

In 2016, the Central African Republic made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Assembly ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict before submitting it to the President for approval, and the Government launched a National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. In addition, the Ministry of Education issued an official directive providing free school admission to children from internally displaced persons camps, and 1,526 child soldiers were released from armed groups under the Bangui Forum Agreement. However, children in the Central African Republic engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in illicit activities and armed conflict, sometimes as a result of forced or compulsory recruitment by nongovernmental armed groups. An estimated 1.4 million children lacked access to education as a result of ongoing instability, and limited resources hampered the Government's ability to implement policies and programs to address child labor, including its worst forms.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Central African Republic (CAR) engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in illicit activities and armed conflict, sometimes as a result of forced or compulsory recruitment by nongovernmental armed groups.(1-5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in CAR.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	31.0 (373,742)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	63.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	28.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		44.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.(6)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010.(7)

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	Working in agriculture, activities unknown (1)
	Working in forestry, including carrying tools and assisting with slaughter (8)
	Fishing, activities unknown (1)
Industry	Diamond and gold mining† (1, 9-13)
	Working in sawmills, forges, and foundries, including sharpening sawblades and maintaining fires (1, 8)
	Construction, activities unknown (1)
Services	Domestic work (14)
	Street work, including carrying heavy loads, garbage scavenging, and market vending (1, 8, 9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as porters, concubines, domestic workers, and guards (2, 3, 5, 15-26)
	Domestic work, working in agriculture, markets, and mining, including in diamond mines, each as a result of human trafficking (2, 26-28)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2, 26-31)
	Use in illicit activities, including as spies for armed forces and carrying stolen goods (2, 4, 5, 32, 33)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

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

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Sectarian violence has plagued CAR since 2013, and although a new President and National Assembly were elected in February 2016, the new Government has limited authority outside of the capital.(4, 24, 32, 34-36) Non-state armed groups continued to forcibly recruit children during the reporting period, some as young as age 8.(2, 3, 5, 22, 37-39) There was also a significant increase in the number of children abducted for forced soldering by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group that operates in CAR.(2, 25, 32, 38, 39) The Government worked with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), UNICEF, and other partner agencies to prioritize these children’s demobilization and reintegration into community life.(1, 20, 35, 40) There were no new allegations of children in refugee camps subject to commercial sexual exploitation in exchange for food or other compensation by peacekeeping troops, although displaced children remain vulnerable to child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation by organized criminal groups.(26, 41)

In 2016, the Ministry of Education issued an official directive providing free school admission to children from internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and waiving school exam fees for refugees, IDPs, and returnees.(26, 42-44) The Government has also waived birth registration requirements for primary school enrollment in areas still affected by conflict and is making a concerted effort to ensure all children have birth registration, including by providing free birth registration to all children born during the conflict, from 2012 – 2014, and by rebuilding the national civil administration.(24, 26, 28, 44-48) As birth registration is required for secondary school enrollment, lack of birth registration may be a barrier to education for some children.(41) An estimated 33 percent of school-age children had difficulty accessing education because of school fees, an absence of teachers, security concerns, and unavailability of schools, especially in rural areas.(4, 13, 26, 28, 34, 45, 49-52) As of April 2016, an estimated 25 percent of schools throughout the country were non-functional due to destruction, damage, or looting as a result of the conflict, and others were occupied by displaced civilians or armed groups, causing some students to lose more than 2 years of schooling.(3-5, 13, 15, 22, 24, 31, 33, 45, 46, 49, 50, 52-56) However, the Government indicates that with the exception of the three provinces in which conflict persists, 98 percent of schools reopened for the 2016–2017 school year.(26)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

CAR has ratified most 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	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In 2016, the Government ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.(43, 44) The National Assembly ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict, and it is awaiting approval from the President.(8, 43, 44)

