

In 2012, the Central African Republic made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography in October 2012. Although the Government had previously signed an agreement to demobilize child soldiers, armed groups on all sides of the conflict increased the use of child soldiers. Needed legal protections against child labor were not adopted. In addition, although the Government had an agreement with UNICEF to implement a general action plan to protect children, research found no evidence that policies and programs to combat child labor were implemented. Children continue to be engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including being used as child soldiers and in dangerous work in agriculture.



Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	51.1 (602,932)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	53.9
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	33.4
Primary Completion Rate		43.0

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in the Central African Republic (CAR) are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including being used as child soldiers in armed groups.(3-7) Children are also commonly engaged in dangerous work in agriculture.(8, 9) Although evidence on children's involvement in the production of particular agricultural products is limited, there is reason to believe that children are engaged in work on cotton, coffee, cassava, and peanut farms under conditions that amount to the worst forms of child labor.(6, 10, 11) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(12, 13) Although information is limited, there are reports that children are also engaged in dangerous work in fishing.(8, 9) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children engaged in fishing may work long hours, perform physically demanding tasks, and face dangers such a drowning.(12, 14)

Children work under dangerous conditions in diamond mines. In addition, although the extent of the problem is unknown, there are reports that children are also found working in gold mines.(11, 15-18) Children working in mines transport and wash gravel, dig pits, use sieves, and carry heavy loads.(11, 15-18) Reportedly, the hard physical labor associated with these activities may result in exhaustion or injury, including hernias. In addition, collapsed pit walls may result in injury or death.(17) Furthermore, the potential economic gain from mining encourages children to work instead of going to school.(17)

Many children also work long hours as domestic servants.(19, 20) Children employed as domestics may be required to work long hours, performing strenuous tasks without sufficient food or shelter. These children may be isolated in private homes and are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(21, 22) *Ba'aka* children are forced into both agricultural labor and domestic service.(6, 19)

Children are involved in commercial sexual exploitation.(10, 20, 23) Some children have also been forced to work as porters, including carrying stolen goods for criminal groups.(6, 15)

During the reporting period, because of protracted conflict, spillover violence from neighboring countries and rebel groups, the Government had little control in the countryside, particularly after rebel groups threatened the capital in December 2012, forcing the Government to agree to talks to form a coalition government.(3, 6, 24-28)

According to the UN, in December 2012 the Government called on youth to arm themselves and protect the city by creating neighborhood security groups. There are also reports that CAR's armed forces used children in Bangui.(29-31) In March 2013, Seleka rebels, a coalition of several rebel groups, took control the capital, ousted the sitting President, and formed a new Government.(32, 33) Reportedly, the Seleka rebels deployed child soldiers during the fighting to capture

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Bangui.(32, 34) The UN reports that the ongoing conflict has resulted in an increase of boys and girls being forced into armed groups to serve as child soldiers, carry supplies, and be sexually exploited.(35, 36)

Children are also abducted for forced labor and/or soldiering by rebel groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan rebel force that has moved into CAR.(3-5, 37-40) The LRA forces children to work as soldiers, sex slaves and porters.(6, 40) During the reporting period, there were multiple reports of children being abducted by the LRA, including in March 2012 when the UN reports at least six children were abducted.(29, 31) Children also are recruited and used by other indigenous rebel groups such as the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP) and the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR).(3-6, 12, 25, 37, 41) In 2012, the CPJP and UFDR recruited children and used them as guards at roadblocks, messengers, and cooks. In addition, on October 16, 2012, the UN reports that 40 to 50 armed children were seen with CPJP elements.(29, 31)

In some cases, especially in areas where there is no national army or police force present, villages and towns have formed self-defense groups to protect themselves from attacks by rebel groups and bandits. UNICEF estimates one-third of the members of these groups are children who serve as combatants, lookouts and porters.(3, 4, 12) UNICEF reports that even before the recent increase in child soldier recruitment, an estimated 2,500 children were associated with multiple armed groups, including community self-defense groups.(35, 42) During the first half of 2012, the UN reports that self-defense groups in the LRA-affected communities of Rafai, Zemio, and Obo used children to patrol villages.(29)

CAR is a source and destination country for trafficked children. Along with children trafficked by the LRA, children are trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation, domestic service, work in agriculture, restaurants and markets, and mining, including diamond mines.(20, 39, 41) Children are trafficked from CAR to West and Central Africa for similar purposes.(41)

There are reports of children working on the streets, but specific information on hazards is unknown.(6, 19, 23)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14. Children who are at least age 12 may engage in light work in some forms of agriculture or domestic service.(43, 44) Children younger than age 18 are prohibited from working

between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. and from working in mines.(44-46) However, the Labor Code, including the above mentioned age, hours, and mining prohibitions, does not apply to children who are self-employed.(18)

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	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

The Labor Code also prohibits the procurement or offering of a child for prostitution and the production of pornography.(47) The Penal Code includes a prohibition against assisting in or profiting from prostitution and human trafficking.(20, 48) However, neither code prohibits the possession and distribution of child pornography.(20, 47)

