

In 2015, the Central African Republic made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In May, 10 armed groups signed a formal agreement with the Transitional Government to end the recruitment and use of children in armed combat and facilitate the separation of children from their ranks. Additionally, the Government established an Interministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and approved an Education Program to rehabilitate and equip more than 300 schools. However, children in the Central African Republic are engaged 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) are engaged 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.(1-7) 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)	5-14 yrs.	31.0 (373,742)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	63.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	28.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		44.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(8)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010.(9)

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 (3)
	Fishing,* activities unknown (2, 3)
Industry	Diamond and gold* mining† (3, 10-14)
Services	Domestic work* (3)
	Street work,* including carrying heavy loads* and market vending* (3, 10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in armed conflict, sometimes as a result of forced or compulsory recruitment by armed groups (1, 3-7, 15-28)
	Domestic work, working in agriculture, markets, and mining, including in diamond mines, each as a result of human trafficking* (4, 29, 30)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (3, 4, 29-31)
	Forced labor of Ba'aka children in agriculture* (4)
	Use in illicit activities, including as spies for armed forces and carrying stolen goods* (1, 3, 4, 6, 7)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

† 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 armed groups remain in control of large parts of the country. The ongoing insecurity has impacted the Government's ability to address the worst forms of child labor.(6, 22, 32-44) Despite a July 2014 cease-fire agreement, armed groups have continued to perpetrate violence against civilians and engage in fighting with other armed factions, displacing an estimated 800,000 civilians.(5, 7, 13, 22, 26, 43, 45-47) Reports indicate that some children in refugee camps may be vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation by peacekeeping troops, sometimes in exchange for food.(5, 7, 13, 31, 46, 48-55)




The UN reported that non-state armed groups continued to recruit and use child soldiers during the reporting period, sometimes as a result of forced or compulsory recruitment.(4, 5, 7, 14, 18, 27, 42, 56-58) An estimated 6,000 to 10,000 children associated with armed groups, some as young as age 8, are used to carry supplies; monitor checkpoints; and serve as combatants, cooks, lookouts, and concubines.(1, 5-7, 18, 19, 24, 28, 30, 59-64) Some children have reportedly been used as human shields by armed men.(5, 7) There are also reports that children from neighboring countries have been recruited by CAR armed groups, and that children in CAR have been abducted for forced labor and/or forced soldiering by the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group that operates in CAR.(4-7, 14, 16, 30, 65) Catholic Relief Services reported that 145 children were abducted from CAR between April 2015 and January 2016 for use by the Lord's Resistance Army; 128 had been released as of February 2016.(30) The Government worked with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), UNICEF, and other partner agencies to prioritize the demobilization and reintegration into community life of these children.(22, 44, 47, 64, 66)

Although the Constitution provides free education, associated fees and a severe lack of textbooks, schools, and teachers, particularly in rural areas, limit access to education for an estimated 1.4 million, or 30 percent, of school-aged children.(6, 14, 43, 58, 65, 67, 68) Teachers and civil servants who fled during the conflict have yet to return and others have been threatened, attacked, or killed. Some schools have been used by armed groups, including as military bases and for recruiting children into their ranks.(5-7, 14, 65, 68, 69) Many schools have been closed for lengthy periods of time due to destruction, damage, or looting as a result of the conflict, and others are occupied by displaced civilians.(5-7, 14, 27, 65, 68-71) Additionally, some students do not attend school due to safety concerns.(14) Birth registration is required for children to enroll in school; however, birth registration was not possible in all areas of CAR in 2015 and the associated cost of registering births made it prohibitive to some.(30, 65, 71, 72) Additionally, members of the armed group *ex-Séléka* reportedly looted and destroyed the records at birth registration offices throughout the country.(65)

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	✓

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 259 of the Labor Code (73)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 263 of the Labor Code (73)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations and/or Activities for Children	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code (73, 74)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 7 of the Labor Code; Article 151 of the Penal Code (73, 75)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 151 of the Penal Code (75)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code; Articles 110 and 111 of the Penal Code (73, 75)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code (73)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Legislation title unknown (30)
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 (67, 76, 77)
Free Public Education	Yes		Ordinance N° 84/031; Article 7 of the Constitution (67, 76, 77)

* No conscription (30)

Article 261 of the Labor Code mandates that the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Public Health, in consultation with the Permanent National Labor Council, issue a joint order determining the types of activities and occupations prohibited for children, but this has yet to be issued.(72, 73) The types of hazardous work prohibited for children are not comprehensive, and do not cover diamond mining, an area of work where there is evidence of children working in hazardous conditions, under water, and carrying heavy loads.(10-12) Additionally, the law does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation, as the possession and distribution of child pornography are not criminally prohibited. In addition, the law does not criminally prohibit an individual from benefiting from the sexual exploitation of children.(73, 75) Research did not uncover a public version of the Government's legislation with regard to minimum age for voluntary military recruitment.

