CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Central African Republic

The Government of the Central African Republic implemented a new Penal Code and amended its Labor Code, expanding protections to children in the worst forms of child labor. However, the worst forms of child labor continue to exist. Children continue to work in the streets and they are forcibly recruited into armed militias, some of which may receive government support. There is little evidence to suggest that laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor are enforced.

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	61.1%
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	38.5%
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	30.0%

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in the Central African Republic are exploited in the worst forms of child labor.⁹⁵⁰ Many of them are street children engaged in vending and begging.⁹⁵¹ The high rate of orphanhood, including from HIV/AIDS, is believed to be responsible for the displacement of many of these children to the streets.⁹⁵² For example, 5,000 children in Bangui live and work in the streets.⁹⁵³ Street children in Bangui and elsewhere in the Central African Republic risk exposure to severe weather, accidents caused by proximity to vehicles, and vulnerability to the criminal element.⁹⁵⁴ Children living in the streets are more susceptible to the worst forms of child labor, including prostitution. Traumatized, uneducated, and rootless, children are also more susceptible to recruitment into soldiering.⁹⁵⁵

Displaced children also work in fields for long hours in extreme heat. Although evidence is limited, there is reason to believe that the worst forms of child labor are used in the production of cassava and peanuts. Children have also been forced to work as porters, carrying stolen goods for bandit groups.⁹⁵⁶ Children, including street children, abandoned children, and those dwelling in urban areas, work in prostitution.⁹⁵⁷ Some children also traffic drugs.⁹⁵⁸

Due to protracted conflict, spill-over violence from neighboring countries, and rebel groups, the Government of the Central African Republic has little control over regions outside of the capital.959 In some cases, villages have formed self-defense groups in order to protect themselves from attacks from various actors, ranging from rebel groups and bandits to government troops.⁹⁶⁰ Children are sometimes recruited by some of these self-defense groups. There are concerns that some self-defense groups that use children are supported by the government.⁹⁶¹ Children are also recruited for forced labor and/or soldiering by rebel groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army, (LRA), the Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix, the Forces Démocratiques Populaires de Centrafrique, and the Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice.962 Children abducted by the LRA work as child soldiers and sex slaves.⁹⁶³ The LRA has trafficked children to and from Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda for work and child

soldiering.⁹⁶⁴ Children have been forced to terrorize their own communities, and kill or mutilate civilians.⁹⁶⁵ Children from other militias are used as spies, soldiers, or sex slaves.⁹⁶⁶

Children also work in gold and diamond mines, transporting and washing gravel, digging holes, and carrying heavy loads.⁹⁶⁷

Children are engaged in dangerous work in fishing and agriculture, including work on coffee plantations.⁹⁶⁸ Children's work in agriculture commonly involves carrying heavy loads and applying potentially harmful pesticides. Fishing commonly involves exposure to waterborne diseases and drowning. Children from indigenous groups, such as the *Ba'aka* (Pygmy) children, are forced into agricultural labor and domestic service.⁹⁶⁹

Children work as domestic servants.⁹⁷⁰ Such work may involve long hours, dangerous activities, and exposure to physical and sexual exploitation by their employer.

The Central African Republic is a source and destination country for trafficked children.⁹⁷¹ Along with children trafficked by the LRA, children are trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation; domestic service; work in agriculture; restaurants; markets; and mining, including diamond mines.⁹⁷² For similar reasons, children are trafficked to and from Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁹⁷³ Children from Rwanda may also be trafficked to the Central African Republic.⁹⁷⁴

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14.⁹⁷⁵ However, children who are at least age 12 may engage in light work, such as some forms of agriculture or domestic service.⁹⁷⁶ Children under age 18 are prohibited from working between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. and from performing certain kinds of work, including work in mines. The law protects children from performing work that involves carrying heavy loads, but the law applies only to children under age 14.⁹⁷⁷ Despite these protections, the Government has not issued a more specific list of prohibited hazardous work.⁹⁷⁸ The Mining Code prohibits the employment of children in mining. Violators of this law are subject to imprisonment of 6 months to 3 years, a fine, or both.⁹⁷⁹

The minimum age for compulsory or voluntary recruitment into the Government Armed Forces in the Central African Republic is 18.980

In 2009, the Government amended the Labor Code so that it now covers certain worst forms of child labor. Specifically, the new code prohibits the procurement or offering of a child for illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs. It also prohibits the procurement or offering of a child for prostitution and the production of pornography.⁹⁸¹ The new Code prohibits all forms of slavery, forced labor, and bonded labor, and it bans forced or compulsory recruitment of children in armed conflict.⁹⁸²

In 2009, the Government of the Central African Republic passed a new Penal Code. The new Code prohibits the procurement of persons of any age for sexual purposes, including assisting in or profiting from prostitution.⁹⁸³ The amended Penal Code also prohibits human trafficking and prescribes punishments for the offense, including life imprisonment with hard labor for trafficking a minor.⁹⁸⁴

