

In 2017, the Central African Republic made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government acceded to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict and convened representatives from 14 armed groups as part of the follow-up to the Bangui Forum Agreement, during which the groups agreed to participate in a pilot disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration project. The government appointed several members to the Special Criminal Court, which investigates serious human rights abuses including the use of children in armed conflict; created a coordinating group for the Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence; and established the Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children to improve coordination on programs related to women, family, and children. However, children in the Central African Republic engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in diamond mining and armed conflict, sometimes as a result of forced or compulsory recruitment by non-governmental 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 implementation of policies and programs to address child labor.



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 non-governmental armed groups. (1; 2; 3; 4) 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 (%)		42.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (5)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010. (6)

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 (7)
	Working in forestry, including carrying tools (8)
	Fishing, activities unknown (7)
Industry	Diamond and gold mining† (7; 9; 10; 11; 12)
	Working in sawmills, forges, and foundries, including sharpening sawblades and maintaining fires (7; 8)
	Construction, activities unknown (7)
Services	Domestic work (13)
	Street work, including carrying heavy loads, garbage scavenging, and market vending (7; 8)
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 (14; 15; 16; 17; 2; 12)
	Domestic work and working in agriculture, markets, and mining, including in diamond mines, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (15; 18; 19; 2)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Forced labor of indigenous <i>Baka</i> children in farming (2)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (15; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 2)

[†] 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.




CAR experienced a surge of violence in 2017, almost doubling the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) to 688,700, and militias controlled much of the country beyond the capital of Bangui. (14; 17; 23; 24; 25; 3; 26; 27; 12) Although the government worked with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), UNICEF, and other partner agencies to demobilize and reintegrate children into community life, there were allegations of abuse and commercial sexual exploitation lodged against UN peacekeepers. (2; 24; 4; 3) Non-state armed groups intensified the forcible recruitment of children during the reporting period as a result of the increase in violence. (2; 28; 12) UNICEF estimated between 6,000 and 10,000 children were associated with armed groups in 2017. (28)

The Ministry of Education has attempted to improve access to education by providing free school admission to children from IDP camps, waiving school exam fees for children affected by conflict, and expanding programs to provide birth registration which may be required for school enrollment. (15; 29; 30; 31; 15) However, children continued to experience difficulties accessing education due to school fees, an absence of teachers, security concerns, destruction or looting of school materials and buildings by armed groups, and unavailability of schools, especially in rural areas or IDP camps. (15; 19; 32; 33; 34; 35; 36; 16; 26) Although many schools have reopened, some were temporarily closed due to attacks or occupation by armed groups, occupation by peacekeeping troops or internally displaced persons, or the close proximity of armed groups. (34; 35; 37; 38; 32; 36; 17; 3; 4; 12) The UN estimates that 25 percent of school-age children are not in school and at least 500,000 children have had their education disrupted. (26)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

CAR has ratified all 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 2017, the government ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict. (39)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in CAR’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 259 of the Labor Code (40)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 263 of the Labor Code (40)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 261 and 262 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code (40; 41)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 7 of the Labor Code; Article 151 of the Penal Code (40; 42)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 151 of the Penal Code (42)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code; Articles 90–92 and 110–111 of the Penal Code (40; 42)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code (40)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes*	18	Article 22 of the Constitution; Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code (40; 43)
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Decree N° 85.432; Declaration to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict (39)
Non-state	Yes	18	Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code (40)
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 (43; 44)
Free Public Education	Yes		Ordinance N° 84/031; Article 9 of the Constitution (43; 44)

* No conscription (14; 43)

In 2017, the Ministry of Justice announced its intention to reinforce the Labor Code’s prohibition of the use of children in armed conflict by non-state armed groups through additional legislation. (28) A draft of the Child Protection Code is still pending adoption by the National Assembly. (31; 45) Despite a 2016 study on hazardous work, CAR has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (40; 46; 47) Although the Labor Code prohibits work by children under age 14, the law does not apply to children outside of formal employment relationships, which does not conform to international standards that require all children be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (40; 48)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Public Service, Modernization of Administration, Labor, Employment and Social Protection (MOL) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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. (7)
Internal Security Forces Police and Gendarmes	Enforce all laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (28)
Ministry of Justice	Protect the rights of the child through its Rapid Response for Child Protection team and combat the worst forms of child labor through its courts and tribunals. (31; 13)
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. (13)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)

