

In 2017, Nigeria made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Edo State established a Task Force to combat human trafficking and the Borno State government signed as a witness to an Action Plan between the United Nations and the non-governmental Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) which aims to end the recruitment and use of children by the CJTF. Labor inspectors conducted 4,694 child labor inspections, found 606 violations, and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters convicted 10 perpetrators for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. However, despite these efforts, children continue to be engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in quarrying granite and gravel, commercial sexual exploitation, and armed conflict. The legal framework has inconsistencies regarding child labor, and the minimum age for work is below international standards. There are not enough labor inspectors to provide sufficient coverage of the workforce. In addition, 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, and armed conflict. (1; 2; 3; 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	31.1 (13,924,739)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	76.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	26.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		73.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (5)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2011. (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; 8; 9)
	Fishing, activities unknown (10)
	Herding livestock (11)
Industry	Mining and quarrying granite and gravel (1; 2; 7; 12)
	Artisanal gold mining and processing (2; 7; 13; 14; 15)
	Harvesting sand (7)
	Construction, including making bricks and carrying construction materials (2)
Services	Domestic work (1; 2; 16; 17)
	Collecting money on public buses, and automotive repair (1; 17; 18; 11)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and scavenging (1; 2; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (17; 21; 22; 3)
	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 (23; 24; 3; 25; 26)
	Use in illicit activities for armed groups, sometimes as a result of forced recruitment, including participating in extortion, armed robbery, and drug trafficking (9; 17; 18)

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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‡	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict and in non-conflict support roles (3; 4; 27; 28)

‡ 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. (29; 30; 31) Furthermore, these children are highly vulnerable to recruitment by Boko Haram. (31)

Benin City, the capital of Edo state, is a major human trafficking hub in Africa. (32; 33) Girls from Nigeria are sent to North Africa and Europe for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (33; 34; 35; 36; 37; 38) Children from West African countries experience forced labor in Nigeria, including in granite mines, begging, agriculture, and domestic work. (3; 23; 39; 40)

Boko Haram forcibly recruited and used child soldiers during the reporting period. (4; 3) Reports indicate that children were recruited to participate in combat operations and act as spies, messengers, porters, body guards, and cooks. (27; 41) Children were also forced to act as suicide bombers. (4) The terrorist group also subjected girls to forced labor and sexual servitude. (3; 41) The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a non-state self-defense militia involved in fighting Boko Haram, continued to recruit and use children to conduct security searches, gather intelligence, man checkpoints, and apprehend suspected insurgents. (27; 28) The CJTF also reportedly used some children recovered from Boko Haram to lead CJTF and army personnel to Boko Haram camps, putting these children at serious risk for retaliation and denying them victim care. Although the Government of Nigeria has officially prohibited the recruitment and use of child soldiers, research found that the Nigerian military conducted joint patrols with the CJTF, which used children during the reporting period. (42; 27; 28) As reported by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as of May 2016, Nigerian military personnel were using four boys between ages 14 and 16 years old in support roles. At the close of 2017, it was unknown whether these children had been released. (43)

In 2017, more than 1.7 million people were internally displaced in northeast Nigeria, of which nearly 500,000 were children under age 18. (44) Some girls, particularly unaccompanied minors, were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in IDP camps and military barracks, often by members of the Nigerian military, the CJTF, and other camp security personnel in exchange for food. (3; 45; 46; 47; 48) Research was not able to determine the scale of this problem in 2017.

Although free and compulsory education is federally mandated by the Education Act, little enforcement of compulsory education laws occurs at the state level. (49) School fees are often charged, and the cost of materials can be prohibitive for families. (49; 50) Access to education is further hindered by a lack of teachers and inadequate sanitation facilities, particularly for girls. (49) Many families favored the enrollment of boys over girls in elementary and secondary school. (51; 52) Furthermore, government armed forces have previously occupied schools in their campaign against Boko Haram and the Islamic State-West Africa. (43; 27)

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: 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 (53; 54)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 59(6) of the Labour Act; Sections 28, 29, and 277 of the Child's Right Act (53; 54)
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 (53; 54; 55)
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 (54; 55)
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 (54; 55)
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 (54; 55; 56)
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 (54; 55)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Section 28 of the Armed Forces Act; Section 34 of the Child's Right Act (54; 57)
Non-state	No		Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (55)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Sections 2 and 15 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child's Right Act (54; 58)
Free Public Education	Yes		Sections 2 and 3 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child's Right Act (54; 58)

* No conscription (57)

The Federal Child's Right Act (CRA) codifies the rights of children in Nigeria and must be domesticated by each state to become law in its territory. (9; 54) To date, 23 states and the federal capital territory have domesticated the CRA; of the remaining 13 states, 12 are in northern Nigeria. (16; 59)

The laws in Nigeria regarding minimum age for employment are inconsistent. The CRA supersedes all legislation related to children yet states that the provisions on young people in the Labour Act still apply to children. (54) Although the CRA restricts children under age 18 from any work except light work for family members, it still applies Section 59 of the Labour Act, which is in force in all 36 states, that sets the minimum employment age at 12. (53; 54; 60) The Labour Act also permits children of any age to do light work alongside a family member in agriculture and domestic work. (53; 61) Furthermore, the minimum age protections in the Labour Act do not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy. (53; 61)

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. (53) The National Steering Committee

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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. (2; 61)