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4). However, gaps exist in CAR’s legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 259 of the Labor Code (57)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 263 of the Labor Code (57)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 262 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code (57, 58)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 7 of the Labor Code; Article 151 of the Penal Code (57, 59)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 151 of the Penal Code (59)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 262 of the Labor Code; Articles 90–93 and 110–111 of the Penal Code (57, 59)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code (57)
Minimum Age for Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes*	18	Article 22 of the Constitution; Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code (57, 60)
State Voluntary	No	N/A	Legislation title unknown (47)
Non-state Compulsory	Yes	18	Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code (57)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Ordinance N° 84/031 Orienting the Teaching System; Article 7 of the Constitution; Article 13 of Law N° 97/014 Orienting the Education System (60, 61)
Free Public Education	Yes		Ordinance N° 84/031; Article 7 of the Constitution (60, 61)

* No conscription (24, 60)

A draft of the Child Protection Code was revised to harmonize its protections with the CRC and was sent to the National Assembly for adoption.(26, 44) In 2016, the Government, with the support of UNICEF, conducted a study of child labor with the intention of updating the list of hazardous activities prohibited to children.(1) The existing types of hazardous work prohibited for children are not comprehensive and do not cover diamond mining, an area of work in which there is evidence of children working in hazardous conditions and carrying heavy loads.(9-11) Additionally, the law does not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children, as the possession and distribution of child pornography are not criminally prohibited.(57, 59)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF 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 in labor law and criminal law enforcement remain and some enforcement information is not available.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Public Service, Modernization of Administration, Labor, Employment and Social Protection (MOL)	Monitor and enforce laws related to child labor.(1)
Ministry of Justice	Protect the rights of the child and combat the worst forms of child labor through its courts and tribunals.(8) In 2016, created a national Rapid Response for Child Protection team.(28, 62)
Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Gender, and Humanitarian Action (MSA)	Oversee child soldier issues and lead the Government’s anti-trafficking policy efforts through the National Council on Child Protection. Refer victims of child trafficking to NGOs and maintain an orphanage for children at risk of child trafficking.(38, 47)
Special Criminal Court	Investigate serious human rights abuses committed since 2003, including the use of children in armed conflict. Comprises national and international magistrates.(12, 43, 63-65)

The Special Criminal Court was not operational in 2016, and the only functioning juvenile court in CAR lacks the staff and resources to conduct investigations.(3, 12, 13, 22, 25, 26, 35, 62, 63, 65, 66) The weak judicial system, absence of state authority outside the capital, and limited resources hinder the Government’s ability to combat the worst forms of child labor.(3, 13, 24-26,

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33, 38) In addition, all 135 lawyers in CAR are in Bangui, and some magistrates have been prevented from being deployed to the regions due to threats by armed groups or continued insecurity.(14, 25)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2016, labor law enforcement agencies in CAR took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown* (14)	Unknown* (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	41 (14)	Unknown* (1)
Number of Child Labor Dedicated Inspectors	5 (14)	Unknown* (1)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (67)	Yes (67)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (14)	Unknown* (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (14)	N/A (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (14)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections	Unknown* (14)	Unknown* (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown* (14)	Unknown* (1)
Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown* (14)	Unknown* (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown* (14)	Unknown* (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown* (14)	Unknown* (1)
Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown* (14)	Unknown* (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (14)	Unknown* (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (14)	Unknown* (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (57)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (14)	Unknown* (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (14)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (14)	Yes (41)

* The Government does not publish this information.

Research indicates that violations were common in all sectors of the economy.(14, 67-69) Although child labor violations may be reported in person to the labor inspectorate in Bangui, there is no mechanism to report child labor violations in other parts of the country.(67) Although the Ministry of Public Service, Labor, Social Security, and Employment is supposed to work with the Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Gender, and Humanitarian Action; and UNICEF to provide assistance to victims of child labor, a lack of resources limited the ability of these ministries to provide adequate support to victims.(41, 67) During the reporting period, UNICEF provided training to regional directors and labor inspectors responsible for enforcing child labor laws.(1)

The number of labor inspectors is insufficient for the size of CAR's workforce, which includes over 2.4 million workers.(70) According to the ILO's recommendation of 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, CAR needs about 56 inspectors.(70-72) The Government's efforts to combat child labor were hindered by a lack of labor inspectorate capacity and inadequate financial and material resources, including transportation, office facilities and supplies, and computers.(1)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2016, criminal law enforcement agencies in CAR took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (14)	Unknown (1)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor (cont)

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (14)	N/A (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (73)	No (2)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (67)	39 (1, 43, 44)
Number of Violations Found	2,679 (5)	1,404 (74)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (47)	0 (38)
Number of Convictions	0 (47)	0 (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (73)	Yes (41)

Research indicates members of the armed forces and the Central African Office for the Suppression of Banditry committed extra-judicial killings of minors suspected to be members of rival factions. Research also found that law enforcement officials detained some children released from the LRA for interrogation rather than turn them over to social services providers, and children may have been held in detention centers with adults despite a 2016 decree that states children and adults should be kept separate.(25, 28, 44) Criminal acts were widely resolved through traditional methods across the country, often to the exclusion of formal legal proceedings.(2) Research also indicates that government officials outside of the capital may lack the means and capacity to enforce the law, including not having access to copies of relevant laws.(47, 62, 73) In addition, the Government primarily relies on NGOs to provide social services to victims.(28, 41)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Although the Government has established a coordination mechanism on trafficking or other type of child labor, research found no evidence of mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including all its worst forms (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Interministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking	Investigate and combat human trafficking in CAR. Overseen by the Ministry of Public Security.(73)
Disarmament, Demobilization, Reinsertion, and Repatriation Committee (DDRR)*	Secures the release of children used in armed conflict and provide appropriate care.(38) In October 2016, with the support of MSA and the UN, hosted an international workshop on the use of children in armed conflict and conducted a mission to Vakaga prefecture to verify and separate 133 children affiliated with armed groups.(42)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

The National Child Protection Council in the Prime Minister's Office no longer appears to be functioning, and research was unable to determine whether the Interministerial Committee was active in 2016.(8, 28)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Bangui Forum Agreement	Formal agreement signed by 10 armed groups and the Transitional Government on May 5, 2015, to end the recruitment and use of children in armed combat and to facilitate the separation of children from the ranks of armed groups.(3, 5, 12, 20, 38, 40) Between January and March 2016, 1,526 child soldiers were released from armed groups and received psychosocial support and reintegration services from UNICEF.(21)
Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy	Based on the Bangui Forum Agreement, MSA policy that aims to facilitate a policy to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate child soldiers in CAR in cooperation with UN agencies, other ministries, and armed groups.(1, 3, 21, 24, 44) Through its National Strategy for Community Reinsertion of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Groups, provides temporary care to children separated from armed groups and establishes child protection networks (RECOPE) throughout the country.(21, 37, 43) By the end of 2016, 7,506 children had been removed from armed groups.(43, 44)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA) (2017–2021) [†]	Aims to re-establish peace, security, and support reconciliation, including by disarming and reintegrating children associated with armed groups, promoting legal reform, seeking justice for victims, and improving access to education. Aims to construct 218 schools and 1,200 school canteens, to train 1,000 teachers, and to distribute 150,000 school kits.(24, 26)
National Strategy for the Community-based Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups in CAR [†]	Aims to coordinate the reintegration of ex-combatant children into communities as civilians and prevent re-recruitment by armed groups.(75)
UNDAF (2012–2016)	Aims to continue peace-building efforts, strengthen the rule of law, and accelerate progress toward the Millennium Development Goals. Commits to improving reintegration activities for child ex-combatants, improving access to protective services for children, and increasing primary school attendance and access to quality education.(27, 76)

