

NIGERIA

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Nigeria made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government, through the International Labor Organization’s Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains in Africa Project, renovated Oke Agunla Community School and enrolled 110 children at risk of child labor. However, Nigeria’s minimum age for work protections do not meet international standards as they do not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy and the state of Kano does not prohibit the use of children in illicit activities. The government also lacks the necessary number of labor inspectors to cover the labor force and research was unable to determine if the government’s coordinating mechanism or policies were active during the reporting period.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	15.0% (6,798,456)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	78.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	10.4%

Children in Nigeria are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and use in armed conflict. Children also engage in quarrying granite and artisanal gold mining.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Production of manioc/cassava, cocoa, and herding livestock.



Industry

Mining and quarrying of granite and gravel; harvesting sand; artisanal gold mining; and construction, including carrying construction materials.



Services

Domestic work; collecting money on public buses, washing cars, and automotive repair; and street work, including vending, begging, and scavenging.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]

Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; forced labor in begging; domestic work; street vending; mining and quarrying gravel and granite; agriculture, including in the production of cocoa; and recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict and in non-conflict support roles, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.

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



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Nigeria’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Raise the minimum age for work from 12 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.

Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to children working in the informal sector and who are self-employed.

Harmonize the Child’s Right Act and the Labor Act to ensure that their legal provisions are not contradictory, including provisions on minimum age for work and light work.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont.)

Criminally prohibit using, procuring, and offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs in all states.

Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

Ensure that provisions related to light work conform to international standards by putting restrictions on domestic and agricultural work.

Amend the Terrorism Prevention Act to prohibit the punishment of children for their association with armed groups.

Enforcement

Increase the number of labor inspectors from 733 to 4,885 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 73,273,000 workers.

Ensure that labor inspectors and enforcement agencies receive sufficient resources, including funding, resources for inspections, office facilities, transportation, fuel, and other necessities, to enforce child labor laws.

Establish a mechanism to enforce existing protections for children working in the informal sector.

Publish information on child labor law enforcement, including labor inspectorate funding, whether training for labor inspectors is provided, the number of child labor violations found, whether penalties were imposed for child labor violations, the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, and whether routine, targeted, and unannounced inspections were conducted.

Publish disaggregated information on criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators, number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.

Coordination

Ensure that the National Steering Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor is active and able to carry out its mandates as intended.

Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement government policies, including the National Social Behavioral Change Communication Strategy for Elimination of Child Labor in Nigeria, the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria, and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, and that data on these activities are published during the reporting period.

Social Programs

Increase access to education by ensuring all states adopt programs to offer free education, assist the transfer of children in *Almajiri* schools into government-recognized schools, eliminate school fees, provide sufficient infrastructure for schools including increasing the number of sanitation facilities, address sexual harassment, and establish programs to ensure girls are afforded the same educational opportunities as boys.

Establish a robust mechanism to ensure that children are provided birth documentation so they are able to attend school.

Ensure that there are proper protection protocols in place to keep schools safe, including from acts of terrorism and sexual violence.

Ensure that the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters and related agencies provide appropriate facilities and resources, including livable stipends and adequate housing, to survivors, and that survivors are not held against their will in shelters.

Establish programs that prevent and remove children from all relevant worst forms of child labor, including armed conflict and commercial sexual exploitation.

**CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

Children in and near Benin City are at higher risk of being trafficked as Benin City is a major human trafficking hub in Africa, with children trafficked for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Further, children from primarily rural areas within the country are at higher risk of being subjected to child labor, with girls recruited for domestic work and sex trafficking, while boys are recruited for street vending, domestic work, mining, agriculture, and begging. Despite notable military advances and proclamations of Boko Haram's defeat by government forces, the group remained a security threat in 2023, with escalating attacks by both Boko Haram and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) West Africa in Nigeria's northeastern regions. These attacks have contributed to the displacement of more than 2 million Nigerians, of which 56 percent are children.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Research suggests that one-third of all Nigerian children are out of school. Northeastern and northwestern states have female primary net attendance rates of 47.7 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively. Rapid population growth in Nigeria is also driving the informal education sector, with several million boys in the north going to Quranic schools known as *Almajiri*. The government does not officially recognize these schools, and students attending *Almajiri* schools are officially considered to be out of school. The *Almajiri* system includes a component of child labor, with some teachers tasking older children with menial jobs and other children forced into begging. Reports also suggest that children lacking birth certificates or other formal documentation have been denied access to public schools. Although it is unclear how widespread this issue is, research suggests that it is most common in the northeastern region and rural areas. In addition, the widespread increase in kidnappings, killings, village raids, and cattle-rustling throughout the Northwest and North Central regions led by organized criminal groups has also contributed to the intermittent closure of schools throughout the region, with these challenges being more acute in rural areas. 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. When families experience economic hardship, the enrollment of boys is typically prioritized over the enrollment of girls. Other barriers to education include a lack of trained teachers, sexual harassment, inadequate sanitation facilities, poor infrastructure, and fear of abduction or attack by Boko Haram while at school, particularly for girls in the northeastern part of the country.






LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Nigeria has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Nigeria's laws do not meet international standards on minimum age for work as the Labor Act does not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy. In addition, the Labor Act permits children of any age to do light work in agriculture and domestic work if they are working with a family member, which does not meet international standards.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 12 Years		Sections 59(1) and 91 of the Labor Act; Sections 28, 29, and 277 of the Child's Right Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Sections 59 (5) and (6) of the Labor Act; Sections 28, 29, and 277 of the Child's Right Act; Sections 23 and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Sections 59–61 and 91 of the Labor Act; Section 28 of the Child's Right Act
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Sections 13, 21–25, and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015; Sections 28, 30, and 277 of the Child's Right Act; Article 34 of the Constitution
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Sections 13, 16, 17, 21–25, and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015; Sections 30, 33, and 277 of the Child's Right Act
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Sections 13–17 and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015; Section 23 of the Cybercrimes Act; Sections 30, 32, and 277 of the Child's Right Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Sections 25, 26, 30, and 277 of the Child's Right Act
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Section 28 of the Armed Forces Act; Sections 34 and 277 of the Child's Right Act

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act
Compulsory Education Age, 15 Years		Sections 2 and 15 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child’s Right Act
Free Public Education		Sections 2 and 3 of the Education Act; Part 2 Section 15 of the Child’s Right Act

*Country has no conscription

In Nigeria, 35 of the 36 states have adopted and implemented the Child’s Right Act (CRA), leaving the state of Kano in northern Nigeria with a legal statute that does not meet international standards for the prohibition against the use of children in illicit activities. Furthermore, under the CRA, certain provisions of the Labor Act that are not in compliance with international standards may remain in force. This includes Section 59, which sets the minimum age for employment at age 12 in contradiction to the CRA, which only permits children under age 18 to engage in light work for family members. The minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age of 15, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. In addition, the Labor Act permits children of any age to do light work in agriculture and domestic work if they are working with a family member, which does not meet international standards. Furthermore, the minimum age protections in the Labor Act do not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy. Lastly, children are not excluded from the Terrorism Prevention Act’s penalty of life imprisonment for assisting in acts of terrorism and are implicitly included as people in the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Nigeria took actions to address child labor. However, insufficient funding for enforcement agencies hinders enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Labor Inspectorate, Ministry of Labor and Employment (MLE): Deploys labor inspectors across 36 state labor offices and the federal capital territory to enforce federal child labor laws.

Nigeria Police: Enforce all laws prohibiting forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Collaborate with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to address human trafficking issues.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2023, **733** labor inspectors conducted **17,068** worksite inspections, finding **453** child labor violations. It is **unknown** whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions were initiated, or perpetrators were convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Nigeria established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.</p>	<p>National Steering Committee for the Elimination of Child Labor (NSCCL): Coordinates efforts to address child labor and is led by MLE; comprises representatives from seven governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, NGOs, ILO, and UNICEF. Members are charged with leveraging resources for project implementation from their institutions and identifying synergies with other existing programs.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Nigeria established policies related to child labor. However, research was unable to determine if these policies were active during the reporting period.</p> <p><i>‡ The government had other policies that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p>National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor and Its Worst Forms (2021–2025): Outlines the steps toward achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and child labor in its entirety in 2030. During the reporting period, the MLE held a 3-day capacity building for the NSCCL in January 2023 and July 2023, in commemoration of the 2023 World Day Against Child Labor. Quarterly meetings at national and state levels were also held. In addition, domestic airport workers and airlines throughout the country were provided anti-trafficking trainings.</p> <p>National Action Plan on Human Trafficking (NATIP) in Nigeria (2022–2026): Provides a framework for anti-human trafficking programming, with an emphasis on enforcement, prosecution, and provision of services to survivors. Research was unable to determine whether activities were carried out to implement the policy in 2023.</p> <p>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, ensures that suspects under age 18 are treated in accordance with international law, and provides for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration for children previously associated with CJTF. The UN and CJTF, with the support of the government, continued to reintegrate children in 2023. Since the signing of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, the UN has reported nearly no use of children by CJTF.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Nigeria funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors and in all states where child labor has been identified.</p> <p><i>‡ Program is funded by the Government of Nigeria.</i></p>	<p>NAPTIP Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims:[‡] Government-funded program that operates 10 shelters in Nigeria, capable of housing up to 315 trafficking survivors. Shelters provide legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training and business management skills, along with referring survivors to NGOs for additional care. However, research found concerns regarding the conditions in shelters housing human trafficking survivors, including poor housing facilities, a lack of food, and insufficient stipends, along with reports of survivors being held against their will for extended periods at shelters run by NAPTIP.</p> <p>Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains in Africa (ACCEL Africa): ILO-sponsored regional project which aims to eliminate child labor in supply chains, with particular focus on those involved in the production of cocoa, coffee, cotton, gold, and tea. In 2023, ILO-ACCEL renovated Oke Agunla Community School and enrolled 110 children at risk of child labor.</p> <p>World Bank-Funded Programs: Projects aimed to improve access to education. Include the Additional Financing for Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment, a \$700 million project aimed at improving secondary education opportunities for girls that was approved in 2023.</p>

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports