

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 1998, the Government of the Central African Republic, local NGOs and unions established a network to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.⁸⁸² The government launched a study in 2000 on the problem. Although no final report has been released, initial findings indicate a need for training for government employees involved in labor issues such as child labor.⁸⁸³ The government has also created a commission to study the magnitude of trafficking in persons in the country.⁸⁸⁴ In August 2001, the government organized a 1-week sensitization campaign on the problem of sexual exploitation in preparation for the UN World Child Summit.⁸⁸⁵ In July 2002, the government ratified the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The government has also initiated a campaign, with assistance from UNICEF, to set up local committees to monitor and enforce children's rights in every district of the capital of Bangui.⁸⁸⁶

A community schools pilot program has been established in the country with assistance from UNICEF.⁸⁸⁷ In order to promote girls' education, primary schools were constructed in the southwest region of the country with assistance from UNICEF during 2003.⁸⁸⁸

In March 2003, the Government of the Central African Republic was overthrown in a coup and a new government was installed. The coup, the population displacement it caused, and a teachers' strike for non-payment of wages led to the closure of schools in certain regions of the country. In May, the new government provided free transportation back to affected regions to encourage teachers and students to return to school.⁸⁸⁹ The government, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the French cooperation program agency also have developed a plan of action to address the need for more complete birth registration.⁸⁹⁰ Such efforts are intended to improve children's access to education and other social services.⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸² U.S. Embassy- Bangui, *unclassified telegram no. 783*, October 3, 2001.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁴ The Ministries of Social Affairs, Interior, Labor, Rural Development, Justice, and Defense are represented on the commission. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Central African Republic*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 6f; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18174pf.htm>.

⁸⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Central African Republic*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8301.htm>.

⁸⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

⁸⁸⁷ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 658th Meeting: Central African Republic*, CRC/C/SR.658, February 2001, para. 31; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/7c0595bc56c343b5c12569f500598d21?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/7c0595bc56c343b5c12569f500598d21?Opendocument).

⁸⁸⁸ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "UNICEF Funding Schools Construction in the Southwest", IRINnews.org, [online], January 30, 2003 [cited June 18, 2003]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=32015>.

⁸⁸⁹ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Teachers, Pupils to be Transported to Schools, Minister Says", IRINnews.org, [online], May 13, 2003 [cited June 18, 2003]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=34057>.

⁸⁹⁰ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "UNICEF says one-third of children not registered", IRINnews.org, [online], June 20, 2003 [cited June 23, 2003]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=34906>.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 63.5 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in the Central African Republic were working.⁸⁹² Children work throughout the country, especially in rural areas.⁸⁹³ Children work in agriculture, mining, and cattle raising.⁸⁹⁴ According to reports from an international agency, children also work alongside their families in the diamond fields.⁸⁹⁵ In some rural areas, children are required to engage in farming at schools. The proceeds from their work are used for school supplies and activities.⁸⁹⁶ Children are also engaged in domestic service and street vending.⁸⁹⁷ In 2002, there were approximately 3,000 street children in Bangui.⁸⁹⁸

Children are involved in prostitution in the Central African Republic.⁸⁹⁹ Trafficking of children to and from the country also occurs. Children are brought from Nigeria, Sudan and Chad to work as domestic servants, shop assistants and agricultural workers. These children do not receive payment for their work and are not enrolled in school.⁹⁰⁰ There are some reports of children being trafficked to Nigeria and other neighboring countries for work in agriculture.⁹⁰¹

Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 14.⁹⁰² However, students must pay for their own books, supplies, transportation, and insurance.⁹⁰³ In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 75.0 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 54.7 percent.⁹⁰⁴ In 2000, the net primary attendance rate was 38.3 percent.⁹⁰⁵ Primary enrollment and attendance rates are higher for boys than girls,⁹⁰⁶ and higher for children living in urban areas than

⁸⁹² Children who are working in some capacity include children who have performed any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, who have performed more than 6 hours of housekeeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. Government of the Central African Republic, *Enquête a Indicateurs Multiples en Republique Centrafricaine (MICS): Rapport Préliminaire*, UNICEF, Bangui, December 2000, 31.

⁸⁹³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 6d.

⁸⁹⁴ U.S. Embassy- Bangui, *unclassified telegram no. 783*.