Organization/Agency	Role
Special Criminal Court	Investigate serious human rights abuses committed since 2003, including the use of children in armed conflict. Hybrid court comprising international and national judges and prosecutors. (49; 25) In 2017, the President and Minister of Justice appointed a chief prosecutor, a deputy prosecutor, and five judges. (25)

Victims of child labor may be referred to the Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children, which was created in 2017 to improve government coordination on relevant programs. (31) A total of 19 new magistrates were appointed throughout CAR; those who were unable to be deployed to the regions due to threats by armed groups or continued insecurity assisted with a backlog of cases in Bangui. (50; 4) However, judicial authorities lacked the staff and resources to conduct investigations, and government authority was largely absent outside Bangui. (10; 50; 15; 51; 26) The Special Criminal Court is funded for only the first 14 months of its 5-year mandate, and only the juvenile court in the capital is functional. (11; 25) Cases were widely resolved outside of formal legal proceedings due to a lack of public trust, access, or knowledge about the justice system. (52; 53; 54; 26)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in CAR took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MOL that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including adequate financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (55)	Yes (55)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (7)	N/A (31)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (7)	Unknown (31)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (7)	Yes (31)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown* (7)	Unknown* (31)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (7)	Yes (31)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (56)	Yes (56)

* The government does not publish this information.

Research indicates that violations were common in all sectors of the economy, but government 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. (57; 55; 48; 58; 31) 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. (55) The MOL is supposed to work with other ministries and UNICEF to provide assistance to victims of child labor; however, due to a lack of resources, the government relies primarily on NGOs to provide social services to victims. (19; 56)

Although the exact number of inspectors is unknown, research indicates that the existing number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of CAR's workforce, which includes almost 2.2 million workers. (59) According to the ILO's technical advice ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, CAR should employ about 55 labor inspectors. (59; 60; 61)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in CAR took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including human resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown (7)	Unknown (31)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (7)	Unknown (31)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (52)	Yes (28)
Number of Investigations	39 (7; 29; 30)	Unknown (31)
Number of Violations Found	1,404 (62)	3,105 (28)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (1)	Unknown (31)
Number of Convictions	0 (52)	Unknown (31)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (56)	Yes (63)

There is only 1 police officer for every 1,300 Central Africans, and government authority is largely absent outside the capital. (64; 28) However, with the support of MINUSCA, the Internal Security Forces began recruiting 500 police and gendarmes in 2017. This marks the first recruitment since 2010 and 2011, respectively. (64; 4) Government officials outside of the capital may lack the resources and knowledge to enforce the law, including lack of access to copies of relevant laws. (51) Research found evidence that law enforcement officers may subject children to violence during criminal investigations, which may amount to inhumane treatment. (19) Additionally, there is evidence that children released from non-state armed groups are detained, interrogated by state law enforcement agencies, and denied access to humanitarian assistance and social service providers. (50) Furthermore, juvenile criminal offenders are regularly imprisoned with adults despite a 2016 decree that prohibits this practice, as no separate juvenile cells or juvenile prisons exist. (19; 30; 2)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
Children Associated with Armed Forces or Groups (EAFGA)	Secure the release of children used in armed conflict and provide appropriate care with the support of UNICEF. (2; 31) As of June 2017, removed 2,456 children from armed groups. (65) Formerly listed as the Disarmament, Demobilization, Reinsertion, and Repatriation Committee. (31)
Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence (UMIRR)*	Combat sexual violence against women and children. Comprises representatives from the MSA, Ministry of Justice, and law enforcement. (31) Operate a 24-hour hotline. (28)

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

Although the Inter-ministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking still exists, it is no longer functional due to a lack of resources. (19; 13)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all forms of child labor.