[†] Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Although the Government of CAR has adopted the Bangui Forum Agreement, which seeks to address child soldiering, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.(47) A draft of a national policy addressing the elimination of child labor has yet to be adopted.(48, 68) Research was unable to determine whether the UNDAF was implemented during the reporting period.(8, 67) The Government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Strategy for the Education Sector (2008–2020).(77)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2016, the Government participated in programs that may contribute to the prevention or elimination of child labor (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Awareness Raising Programs*	MOL program aims to raise awareness of child labor and international conventions. In 2016, local inspectorates conducted awareness-raising campaigns in the forested and mining areas of Lobaye and Mambere-Kadei Prefectures, where children are vulnerable to exploitation.(1, 43, 44)
Shelters for Unaccompanied Children	MSA- and UNICEF-supported centers in Bangui provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to unaccompanied children and former child soldiers.(38, 78) In 2016, the Government adopted national guidelines for the care of children in temporary care.(43, 44)
Education Programs	Programs to restore educational infrastructure. Includes: \$23.4 million European Union-funded Education Program which will rehabilitate and equip more than 300 schools in 4 prefectures and the capital; Bangui Ministry of Mines and Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research program to construct schools in mining zones; and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Education Clusters led by UNICEF and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, that provides access to education in conflict-affected areas.(1, 42-44, 49, 51, 53, 79-81) In 2016, trained 1,312 teachers and 1,518 volunteer teachers; constructed or rehabilitated 144 schools; distributed school kits and textbooks to 390,000 students and 6,000 teachers; established new Temporary Spaces for Learning and Child Protection (ETAPE), which serve 40,258 children; and reopened 5 schools in Kaga-Bandoro.(36, 44, 51, 55)
Birth Registration Campaign [†]	In support of the 2014 decree mandating free birth registration to children born during the 2012–2014 conflict, opened 176 civil registration centers in areas affected by conflict; registered over 25,000 children since 2014. In 2016, provided birth registration to 8,199 children in Bangui, Bimbo, and Begoua and to 1,951 children in 3 other provinces.(44)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

[†] Program is funded by the Government of CAR.

Although the Government participates in a program that assists former child soldiers, coordination with non-government actors is weak and the scope of this program is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.(3, 13, 37, 82) The Government was unable to provide direct reintegration programs to former child soldiers due to a lack of resources, which left victims vulnerable to exploitation or re-recruitment by armed groups.(2, 3, 8) Research found no evidence that the Government has programs to assist children engaged in other worst forms of child labor, largely due to a lack of governmental capacity and funding.(14)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in CAR (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2016
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, and ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive.	2013 – 2016
	Establish criminal prohibitions for possession and distribution of child pornography.	2009 – 2016
	Publish the Government's legislation for a minimum age for voluntary military service.	2015 – 2016
Enforcement	Ensure that courts are operational and that citizens can report violations and access formal judicial processes throughout the country.	2016
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate's funding level, type of training provided to inspectors and investigators, and data related to enforcement efforts, including the number and type of investigations conducted, violations found, penalties imposed and collected, and whether routine and unannounced inspections were conducted.	2014 – 2016
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor in accordance with the ILO's recommendation and ensure enforcement officers have the resources necessary to fulfill their mandate.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that enforcement agencies have sufficient resources and allocated funding to enable government officials to enforce laws related to child labor throughout the country and provide services to victims.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that children are not subject to unlawful punishment, are not kept in detention centers with adults, and are turned over to social service providers when released from armed groups.	2016
Coordination	Ensure coordinating mechanisms are functional and combat all forms of child labor, including all its worst forms.	2011 – 2016
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2016
	Implement established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2016
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into education and poverty reduction policies.	2009 – 2016
Social Programs	Ensure that children in displaced persons camps are not vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.	2016
	Improve access to education by eliminating school-related fees, making additional efforts to provide all children with birth registration, establishing an adequate number of teachers and classrooms throughout the country, and ensuring that schools are safe spaces and free from armed groups.	2009 – 2016
	Expand programs to assist former child combatants and children associated with armed groups and improve coordination among relevant actors.	2013 – 2016
	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2016

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