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. (54; 52)

Children are not excluded from the Terrorism Prevention Act's penalty of life imprisonment for assisting in acts of terrorism. (63)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON 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 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)	Deploy labor inspectors across 36 state labor offices and the federal capital territory to enforce federal child labor laws. (9; 64)
National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP)	Enforce laws against human trafficking and exploitative labor. (9) 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. (9)
Nigeria Police	Enforce all laws prohibiting forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Collaborate with NAPTIP on human trafficking enforcement. (9)
Nigeria Immigration Service	Collaborate with NAPTIP to enforce laws against child trafficking. (9)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, 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	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown	888 (65)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	Yes (11)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (66)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown	25,395 (66)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	23,472 (66)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	606 (66)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	3 (66)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	0 (66)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (66)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Yes (66)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown	Yes (66)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (66)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown	Yes (66)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Yes (66)

There are 42 inspectors dedicated to child labor in the federal capital territory; however, research did not find mechanisms to enforce existing protections for children who perform street work. (67; 66) The 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. (68; 69; 66) Enforcement of child labor laws remains challenging due to the lack of resources for inspections. (70; 10)

In 2017, inspectors conducted 4,694 child labor specific inspections and removed 275 children from child labor; 211 children were provided with vocational training, 100 children were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, and 20 children were reunited with their parents. (66) The Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) 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). (29)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, 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, including investigation planning.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (71)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (72)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (72)	Yes (71)
Number of Investigations	89 (73)	25† (74)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	3 (66)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	10† (74)
Number of Convictions	10 (73)	10† (74)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (75)	Yes (3)

† Data are from January 2017 to September 2017.

In 2017, NAPTIP conducted 25 investigations of the worst forms of child labor in domestic work. (74) NAPTIP initiated 10 prosecutions, 6 for the commercial sexual exploitation of children and 4 for child domestic work. It achieved 10 convictions, 9 regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children and 1 regarding child domestic work. (74) Despite efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict those who used children in the worst forms of child labor, the scope of these efforts is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.

In February 2017, the government signed standard operating procedures to refer children associated with armed groups to social protection services. (43) 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. (9) During the reporting period, NAPTIP rescued 298 children from the worst forms of child labor; 237 children from domestic work, and 61 boys from begging. (74) In February 2017, the government evacuated 41 girls from Mali who were trafficked for labor and sexual exploitation. (76) Criminal law enforcement authorities continued to detain children for their or their parent's alleged association with Boko Haram. (27; 46) Although the government released some of the children and referred them to social service providers, many children remained in detention facilities for prolonged periods. (41)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Steering Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinate efforts to combat child labor. Led by MOLE, comprises representatives from seven governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, NGOs, ILO, and UNICEF. (9; 77)
Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons	Coordinate child labor issues related to human trafficking. Chaired by NAPTIP. (9)
State Steering Committees on Child Labor	Guide state-level implementation of the National Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor. (77) Established in Akwa Ibom, Delta, Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo states. (78)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (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. (79)
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. (77) In 2017, the ILO supported MOLE to develop a reporting template and implementation guidelines for the Plan. (11)
NAPTIP Strategic Plan (2012–2017)	Provides a framework for mobilizing NAPTIP and all stakeholders involved in combating human trafficking within Nigeria and internationally. (80) In 2017, the government began drafting a new national action plan. (3)
National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism [†]	Designed to end the recruitment and use of children by the Borno CJTF. Also aims to promote the protection of children's rights, ensure suspects under age 18 are treated in accordance with international law, and provides for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration for children previously associated with the CJTF. (81; 82; 83)

[†] Policy was approved during the reporting period.

[‡] The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (84)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, 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
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. (51)
UNICEF country program (2014–2017)	Donor-funded program in coordination with the government that worked to ensure children associated with armed groups, including those in detention facilities, received reintegration services. (85; 86; 87)
NAPTIP Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims [†]	Government-funded program that operates ten 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. (3)
Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor (MAP16)*	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO to conduct research and develop new survey methodologies, improve awareness, and strengthen policies and government capacity to combat child labor and forced labor in 10 countries. For additional information, please see our website.
National Social Investment Program	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. (88) Launched in December 2016, the program is initially targeting 1 million households in eight of Nigeria's 36 states. (89)
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. (90; 91)

* 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. (92)

Research found no evidence of programs to specifically address children engaged in agriculture, quarrying, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, 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 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	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 – 2017
	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 – 2017
	Ensure that using, procuring, and offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs are criminally prohibited in all states.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2017
	Amend the Terrorism Prevention Act to prohibit the punishment of children for their association with armed groups.	2016 – 2017
Enforcement	Publish information on the training of labor inspectors.	2009 – 2017
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice. Ensure that labor inspectors receive sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws.	2016 – 2017
	Ensure that a mechanism exists for enforcing existing protections for children who perform street work.	2010 – 2017
	Ensure that the elements of the Nigerian military do not use children, including in coordination with the CJTF, and that the CJTF does not use children.	2016 – 2017
	Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict those who use children in the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict and commercial sexual exploitation.	2017
	Cease the practice of detaining children associated with armed groups for prolonged periods and refer these children to social service providers.	2015 – 2017
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 – 2017
	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 – 2017
	Establish and expand programs that prevent and remove children from child labor in agriculture, quarrying, armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and illicit activities.	2009 – 2017

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