grade 1 students. (73)
Safe Schools Initiative	Donor-funded program implemented by the government and international organizations that aims to improve access to education in northeastern Nigeria. (22,74,75) Research was unable to determine if this project was active 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. (76)

There are increasing concerns regarding the shelter conditions which are housing trafficking victims. These conditions include poor housing facilities, a lack of food, and insufficient stipends along with reports of victims being held against their will at the NAPTIP-run shelters for extended periods of time. (59, 63)

In addition, research found no evidence of programs to address all relevant worst forms of child labor, including the use of children in armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit activities.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Nigeria (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory; ensure that national legislation on the minimum age for work is consistent; and that all children are protected.	2012 – 2019
	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 – 2019
	Ensure laws criminalize both domestic and international trafficking or trafficking for the purpose of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation in all states.	2019
	Criminalize the offering of a child for prostitution in all states.	2019
	Ensure that using, procuring, and offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs are criminally prohibited in all states.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that provisions related to light work conform to international standards.	2009 – 2019
	Amend the Terrorism Prevention Act to prohibit the punishment of children for their association with armed groups.	2016 – 2019
Enforcement	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice and ensure that labor inspectors receive sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that a mechanism exists for enforcing existing protections for children working in the informal sector.	2009 – 2019
	Publish information on the training provided for new criminal investigators and whether any refresher courses were provided.	2015 – 2019
	Cease the practice of detaining children associated with armed groups for prolonged periods of time and refer these children to social services providers	2016 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their mandates as intended.	2018 – 2019
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children and forced child labor in granite, gravel, and cocoa production.	2018 – 2019
Social Programs	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 – 2019
	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 – 2019
	Ensure that NAPTIP shelters provide appropriate facilities, resources, and freedoms to victims.	2019
	Establish programs that prevent and remove children from all relevant worst forms of child labor, including armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit activities.	2009 – 2019

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