

# Nigeria

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Nigeria are unavailable.<sup>3455</sup> Many children work in agriculture and related sectors, helping the family in fishing, farming, or cattle herding. Children also work on commercial farms.<sup>3456</sup> In urban areas, children work as domestic servants, street hawkers, vendors, beggars, scavengers, shoe shiners, car washers/watchers, and bus conductors.<sup>3457</sup> Children also work in cottage industries and mechanical workshops as iron and metal workers, carpenters, tailors, weavers, caterers, barbers and hairdressers.<sup>3458</sup> Child begging is especially widespread in northern Nigeria.<sup>3459</sup> The *almajiranci* system of semi-formal Koranic education has come to rely on child pupils begging to support their *mallam*, or Islamic teacher.<sup>3460</sup> Child labor is one of many problems associated with poverty. In 1996, the most recent year for which data are available, 70.2 percent of the population in Nigeria were living on less than USD 1 a day.<sup>3461</sup>

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is common in many cities in Nigeria.<sup>3462</sup> The country is a source, transit, and destination country for children trafficked for forced labor and forced prostitution.<sup>3463</sup> Children from Benin and other African countries are trafficked to Nigeria, where some are forced to work as domestic workers, prostitutes,<sup>3464</sup> or under other exploitative labor conditions.<sup>3465</sup> Nigerian children are trafficked internally and to West and Central Africa for domestic labor, commercial agriculture (including

---

<sup>3455</sup> This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section in the front of the report for information about sources used. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section.

<sup>3456</sup> Anthony Hodges, *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-up Call, Situation Assessment and Analysis 2001* (Lagos: UNICEF and the Nigeria National Planning Commission, 2001), 204. See also Bolanle M Fetuga, et. al., "Prevalence, types and demographic features of child labour among school children in Nigeria," *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 5 (March 2, 2005); available from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-698X/52>.

<sup>3457</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Nigeria*, February 28, 2005, section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41620.htm>. See also U.S. Consulate General- Lagos, *reporting*, August 31, 2005. See also Fetuga, "Prevalence, types and demographic features of child labour among school children in Nigeria."

<sup>3458</sup> Hodges, *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria*, 205.

<sup>3459</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>3460</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3461</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005* [CD-ROM], Washington, DC, 2005.

<sup>3462</sup> Hodges, 209-210. An NGO has reported that the average age of commercial sex workers is 16 years. See ECPAT International, *Nigeria*, in ECPAT International, [database online] 2002 [cited November 8, 2005], Child Prostitution; available from [http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat\\_inter/projects/monitoring/online\\_database/index.asp](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp).

<sup>3463</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Nigeria*, Washington, D.C., June 3, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46614.htm>. See also ILO-IPEC, *Combating the trafficking of children for labour exploitation in West & Central Africa (Phase II)*, project document, RAF/01/P53/USA, Geneva, April, 2001, 1.

<sup>3464</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Combating the trafficking of children for labour exploitation in West & Central Africa (Phase II)*, 1.

<sup>3465</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Nigeria*.

cocoa), quarrying, and street hawking, and to Europe for commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>3466</sup> Children are also trafficked to Saudi Arabia.<sup>3467</sup>

The Constitution of Nigeria requires the government to provide free, compulsory primary education “when practical.”<sup>3468</sup> The compulsory education period in Nigeria is 9 years.<sup>3469</sup> In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 119 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 67 percent.<sup>3470</sup> Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Primary school attendance statistics are not available for Nigeria.<sup>3471</sup> Although more than two-thirds of all states in Nigeria have declared free basic education,<sup>3472</sup> access to education is hindered by the costs of books, transportation, and uniforms.<sup>3473</sup> Girls who are unable to attend school are often required to work as domestics, traders or street vendors.<sup>3474</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Act sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years, except for light agricultural, horticultural, or domestic work performed for the family.<sup>3475</sup> The minimum age for apprenticeships is 13 years.<sup>3476</sup> The Labor Act prohibits employing children to lift or carry any load likely to negatively affect their physical development, and establishes a minimum age of 15 years for industrial work and maritime employment.<sup>3477</sup> Children under 16 years are prohibited from working underground, on machines, at night, on a public holiday, or in employment that is dangerous or immoral, for more than 4 consecutive hours, or for more than 8 hours a day.<sup>3478</sup> The Act authorizes the Ministry of Labor to regulate child domestic service.<sup>3479</sup>

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Nigeria. According to section 11 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, any person who traffics a child under the age of 18 years into or out of Nigeria with the intent to prostitute him/her is subject to imprisonment from ten years to life. The Act stipulates a prison term for any person who procures for himself or others any child under the age of 18, and for any person who commits a child

---

<sup>3466</sup> Ibid. See also ILO-IPEC, *West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Programme to Combat Hazardous and Exploitative Child Labour (WACAP)*, project document, RAF/02/P50/USA, Geneva, September 2002. Children are often trafficked by relatives or other familiar people who offer salary payments, schooling or training. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Nigeria*, section 5.

