

Niger

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

UNICEF estimated that 70.1 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were working in Niger in 2000.²⁹⁶⁴ Children work primarily in the informal and agricultural sectors.²⁹⁶⁵ Children in rural areas mainly work on family farms gathering water or firewood, pounding grain, tending animals, or working in the fields.²⁹⁶⁶ Children as young as 6 years old are reported to work on grain farms in the southwest.²⁹⁶⁷ Children also shine shoes; guard cars; work as apprentices for artisans, tailors, and mechanics; perform domestic work; and work as porters and street beggars.²⁹⁶⁸ Children work under hazardous conditions in small trona, salt, gypsum, and gold mines and quarries; prostitution; and drug trafficking;²⁹⁶⁹ as well as in slaughterhouses.²⁹⁷⁰

Niger serves as a source and transit country for children trafficked into for domestic service and commercial labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.²⁹⁷¹ Some Koranic teachers indenture young boys and send them to beg in the streets.²⁹⁷² Forced domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation of girls is a problem in Niger.²⁹⁷³

²⁹⁶⁴ The survey also found that 60.9 percent of children ages 5 to 9 and 82.6 percent of children ages 10 to 15 were working.. The statistics include children working only, children working and studying, and children that carry out household chores for more than 4 hours per day. See Republic of Niger, *Enquête a indicateurs multiples de la fin de la décennie (draft) (MICS2) Standard Tables*, UNICEF, November 2000, 67; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/niger/nigertables.pdf>.

²⁹⁶⁵ International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), *Internationally Recognised Core Labour Standards in Niger and Senegal*, ICFTU, Geneva, September 24, 2003, 1; available from <http://www.icftu.org/www/pdf/nigersenegalclsreport.pdf>.

²⁹⁶⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Niger*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27742.htm>.

²⁹⁶⁷ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Niger: Child Labour Project Launched", IRINnews.org, [online], September 13, 2001 [cited May 27, 2004]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=11374>.

²⁹⁶⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Examen des Rapports Présentés par les États Parties en Application de l'Article 44 de la Convention, Rapports initiaux devant être soumis en 1992, Niger*, CRC/C/3/Add.29/Rev. 1, Geneva, October 2001, para. 381. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 6d.

²⁹⁶⁹ In 2000, the ILO estimated that 57 percent of the workers in small quarries in Niger were children. Some 250,000 children were estimated to be working in small scale mines and quarries. In the shantytowns that spring up around the mines, there are reports that girls as young as 10 are involved in prostitution and that both boys and girls are exploited in drug trafficking. See Soumaila Alfa, *Child Labour in Small-Scale Mines in Niger*, working paper, ILO, Geneva, September 28, 2000; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/papers/childmin/137e1.htm#Niger>. Also see U.S. Embassy- Niamey, *unclassified telegram no. 1166*, August 15, 2003.

²⁹⁷⁰ U.S. Embassy- Niamey, *unclassified telegram no. 1166*. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Niger: Child Labour Project Launched". Girls are also forced into prostitution. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 6d.

²⁹⁷¹ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Niger*, Washington, D.C., June 11, 2004. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 6f.

²⁹⁷² U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Niger*. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Sections 6f.

²⁹⁷³ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Niger*. See also ECPAT International, *Niger*, in ECPAT International, [database online] November 28, 2003 [cited May 27, 2004]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/countries.asp?arrCountryID=125&CountryProfile

Primary education is compulsory for six years.²⁹⁷⁴ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 40.1 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 34.2 percent.²⁹⁷⁵ 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. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Niger. As of 2000, 71.1 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.²⁹⁷⁶ Children are often forced to work rather than attend school, particularly during planting or harvest periods. In addition, nomadic children in northern parts of the country often do not have the opportunity to attend school.²⁹⁷⁷

Among the challenges faced by the Nigerian education system are outdated primary teaching methodologies; pre-school education that is restricted primarily to urban areas; parental attitudes towards Nigerian education; inadequate infrastructure; and lack of supplies.²⁹⁷⁸

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years although children under 14 may work with special authorization. Children 14 to 18 years old may not work for more than 4.5 hours per day or in industrial jobs.²⁹⁷⁹ The Labor Code prohibits forced and bonded labor, except for work by legally convicted prisoners.²⁹⁸⁰ The law also requires that employers guarantee minimum sanitary working conditions for children.²⁹⁸¹ The Penal Code criminalizes the procurement of a minor for the purpose of prostitution.²⁹⁸² The Ministry of Labor is charged with enforcing labor laws, but has very limited resources with which to do so.²⁹⁸³

=&CSEC=Overview&Implement=&Nationalplans=&orgWorkCSEC=&DisplayBy=optDisplayCountry. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 5.