Education is compulsory until age 15.(15) Tuition is free, but students must pay for their own supplies, books, and transportation. The cost of these associated fees may be prohibitive for some students and the inability to attend school may increase these children's risk of involvement in the worst forms of child labor.(10)

The Labor Code prohibits all forms of slavery, forced labor and bonded labor. It also bans forced or compulsory recruitment of children in armed conflict and the use of children for illicit purposes.(47) The minimum age for compulsory or voluntary recruitment into the Government Armed Forces in CAR is 18.(4, 49)

The Government ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography in October 2012.(50)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Council for the Protection of Children is charged with coordinating policies and strategies to protect children, including from sexual exploitation and child soldiering.(12, 20, 48) However, research found no evidence of a body that coordinates Government efforts to combat all forms of child labor.

The Ministry of Labor is charged with monitoring and enforcing laws related to forced and hazardous child labor.(20) However, as noted by the ILO Committee of Experts, there has not been a labor administrator to coordinate efforts since 1999.(44, 51) There is also no system in place for the Ministry to track child labor complaints.(20, 44, 51)

Information was not available on the number of labor inspectors employed by the Ministry of Labor in the Labor Inspectorate Unit, whether labor inspectors received any training on child labor, or whether inspectors have the necessary resources to conduct their inspections. However, in previous years, training for labor inspectors did not include any specific information on child labor and the inspectors lacked resources necessary to carry out inspections, including funds for transportation, and in some cases, chairs, desks, doors, and lights for their offices, some of which are inaccessible due to flooding when it rains.(20, 44, 51, 52) Given the state of insecurity in CAR during the reporting period, it seems unlikely these gaps were addressed. The Ministry conducted a study in 2008 with support from UNICEF that concluded that inspections are not conducted in a manner that effectively prevents child labor.(20)

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ), 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. Information was not available on the MOJ's efforts to protect children, the number of arrests and prosecutions involving children victims, or whether punishments were consistent with those prescribed by law.(44) However, in previous years, the MOJ did not provide its officers with any training in these areas and they lacked sufficient office facilities and transportation to carry out investigations.(44) The Government did not have any means to identify victims of trafficking and was unable to provide data on the number of arrests and prosecutions of those involved in trafficking children, or in using them in commercial sexual exploitation or other illicit activities.(20, 41) Again, given the state of insecurity in CAR during the reporting period, it seems unlikely these gaps were addressed during 2012.

A senior inspector from the *Gendarmes*, a military force charged with civilian policing, has been tasked by the Deputy Minister of Defense to investigate reports of child soldiers in self-defense militias.(53) However, there is no information on whether enforcement actions have been taken that relate to child soldiers.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has a National Action Plan to Combat Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which includes measures to address sex trafficking. The Government also has a separate Action Plan designed to combat trafficking in persons, including child trafficking.(53) However, the CEACR has urged the Government to adopt a comprehensive policy to combat all worst forms of child labor.(18)

CAR is a signatory to the N'Djamena Declaration, which represents a commitment among the signatory countries to eliminate the use of child soldiers in their territories.(39) CAR has also signed a General Action Plan with UNICEF for the protection of children.(47, 48, 54) As a member of the African Union, CAR is party to the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, which was designed to provide AU members with support from IOM, ECOWAS, and UNODC to streamline efforts against trafficking by outlining concrete actions that states should take to fight human trafficking.(55) Research did not identify any steps that the Government has taken to address child soldiering.

The Government has a National Action Plan for Education and a National Poverty Reduction Strategy.(47, 56, 57) The National Action Plan for Education calls for informal schools in rural areas in order to permit children ages 8 to 15 who have never been to school before to access education.(56) There appears to be no research addressing the impact of this policy on child labor. Nonetheless, there is a severe lack of schools and teachers especially in rural areas, which prevents some children from accessing education.(15, 47, 58) Furthermore, in January 2013 the UN reported that at least 166,000 students were being denied access to schools due to the ongoing conflict.(36, 42)

Social Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Research found no evidence of programs to address the multitude of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, or to prevent children from entering such work.

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Amend the Labor Code to— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover self-employed children. • Prohibit possession and distribution of child pornography. 	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Eliminate the fees associated with education to increase the number of children able to access schooling, and take measures to ensure safe schools and adequate numbers of teachers and schools.	2010, 2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Establish a body to coordinate government efforts to combat all worst forms of child labor, or expand the purview of the National Council for the Protection of Children in this regard.	2011, 2012
	Provide adequate resources to enforce laws against the worst forms of child labor, including by training personnel, adding to budgetary resources, and providing office facilities.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Create an inspection system that monitors and tracks reported cases of the worst forms of child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Complete an investigation of militias' and local defense groups' use of child soldiers, publish the results, and, based on this information, take vigorous steps to end this practice and rehabilitate victims.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Create a system to identify child victims of trafficking and provide them with adequate shelter and protection.	2010, 2011, 2012
Policies	Assess the impact that existing policies may have on addressing child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Social Programs	Implement programs that provide services to withdraw and protect children from the worst forms of child labor, particularly in child soldiering and agriculture.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

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