⁸⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 6d.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁷ U.S. Embassy- Bangui, *unclassified telegram no. 783*.

⁸⁹⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Section 6f. See also UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 658th Meeting*, para. 28.

⁹⁰⁰ The victims of trafficking in the CAR are generally children. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 6f.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*, Section 5.

⁹⁰³ U.S. Embassy- Bangui, *unclassified telegram no. 783*.

⁹⁰⁴ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

⁹⁰⁵ Government of the Central African Republic, *Enquete a Indicateurs Multiples en Republique Centrafricaine*, 10-11.

⁹⁰⁶ In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 88.9 percent for males, and 61.2 percent for females. That same year, the net primary enrollment rate was 64.3 percent for males, and 45.0 percent for females. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003*. While boys have only slightly higher attendance rates than girls in urban areas, the net primary attendance rate in rural areas is 33.5 percent for boys and 23.8 percent for girls. See Government of the Central African Republic, *Enquete a Indicateurs Multiples en Republique Centrafricaine*, 11. Factors that limit girls' access to schooling include pressure to marry and tradition. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 5. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "UNICEF Funding Schools Construction".

in rural areas.⁹⁰⁷ Many reports indicate that male teachers pressure female students into sex to receive good grades.⁹⁰⁸ Recurring financial problems in the education system⁹⁰⁹ as well as the 2003 coup have led to the closure of many of the country's schools.⁹¹⁰

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years. However, children who are at least 12 years of age may engage in light work in some traditional agricultural activities or domestic work.⁹¹¹ Children under 18 are forbidden to perform hazardous work or to work at night.⁹¹² The Labor Code prohibits forced labor.⁹¹³ A lack of resources and insufficient labor inspection staff contribute to inadequate enforcement of laws relating to child labor.⁹¹⁴

Although prostitution is legal in the Central African Republic, Article 198 of the Criminal Code prohibits publicly soliciting persons to engage in debauchery. Violations are punishable by a fine or imprisonment from 5 days to 1 month. Article 199 prohibits procurement of individuals for sexual purposes, including assisting in prostitution, and designates a fine and imprisonment for 3 months to 1 year for those found guilty. Article 200 increases the penalty of imprisonment from 1 to 5 years for cases involving a minor.⁹¹⁵ Minor's brigades have been established to punish persons responsible for forcing children into prostitution. However, few cases were prosecuted due to the reluctance of victims' families to press charges.⁹¹⁶ The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking. Traffickers can be prosecuted, however, under anti-slavery laws, mandatory school age laws, prostitution laws, and the labor code.⁹¹⁷ The government does not actively investigate trafficking cases.⁹¹⁸

The Central African Republic ratified ILO Convention No. 138 and ILO Convention No. 182 on June 28, 2000.⁹¹⁹

⁹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 5. The net primary attendance rate is 53.5 percent in urban areas as opposed to 28.8 percent in rural areas. See Government of the Central African Republic, *Enquete a Indicateurs Multiples en Republique Centrafricaine*, 11.

⁹⁰⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁹¹⁰ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Teachers, Pupils to be Transported to Schools". HIV/AIDS-related deaths among teachers have also been a contributing factor to school closures. See Integrated Regional Information Networks, "HIV/AIDS leading cause of death for teachers", IRINnews.org, September 5, 2001; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=11236>.

⁹¹¹ U.S. Embassy- Bangui, *unclassified telegram no. 783*. See also NATLEX, *Central African Republic*, ILO, [database online] 2003 [cited June 24, 2003]; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/scripts/natlexcgi.exe?lang=E>.

⁹¹² U.S. Embassy- Bangui, *unclassified telegram no. 783*. See also NATLEX, *Central African Republic*.

⁹¹³ The prohibition of forced or compulsory labor applies to children, although they are not mentioned specifically. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 6c.

⁹¹⁴ U.S. Embassy- Bangui, *unclassified telegram no. 783*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 6d.

⁹¹⁵ The Protection Project, "Central African Republic," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children: A Country-by-Country Report on a Contemporary Form of Slavery*, Washington, D.C., March 2002; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org/main1.htm>.

⁹¹⁶ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 658th Meeting*, para. 28.

⁹¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Central African Republic*, Section 6f.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid.

⁹¹⁹ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited June 24, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.