²⁹⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 5.

²⁹⁷⁵ There is significant gender disparity in gross primary enrollment rates between boys (47.5 percent) and girls (27.5 percent) for 2001. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

²⁹⁷⁶ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*.

²⁹⁷⁷ U.S. Embassy- Niamey, *unclassified telegram no. 2219*, July 2000.

²⁹⁷⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Rapports initiaux*, para. 302, 03, 05, 06.

²⁹⁷⁹ U.S. Embassy- Niamey, *unclassified telegram no. 0822*, February 1998.

²⁹⁸⁰ In addition to the existing prohibition of forced labor in the Labor Code, a new law was passed in May 2003 to outlaw all forms of slavery and to assign prison sentences of 10 to 30 years for those in violation. Despite these legal proscriptions, a traditional caste system is practiced by some ethnic minorities, which promotes slave-like relationships between the upper and lower castes. See International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), *Core Labour Standards in Niger and Senegal*, 8-9. Forced child labor does occur. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 6c.

²⁹⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 6d.

²⁹⁸² The penalty for procuring a minor is two to five years' imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 to 5,000,000 francs (USD 93.56 to 9,355.52). See Government of Niger, *Criminal Code: Chapter VIII- Offenses Against Public Morals*, as cited in The Protection Project Legal Library, [database online], Articles 291 and 92; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/NigerF.pdf>. For currency conversion, see *Universal Currency Converter*, in XE.com, [online] [cited May 27, 2004]; available from <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>.

²⁹⁸³ U.S. Embassy- Niamey, *unclassified telegram no. 1166*. As of August 2003, there were only 8 labor inspectors in the country, one for each region. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Niger*, Section 6d.

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

The government conducts anti-trafficking information and education campaigns, and supports two NGO programs that provide assistance to trafficked victims. The government also provided anti-trafficking training to police and border officials. The Ministry of Justice created a national commission to coordinate anti-trafficking activities, and the government signed an anti-trafficking declaration issued by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).²⁹⁸⁴

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	12/4/1978	✓
Ratified Convention 182	10/23/2000	✓
ILO-IPEC Member		✓
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

Education is a cornerstone of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper under the IMF's Enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.²⁹⁸⁵ The goals of this initiative include increasing primary school enrollment and completion rates, especially among girls, as well as enrollment in rural secondary schools.²⁹⁸⁶ UNICEF is also supporting government education efforts to improve primary education through programs like the African Girls' Education Initiative.²⁹⁸⁷ The Government of Niger is participating in a 4-year USD 2 million USDOL Education Initiative project designed to provide increased access to basic education for 17,800 working or at risk-children.²⁹⁸⁸ WFP is also active in Niger, implementing activities to increase enrollment and attendance in primary schools through a school food program.²⁹⁸⁹

²⁹⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Niger*.

²⁹⁸⁵ Republic of Niger, *Full Poverty Reduction Strategy*, Niamey, January 2002, 62. See also U.S. Embassy- Niamey, *unclassified telegram no. 1645*, October 2001.

²⁹⁸⁶ Republic of Niger, *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, 62.

²⁹⁸⁷ UNICEF, *UNICEF- At a Glance: Niger- The Big Picture*, [online] [cited May 27, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/niger.html>.

²⁹⁸⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, *Combating Exploitive Child Labor Through Education in Niger*, [Tables on website] 2004 [cited October 27, 2004].

²⁹⁸⁹ WFP, *World Hunger - Niger*, [online] [cited June 17, 2004]; available from http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=562.