ATT AN	C138, Minimum Age	\checkmark
VIIIOR	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	\checkmark
٩	CRC	\checkmark
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	\checkmark
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	\checkmark
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	~
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Although the Government of the Central African Republic has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee to Fight Child Exploitation led by the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labor is not included on this committee, and research found no evidence of a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor specifically.⁹⁸⁵ The full responsibilities of the inter-ministerial committee are unknown, although the committee is charged with designing the national anti-trafficking policy and coordinating communication among concerned anti-trafficking partners. However, the Minister of Justice suspended the committee's activities and, as a result, the committee has not worked on its responsibilities.986

The Ministry of Civil Servants, Labor, and Social Security is charged with the monitoring and enforcement of laws related to forced and hazardous child labor.⁹⁸⁷ However, as noted by the ILO Committee of Experts, there has not been a labor administrator to coordinate efforts since 1999.988

The Ministry of Civil Service and Labor employs 73 labor inspectors in the Labor Inspection Unit.989 The Ministry did not process any child labor investigations in 2009, and there is no system in place for the Ministry to track child labor complaints.990 Financial and human resources needed to enforce child labor laws are lacking. For example, inspectors are required to pay for travel out of their own pocket.991

The Ministry of Justice, in coordination with security forces, is responsible for the oversight and investigation of the commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking, and the use of children in illicit activities. However, the ministry does not have sufficient office facilities and transportation to carry out inspections.⁹⁹² There is not a specific enforcement program for the commercial sexual exploitation of children, nor are officers specifically dedicated to investigate commercial sexual exploitation cases.⁹⁹³ It is unclear whether there are specific officers dedicated to trafficking or other worst forms of child labor.⁹⁹⁴

The Government does not have a system in place for identifying victims of trafficking.⁹⁹⁵ No investigations,

arrests, or prosecutions of those involved in using children in commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, or illicit activities took place during the reporting period.⁹⁹⁶

In January 2010, a Senior Gendarmerie was tasked by the Deputy Minister of Defense to investigate reports of child soldiers in self-defense militias.⁹⁹⁷ However, there is no available information on the result of this investigation.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2006, the Central African Republic adopted its National Action Plan to Combat Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, which includes measures to address sex trafficking. The Government also adopted a National Action Plan designed to combat trafficking in persons, including child trafficking.⁹⁹⁸ However, research found no evidence of a policy to combat other worst forms of child labor, including hazardous work, child soldering, and illicit activities.

The Government is also implementing related policies such as the National Action Plan for Education and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The question of whether these policies have an impact on the worst forms of child labor does not appear to have been addressed.⁹⁹⁹

The Central African Republic was one of 24 countries to adopt the Multilateral Cooperative Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Joint Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in West and Central African Regions.¹⁰⁰⁰ As part of the regional Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Government of the Central African Republic agreed to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenders; to rehabilitate and reintegrate trafficking victims; and to assist fellow signatory countries to implement these measures under the Agreement⁻¹⁰⁰¹

Social Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of the Central African Republic is partnering with UNICEF to provide two programs aimed at the protection, demobilization, and reintegration of child soldiers.¹⁰⁰² One of these programs was reportedly able to demobilize 623 children. However, communities lacked the basic infrastructure necessary to provide schooling to those who were demobilized.¹⁰⁰³

The Ministry of Family and Social Affairs continued to operate a shelter for children in distress, including

victims of trafficking.¹⁰⁰⁴ This shelter has the capacity to house 35 children.¹⁰⁰⁵ The shelter lacked the space to accommodate all who sought its services.¹⁰⁰⁶

Aside from the limited programs above, the Government does not provide social protection services aimed at children engaged in the worst forms of child labor.¹⁰⁰⁷

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in the Central African Republic:

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Strengthen legislation to amend the Labor Code to:
- Include a specific list of prohibited hazardous work for children.
- Prohibit children under age 14 from working in agriculture and domestic service.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.
- Provide adequate resources to enforce worst forms of child labor laws, including personnel, vehicles, and
 office facilities.
- Create a system to identify child victims of trafficking, and provide them with adequate shelter and protection.
- Put in place a mechanism for reporting and monitoring cases of the worst forms of child labor.

IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Adopt a policy that addresses all worst forms of child labor.
- Assess the impact that existing policies such as the National Action Plan for Education and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy may have on addressing the worst forms of child labor.
- Develop and implement national policy to prevent the recruitment of children into illegal armed groups.

IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

Implement programs that address the worst forms of child labor.

⁹⁵⁰ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates*, 2005-2010. Data provided are from 2000. 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. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

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⁹⁵⁶ Julia Spry-Leverton, A Cry from the Heart: Central African Republic, UNICEF, March 22, 2007; available from http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_CAR_ Pub_ACryFrmHeart.pdf. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Grim Outlook for Central African Republic's Children", IRINnews.org, [online], November 27, 2008 [cited March 30, 2010]; available from http://www. irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81694. See also U.S. Embassy- Bangui, reporting, February 17, 2010, para 11. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Central African Republic," section 1.

⁹⁵⁷ Spry-Leverton, *A Cry from the Heart*, 25. See also Ministry of Family and Social Affairs official, Interview with USDOL consultant, July 1, 2005. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Central African Republic," section 7d. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request C182: Central African Republic (2010).*

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