<sup>3467</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Nigeria*, Section 5.

<sup>3468</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Nigeria*, Section 5. However, according to the U.S. Department of State, authorities do not effectively enforce laws on compulsory education. See U.S. Embassy- Abuja, *reporting*, September 20 2004.

<sup>3469</sup> Nigerian Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity official, interview with DOL contractor, March 29, 2005.

<sup>3470</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed October 2005).

<sup>3471</sup> This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the “Data Sources and Definitions” section for information about sources used.

<sup>3472</sup> U.S. Consulate General- Lagos, *reporting*, August 31, 2005.

<sup>3473</sup> U.S. Embassy- Abuja, *reporting*, September 20, 2004.

<sup>3474</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Nigeria*, section 5.

<sup>3475</sup> Ibid., section 6d. See also *Nigeria Labour Act, (1974)*, article 59; available from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/42156/64980/E7RNGA01.htm#p3>.

<sup>3476</sup> *Nigeria Labour Act*, article 49.

<sup>3477</sup> Ibid., articles 59-61.

<sup>3478</sup> Ibid., articles 59-60.

<sup>3479</sup> Ibid., articles 59 and 65.

in their care to prostitution or indecent assault.<sup>3480</sup> The Act also prohibits forced labor, trafficking in slaves, pornography, drug trafficking, or forced or compulsory recruitment into armed conflict. The Act applies to all residents of Nigeria, and to Nigerians who are convicted outside of Nigeria for trafficking-related offenses. It also provides for the rights of victims of trafficking, including the right to access health and social services while a temporary resident, protection of identity, and the right to press charges against the trafficker.<sup>3481</sup> Eleven Nigerian states afflicted by trafficking have established anti-trafficking police units.<sup>3482</sup>

The Child Rights Act provides for a ten-year sentence for the trafficking of children for the purposes of hawking, begging, prostitution, pornography, labor under slave-like conditions, and activities related to illicit drugs.<sup>3483</sup> Nigeria has no military conscription. Recruitment into the professional armed forces is on a voluntary basis. The minimum legal recruitment age is 18.<sup>3484</sup>

Child labor regulations, policies and laws are promoted and enforced at the federal, state and local levels by various ministries and agencies. The Federal Ministry of Employment, Labor and Productivity<sup>3485</sup> coordinates all efforts to combat child labor through its Inspectorate Department, which includes a Child Labor Unit. As of March, the Ministry had 318 Labor Officers and Inspectors, 80 of whom had been trained in child labor issues.<sup>3486</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, government initiatives to stem the incidence of child labor have been ineffective.<sup>3487</sup> Inspectors are hindered by inadequate funding, transportation, training, incentives, and resistance by employers, children and their families.<sup>3488</sup> The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act established The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), a national agency to coordinate trafficking in persons efforts, oversee enforcement of the Act, and to provide for victim rehabilitation.<sup>3489</sup> According to U.S. Department of State, trafficking in persons funding is inadequate and official corruption, particularly among immigration and airport authorities, allows traffickers to gain access into the country.<sup>3490</sup>

---

<sup>3480</sup> Government of Nigeria, *Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003*, (July), sections 11-19, 21, 23, 25-26, 36-38. See also UNFPA, *Nigeria Enacts Anti-Human Trafficking Law*, April 5, 2004; available from <http://www.unfpa.org/parliamentarians/news/newsletters/issue20.htm>. See also U.S. Consulate General- Lagos, *reporting*, August 31, 2005.

<sup>3481</sup> *Trafficking in Persons Act*. See also UNFPA, *Nigeria Enacts Anti-Human Trafficking Law*.

<sup>3482</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Nigeria*, section 5.

<sup>3483</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Official Gazette*, No. 116, Lagos, December 23, 2003, Article 30.

<sup>3484</sup> Recruitment into the professional armed forces is on a voluntary basis. The minimum legal recruitment age is 18. See Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004-Nigeria*, online report, 2004; available from [http://www.child-soldiers.org/document\\_get.php?id=790](http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=790).

<sup>3485</sup> The Government of Nigeria, *Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity*, [online] [cited January 20, 2006]; available from [http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/fed\\_min\\_employment\\_labour.aspx](http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/fed_min_employment_labour.aspx).