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).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Public Service, Labor, Social Security, and Employment	Monitor and enforce laws related to child labor.(78) In 2015, established the Child Labor Prevention Service dedicated to combatting child labor through inspections, investigations, and awareness-raising activities.(3, 79) Although allocated a provisional budget of \$1.3 million to carry out activities for 2015, the Child Labor Prevention Service did not receive this funding.(3, 79)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Investigate cases of the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking, and the use of children in illicit activities. The MOJ shares this responsibility with CAR's police forces.(78)
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.(30) Refer victims of child trafficking to NGOs and maintain an orphanage for children at risk of trafficking.(30)
Special Criminal Court*	Comprised of national and international magistrates, the Court investigate serious human rights abuses committed since 2003, including the use of children in armed conflict.(13, 44, 46, 80, 81)

* Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

In June 2015, the Transitional Government promulgated a law that was passed in April to establish the Special Criminal Court.(5, 13, 44, 80, 81) Although the Government drafted the decrees necessary to implement the Court's functioning, developed job descriptions to recruit staff, and identified a building to enable the investigation and prosecutorial activities of the Court, it was not operational during the reporting period.(13, 81) The Ministry of Justice (MOJ), with the support of MINUSCA, developed a strategic plan to gradually reopen courts and detention facilities throughout the country and process the backlog of cases. In 2015, 18 of the country's 28 courts were staffed with magistrates.(44)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2015, 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	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown* (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	18 (82, 83)	41 (3)
Number of Child Labor Dedicated Inspectors	Unknown	5 (3)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (79)	Yes (79)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (3)	Yes (3)
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A (3)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	No (82, 84)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections	0 (82, 84)	Unknown* (3)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	0 (82, 84)	Unknown* (3)
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	0 (82, 84)	Unknown* (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (82, 84)	Unknown* (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (82, 84)	Unknown* (3)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	N/A	Unknown* (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (82, 84)	Yes (3)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (73)	Yes (73)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (82, 84)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (3)

*The Government does not make this information publicly available.

Labor inspectors receive training on topics such as statistics, law, and sociology when they are first hired, in addition to on-the-job training during a probationary period. When funding is available, inspectors are sent to Cameroon or other countries for additional training.(79) Despite an increase since 2014, the number of labor inspectors remains insufficient to address the scope of the problem according to the ILO's recommendation of 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, which is roughly 56 inspectors for CAR.(3, 85-87)

The ongoing violence in CAR has limited the Government's ability to enforce child labor laws in many areas, especially in areas controlled by armed groups.(3, 22) The Government's efforts were further hindered by a lack of labor inspectorate capacity and inadequate financial and material resources, including transportation, office facilities and supplies, and computers. Child labor violations may be reported in person to the labor inspectorate in Bangui, but there is no mechanism to report child labor violations in other parts of the country.(79) Research indicates that violations were common in all sectors of the economy.(3, 65, 79, 82, 83, 88) The Ministry of Public Service, Labor, Social Security, and Employment works closely with the MOJ; Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Gender, and Humanitarian Action (MSA); and UNICEF to provide assistance to victims of child labor.(79)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2015, 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	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (3)
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A (3)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (42, 89)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	0† (90)	Unknown (79)

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Number of Violations Found	0† (90)	2,679 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0† (90)	0 (30)
Number of Convictions	0† (90)	0 (30)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (22)	Yes (4)

† Data are from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014.

The first criminal trials since 2011 were held in Bangui in June and July 2015; however, none of these trials were related to the worst forms of child labor.(30, 79) Of the six juvenile courts in CAR, only the one located in Bangui functions. However, it lacks the staff and resources to conduct investigations.(14) The weak judicial system and absence of state authority outside of Bangui has led to a lack of trust in the system and the inability to access formal judicial processes.(5, 14) Criminal acts were widely resolved through traditional methods across the country, often to the exclusion of formal legal proceedings.(4) Research also indicates that although law enforcement officials received training on how to identify and investigate cases of human trafficking, government officials outside of the capital may lack the means and the capacity to enforce the law, including not having access to copies of relevant laws.(4, 30)

There are no formal referral mechanisms, and the Government did not identify any child trafficking victims during the reporting period. UNICEF and MINUSCA identified and separated at least 2,679 children from armed groups during the reporting period and NGOs identified and provided services to 104 victims of human trafficking, including shelter, psychosocial care, health services, and resettlement.(4, 7)

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

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Council for the Protection of Children	Coordinate policies and strategies to protect children from sexual exploitation and child soldiering. Overseen by the Prime Minister's Office and comprised of government ministries, NGOs, and international organizations.(10, 30, 57, 91)
Interministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking*	Overseen by the Ministry of Public Security, investigates and combats human trafficking in CAR.(4)