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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. (10; 66; 67; 4) In 2017, convened the fourth meeting of the Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation with representatives from 14 armed groups, who agreed to participate in a pilot disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration project involving 560 participants. (4; 12)
Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy	Based on the Bangui Forum Agreement, MSA policy that aims to facilitate initiatives to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate child soldiers in cooperation with UN agencies, other ministries, and armed groups. (7; 54; 68; 14; 30) 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. (68; 69; 29) In 2017, UNICEF provided support to 420 children released from armed groups, and MINUSCA conducted a weeklong campaign to raise awareness about the impact of armed conflict on children. (4)
National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA) (2017–2021)	Aims to re-establish peace and security, and support reconciliation 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. (14; 15) In 2017, with the assistance of UNDP, convened the first meeting of the advisory board and established two local peace and reconciliation committees. (4)
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. (70) In 2017, participated in Bangui Forum Agreement’s pilot program and worked with UNICEF to combat child labor. (13)

Although the Government of CAR has adopted the Bangui Forum Agreement, which seeks to address child soldiering, the Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy has yet to be fully implemented due to a lack of funding and ongoing instability. (71; 3) In addition, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, and a draft of a national policy addressing the elimination of child labor has yet to be adopted. (48; 13) Furthermore, the government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Strategy for the Education Sector (2008–2020). (72)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Awareness Raising Programs†	MOL program that aims to raise awareness of child labor and international conventions. (7; 29; 30) In 2017, participated in an awareness-raising campaign on trafficking in persons, organized by IOM. (28)
Shelters for Unaccompanied Children†	MSA- and UNICEF-supported centers that provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to vulnerable children and former child soldiers. (2) In 2017, continued to provide services to children. (13)
Education Programs	Programs to restore educational infrastructure. Includes: \$23.4 million EU-funded Education Program to 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 (MOE) to provide access to education in conflict-affected areas. (29; 30; 33; 73; 74; 75; 31; 27) In 2017, UNICEF worked with the MOE to hold end-of-year exams for over 10,000 internally displaced children. (27) MINUSCA supported the government in deploying 410 civil servants throughout the country, the majority of whom were from the MOE. (4)
Birth Registration Campaign†	In support of the 2014 decree mandating free birth registration to children born during the 2012–2014 conflict, re-opens civil registration centers in areas affected by conflict and provides registration to children. (30) Although the program remains ongoing, no new registrations took place in 2017 due to administrative issues. (13)

† 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. (54; 11; 69; 31) The absence of

resources and government authority through much of the country significantly hindered the government’s ability to combat child labor, and research found no evidence that the government has programs to assist children engaged in other worst forms of child labor. (31)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

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

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2017
	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 – 2017
	Publish the legal source that establishes a minimum age for voluntary military service.	2015 – 2017
Enforcement	Ensure that courts are allocated sufficient resources to be fully operational and that citizens can report violations and access formal judicial processes throughout the country.	2016 – 2017
	Publish information on the Labor Inspectorate’s funding level, number of labor inspectors, 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, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and whether routine and unannounced inspections were conducted.	2014 – 2017
	Ensure that enforcement agencies have sufficient staff, resources, and funding to enforce laws related to child labor and provide services to victims throughout the country.	2009 – 2017
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors in accordance with the ILO’s technical advice and ensure enforcement officers have the resources necessary to fulfill their mandate.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure that children are not subject to violence during criminal investigations, are not kept in detention centers with adults, and are granted access to social services providers and humanitarian assistance when released from armed groups.	2016 – 2017
Coordination	Ensure that coordinating mechanisms are functional and combat all forms of child labor, including its worst forms.	2011 – 2017
Government Policies	Implement established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2017
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2017
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Strategy for the Education Sector.	2009 – 2017
Social Programs	Ensure that children affected by conflict are not subject to the worst forms of child labor by peacekeeping forces.	2016 – 2017
	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 – 2017
	Expand programs to assist former child combatants and children associated with armed groups and improve coordination among relevant actors.	2013 – 2017
	Allocate sufficient resources and implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor throughout the country.	2009 – 2017

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