<sup>3486</sup> Nigerian Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity official, interview with DOL contractor, March 29, 2005, 17.

<sup>3487</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Nigeria*, 6d.

<sup>3488</sup> Nigerian Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity official, interview with DOL contractor, March 29, 2005. See also U.S. Consulate General- Lagos, *reporting*, August 31, 2005.

<sup>3489</sup> *Trafficking in Persons Act*.

<sup>3490</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Nigeria*, section 5. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Nigeria*.

## Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Nigeria participates in two USDOL-funded regional projects: the first aims to combat the trafficking of children,<sup>3491</sup> and the second, funded jointly with the Cocoa Global Issues Group, withdraws children from hazardous work in the cocoa sector, generates income for families, and improves access to and the quality of education.<sup>3492</sup> In addition, the USAID-supported Sustainable Tree Crops Program incorporates child labor issues into its program in Nigeria, and coordinates with the ILO-IPEC program to address child labor in the cocoa sector.<sup>3493</sup> In 2005, the U.S. Department of State began funding four anti-trafficking awareness raising projects throughout the country.<sup>3494</sup>

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	10/2/2002	✓
Ratified Convention 182	10/2/2002	✓
ILO-IPEC Member		✓
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor Action Plan		✓
Sector Action Plan		

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Global Program against Trafficking in Human Beings provides technical assistance to the government to assess trends in human trafficking.<sup>3495</sup> In addition, the Governments of Nigeria and Italy are collaborating on a separate UNODC project to reduce the trafficking of women and minors for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation between the two countries.<sup>3496</sup> With funding from the U.S. Department of State and USAID, IOM and local non-governmental organizations have developed and currently operate temporary shelters and training centers in Edo State for returned trafficking victims.<sup>3497</sup>

NAPTIP has been working with other federal ministries, law enforcement and immigration officers, and civil society organizations in 22 states to establish anti-trafficking committees at the state level to sensitize the local populations on the dangers of trafficking in persons.<sup>3498</sup> As of August, NAPTIP had successfully convicted 3 traffickers and had 2 additional cases pending.<sup>3499</sup> NAPTIP is also working with international governments and organizations to establish a center for the maintenance and analysis of records from all agencies and organizations working on TIP issues.<sup>3500</sup>

<sup>3491</sup> The project began in 1999 and is currently in its second phase. See ILO-IPEC, *Combating the trafficking of children for labour exploitation in West & Central Africa (Phase I)*, project document, RAF/01/P53/USA, Geneva, July 1999. See also ILO-IPEC, *Combating the trafficking of children for labour exploitation in West & Central Africa (Phase II)*. See also U.S. Department of Labor, *ILAB Technical Cooperation Project Summary: Combating Trafficking in Children for Labor Exploitation in West and Central Africa, Phases 1 & 2 (LUTRENA)*, summary.

<sup>3492</sup> ILO-IPEC, *West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Programme*, project document, 1, 12.

<sup>3493</sup> Sustainable Tree Crops Program, *Program Overview*, [online] January 4, 2006 [cited January 20, 2006]; available from <http://www.treecrops.org/aboutstcp/stcp%20program%20overview.pdf>.

<sup>3494</sup> U.S. Department of State- INL, *reporting*, November 9, 2005.

<sup>3495</sup> The project is supported by funds from Canada, France and Norway. See UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Pilot Projects: Technical Cooperation by Geographical Region: Africa*, [online] [cited January 22, 2006]; available from [http://www.odccp.org/odccp/trafficking\\_projects.html](http://www.odccp.org/odccp/trafficking_projects.html).

<sup>3496</sup> UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Programme of action against trafficking in minors and young women from Nigeria into Italy for the purpose of sexual exploitation*, January 22, 2006; available from <http://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/humantrafficking.html>.

<sup>3497</sup> Many women and children trafficked from Nigeria to Europe originate in Edo State. The shelters offer victims temporary housing, counseling, and 6 months of training in literacy and numeracy, and marketable skills such as computer use and tailoring. See USAID, *Trafficking in Persons: USAID's Response*, March, 2004, 5; available from [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/wid/pubs/trafficking\\_in\\_person\\_usaids\\_response\\_march2004.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/trafficking_in_person_usaids_response_march2004.pdf).

<sup>3498</sup> U.S. Consulate General- Lagos, *reporting*, August 31, 2005.

<sup>3499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3500</sup> U.S. Embassy- Abuja, *reporting*, February 16, 2005.