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

The National Council for the Protection of Children did not meet in 2015 for the third straight year. The Interministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, which was created in March 2015, did not carry out any activities during the reporting period.(72, 79)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. 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 facilitate the separation of children from their ranks.(3, 5, 7, 13, 24, 28, 44, 47, 64, 92, 93) Since the signing of the agreement, 1,446 child soldiers were released from armed groups and received psychosocial support and reintegration services from UNICEF, some as part of this agreement.(5, 7, 23, 30, 57, 62)
Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy†	MSA policy that aims to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of child soldiers in CAR.(5)

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Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
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.(29, 94)
National Action Plan for Education for All (2003–2015)*	Aimed to improve enrollment and completion rates for primary school. Also called for the establishment of informal schools in rural areas to provide access to education for children, between the ages of 8 and 15, who have never attended school.(95, 96)
National Strategy for the Education Sector (2008–2020)*	Aims to improve access and retention in all levels of education by constructing 800 classrooms per year between 2008 and 2015, improving the quality and effectiveness of education, recruiting additional teachers, encouraging the establishment of private schools, and conducting awareness-raising campaigns that promote the importance of education.(97)
National Poverty Reduction Strategy II (2011–2015)*	Established a national framework for encouraging growth and reducing poverty. Focused on promoting security and peace, reviving the economy through regional integration, and developing human capital and social services.(95, 98)
2010 N'Djamena Declaration of the Regional Conference: Ending Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Forces and Groups	Represents a commitment among the signatory countries, including CAR, to eliminate the use of child soldiers. All efforts to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers have been taken under this declaration.(99)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Although the Government of CAR has adopted the Bangui Forum Agreement that seeks to address child soldiering, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor. In 2015, the MSA, in collaboration with an NGO, began drafting a National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking.(4, 72, 79) This replaces a previous action plan drafted in collaboration with UNICEF in 2007 that was not implemented due to a lack of resources.(30) A draft of a national policy addressing the elimination of child labor has yet to be adopted.(72, 88) Research was unable to determine whether the UNDAF, National Action Plan for Education for All, National Strategy for the Education Sector, or the National Poverty Reduction Strategy II were implemented during the reporting period.(79)

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

In 2015, the Government of CAR participated in programs that may contribute to the prevention or elimination of child labor (Table 10).

Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Regional Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants (2015–2020)*	\$24.7 million UNODC-funded program implemented in conjunction with ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) that aims to improve the capacity of West and Central African countries to combat human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants in accordance with the Palermo Protocol.(100) Aims to improve regional coordination in terms of data collection, information sharing, criminal prosecution, and victim protection.(100)
Education Cluster	Funded by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and led by UNICEF, develops and coordinates the implementation of an education program in collaboration with the Ministry of Education for schools that are able to reopen. Establishes Temporary Spaces for Learning and Child Protection (ETAPE) in internally displaced persons sites in Bangui to provide safe learning environments and child protection services.(68, 70)
Shelters for Unaccompanied Children	UNICEF-supported centers in Bangui that provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to unaccompanied children and former child soldiers.(56)
Education Program*	\$23.4 million European Union-funded program to strengthen educational services by rehabilitating and equipping more than 300 schools in 4 prefectures and the capital, Bangui. Provides training for teachers, support for parent-teacher associations, and care for children released from armed groups.(101)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

Although the Government participates in a program that assists former child soldiers, the scope of this program is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.(5, 14, 102) Additionally, 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.(4, 5) 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.(3, 22)

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 – 2015
	Make the Government’s legislation for a minimum age for voluntary military service publicly available.	2015
	Create a comprehensive list of hazardous occupations and/or activities prohibited for children in consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations.	2013 – 2015
	Establish criminal prohibitions for the possession and distribution of child pornography, and for benefiting from the proceeds of the sexual exploitation of children.	2009 – 2015
Enforcement	Ensure that enforcement agencies have sufficient resources and allocated funding to enable government officials to enforce laws related to child labor throughout the country.	2009 – 2015
	Make data publicly available on the labor inspectorate’s funding level, the number and type of investigations conducted, violations found, penalties imposed, prosecutions initiated, and convictions made.	2014 – 2015
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor in accordance with the ILO’s standards.	2009 – 2015
Coordination	Ensure that existing coordination mechanisms function as intended and aim to combat all forms of child labor, including its worst forms.	2011 – 2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into education and poverty reduction policies.	2009 – 2015
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor and ensure adequate funding to fully implement action plans and policies.	2014 – 2015
	Implement established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2015
Social Programs	Improve access to education by eliminating school-related fees; ensure that there are an adequate number of teachers and classrooms throughout the country; ensure that children can safely access education; and ensure that schools are safe spaces, free from armed groups.	2009 – 2015
	Ensure that all children have access to birth registration.	2013 – 2015
	Expand programs to assist former child combatants and children associated with armed groups.	2009 – 2015
	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2015

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- a percentage of the population at the theoretical entrance age to the last grade of primary. A high ratio indicates a high degree of current primary education completion. Because the calculation includes all new entrants to last grade (regardless of age), the ratio can exceed 100 percent, due to over-aged and under-aged children who enter primary school late/early and/or repeat grades. For more information, please see the “Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section of this report.
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