In June 2005, the Governments of Nigeria and Benin signed a cooperation agreement to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, with an emphasis on trafficking in women and children.<sup>3501</sup> In March 2005, police rescued more than 100 trafficked children who were concealed in a frozen food truck on its way to Lagos for work as domestic servants. Sixty seven of these children were between the ages of 1 and 14.<sup>3502</sup> In July, police in Cross River State intercepted a bus traveling to Cameroon carrying 40 children destined to be exploited in forced labor situations.<sup>3503</sup>

The Government of Nigeria's "National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy" (NEEDS 2003-2007) sets an institutional and governmental reform agenda for the country. Among other things, the NEEDS seeks to provide a safety net to vulnerable groups and emphasizes the importance of education and the protection of children from all forms of abuse including hazardous work, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.<sup>3504</sup> The Government of Nigeria's Education strategies include full implementation of the free and compulsory education requirement, decreasing gender gaps in the educational system, and improving the quality of education through teacher reform. In addition, the Government's 2004-2007 Strategic National Education Plan aims to improve the quality of education at all levels.<sup>3505</sup>

In September, the President of Nigeria launched a school feeding program that aimed to provide one meal per school day to 10 percent of all primary school children in the pilot phase of the program. The program aims to increase enrollment and completion rates of children living in poor urban neighborhoods and rural communities.<sup>3506</sup>

UNICEF, in collaboration with the government, has been implementing a Strategy for Acceleration of Girls Education in Nigeria to promote equal access to education for girls.<sup>3507</sup> UNICEF also works to improve enrollment and retention rates, educational attainment and nutritional status in primary schools by focusing on teaching and learning practices.<sup>3508</sup> The Government of Nigeria is implementing a USD 101 million Universal Basic Education Project supported by the World Bank, which aims to improve the quality of schools, increase access to education, and strengthen the Education Management Information System in Nigeria.<sup>3509</sup> USAID funds the Literacy Enhancement Assistance Program (LEAP) which

---

<sup>3501</sup> UNICEF, *Benin and Nigeria pledge to fight child trafficking*, June 9, 2005; available from [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_27309.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_27309.html). See also Max Amuchie, *Nigeria, Benin, United against Child Trafficking*, [online] 2005 [cited June 21, 2005]; available from <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200506201353.html>.

<sup>3502</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Nigeria: Fighting the Many Heads of the Child-Trafficking Beast*, [online] March 21, 2005 [cited May 23, 2005]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=46202>. See also UNICEF, *Nigerian officials rescue more than 100 children from child traffickers*, March 9, 2005; available from [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria\\_25508.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_25508.html).

<sup>3503</sup> U.S. Consulate General- Lagos, *reporting*, August 31, 2005.

<sup>3504</sup> See Government of Nigeria, *Nigeria: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy*, March 2004, 5, 54, 101, 108; available from <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/eGovernment/Needs.PDF>. See also Daily Champion (Lagos), *Osuji Takes SNEP to UNESCO*, allAfrica, [online] September 29, 2004 [cited October 28, 2004]; available from <http://allafrica.com/stories/200409290567.html>. See also U.S. Consulate General- Lagos, *reporting*, August 31, 2005.

<sup>3505</sup> Other NEEDS education strategies involve the further development and improvement of the country's vocational education programs. Government of Nigeria, *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy*. See also UNESCO, *Nigeria: Minister of Education*, [online] 2004 [cited November 22, 2005]; available from <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/english/MesMOE/messages/nigeria.html>.

<sup>3506</sup> Xinhua News Agency, *Nigeria launches school feeding program*, [online] September 26, 2005 [cited September 27, 2005]; available from <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/KHII-6GM4ZF?OpenDocument>.

<sup>3507</sup> UNICEF, *Carol Bellamy Visits Polio's Last stand in Africa*, [online] 2003 [cited July 6, 2005]; available from [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_12203.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_12203.html).

<sup>3508</sup> UNICEF, *UNICEF: At a glance: Nigeria - Statistics*, [online] July 24, 2003 [cited November 22, 2005]; available from [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria\\_statistics.html?q=printme](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_statistics.html?q=printme).

<sup>3509</sup> The project began in 2002. See World Bank, *Universal Basic Education Project*, [online] 2004 [cited November 22, 2005]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P071494>.

supports teacher training, community participation, and the use of educational data in the development of school budgets and policy in three states (Lagos, Kano, and Nasarawa), as well as youth skills development for unemployed youth in Delta, Lagos, and Kano.<sup>3510</sup>

---

<sup>3510</sup> The LEAP program operates in primary grades 3-6. USAID, *S03 - Basic Education*, [online] no date [cited November 22, 2005]; available from <http://www.usaid.gov/ng/so3.htm>.