

# Central African Republic

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

An estimated 61.1 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were counted as working in the Central African Republic in 2000. Approximately 60.4 percent of all boys 5 to 14 were working compared to 61.7 percent of girls in the same age group.<sup>972</sup> UNICEF reports that 53 percent of children are engaged in work in urban areas and 71 percent of children are engaged in work in rural areas.<sup>973</sup> Although children work in many sectors of the economy, most children work in agriculture.<sup>974</sup> Some children work on farms at school. Such work is reportedly considered to prepare children for agricultural work as adults. The proceeds earned on the farms are used for school supplies and activities.<sup>975</sup> Children also reportedly work alongside adult relatives in diamond fields.<sup>976</sup> In the capital city of Bangui, the number of street children, many of whom are orphaned by HIV/AIDS, is estimated at more than 2,500.<sup>977</sup> Such children are vulnerable to early entrance into work. Street children are engaged in various economic activities including grinding, nuts, selling small items, washing dishes in small eateries, and begging.<sup>978</sup> Children from some indigenous groups are forced into agricultural, domestic and other forms of labor by other ethnic groups in the country.<sup>979</sup>

Reports indicate that children fought for both pro-government and rebel forces during the March 2003 coup.<sup>980</sup> Child soldiers were also used by armed groups from neighboring countries operating in the Central African Republic until early 2003.<sup>981</sup> The security situation in the country was generally stable

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<sup>972</sup> UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, "Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates," (October 7, 2005). Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the section in the front of the report titled "Data Sources and Definitions."

<sup>973</sup> UNICEF, *L'enfant en Centrafrique, Famille, Sante, Scolarite, Travail*, July, 2004.

<sup>974</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Enquête a Indicateurs Multiples en République Centrafricaine (MICS): Rapport Préliminaire*, UNICEF, Bangui, December 2000; available from

<http://www4.worldbank.org/afr/poverty/pdf/docnav/03307.pdf>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Central African Republic*, Washington, D.C., February 28, 2005, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41594.htm>.

<sup>975</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 6d.

<sup>976</sup> Ibid.

<sup>977</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Analyse Causale des Problemes de protection des Enfants de la Rue en Centrafrique*, Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, Bangui, April 2004.

<sup>978</sup> Ibid. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*.

<sup>979</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

<sup>980</sup> In the weeks preceding the 2003 coup, for example, many street children were enrolled in security forces to repel the rebellion. See UN Commission on Civil and Political Rights, *List of issues prepared in the absence of the second periodic report of the State party, due on 9 April 1989*, September 3, 2003; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/880cc0a9e81c0a75c1256da90022b550?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/880cc0a9e81c0a75c1256da90022b550?Opendocument). See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*.

<sup>981</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004 - Central African Republic*, 2004; available from [www.child-soldiers.org/regions/country.html?id=41](http://www.child-soldiers.org/regions/country.html?id=41).

during 2005, and there were no reports of children involved in armed conflict during the year.<sup>982</sup> Children in the Central African Republic are also involved in prostitution.<sup>983</sup>

Children are trafficked to the Central African Republic generally from Chad, Nigeria and Sudan for work in domestic services, small shops, and agriculture.<sup>984</sup> Traveling merchants, herders, and other foreigners working in and transiting through the country sometimes brought boys and girls with them. Such children did not attend school and were not paid for their work. There are some reports that children are trafficked from the Central African Republic to Nigeria and other nearby nations for work in agriculture.<sup>985</sup>

Education in public institutions is free and compulsory from ages 6 to 16.<sup>986</sup> However, truancy is rarely punished.<sup>987</sup> In September 2004, the government signed a decree setting fixed fees for public primary education at 600 francs CFA (USD 1) and secondary education at 1500 francs CFA (USD 2.77).<sup>988</sup> These fees are a one-time-only expense and apply to all of the children in a family who attend the same school.<sup>989</sup> The government hopes that fixed education fees will increase primary school enrollment.<sup>990</sup>

In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 66 percent.<sup>991</sup> Gross enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. In 2000, 38.5 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were attending school.<sup>992</sup> The net primary attendance rate for children living in urban areas in 2000 was almost double the rate for children living in rural areas.<sup>993</sup> Many reports indicate that male teachers from the primary to the university levels pressure female students into sex in exchange for good grades.<sup>994</sup>

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<sup>982</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

<sup>983</sup> Ibid. See also UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 658th Meeting: Central African Republic*, February 14, 2001 [cited May 20, 2005]; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/7c0595bc56c343b5c12569f500598d21?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/7c0595bc56c343b5c12569f500598d21?Opendocument).

<sup>984</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

<sup>985</sup> Ibid.

<sup>986</sup> *Journal Officiel de la République Centrafricaine: Projet de Constitution*, (October 21). See also *Portent Orientation de l'Éducation*, 97/014, (December 10, 1997).

<sup>987</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

<sup>988</sup> OANDA Customizable Currency Converter, oanda.com, [online] [cited June 6, 2005]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>. See also Government of the Central African Republic, *Decision No 190*, Ministry of Education, Bangui, September 4, 2004. See also interview with Jonas Guezewan-Piki, *Direction of National Education*, April 28, 2005.

<sup>989</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Decision No 190*.

<sup>990</sup> Mary Gutmann, *TDA In-Country Data Collection for Central African Republic*, May 31, 2005.

<sup>991</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrollment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005).

<sup>992</sup> UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, "Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates."

<sup>993</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Enquête a Indicateurs Multiples en République Centrafricaine*, 10-11.

<sup>994</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

Article 125 of the Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.<sup>995</sup> However, children who are at least 12 years of age may engage in light work.<sup>996</sup> Children under 18 years are forbidden to perform certain kinds of work, including work in mines and work that involves carrying heavy loads, or work at night between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.<sup>997</sup> Article 153 of the Mining Code prohibits a company or parent from using children in mining. Violators are subject to a fine of 100,000 to 3,000,000 francs CFA (USD 185 to USD 5,551.65) and/or imprisonment of 6 months to 3 years.<sup>998</sup> Forced labor was prohibited under the former Constitution; it is unclear whether this provision is included in the new Constitution approved by referendum in December 2004.<sup>999</sup> The minimum age for enlisting in the armed forces is 18 years.<sup>1000</sup> In November 2004, the government issued a special Constitutional bill adopting a series of articles which seek to improve basic social services, including education and the protection of women and children.<sup>1001</sup> Since 1999, the Government of the Central African Republic has submitted to the ILO a list or an equivalent document identifying the types of work that it has determined are harmful to the health, safety or morals of children under Convention 182 or Convention 138.<sup>1002</sup>

The Penal Code prohibits the procurement of individuals for sexual purposes, including assisting in or profiting from prostitution, with penalties that include imprisonment of 1 month and a day to 1 year and/or a fine of 100,000 to 1,000,000 francs CFA (USD 185 to USD 1,850). Those found guilty of engaging in such acts with minors, which the code defines as persons less than 15 years of age, face penalties of imprisonment from 1 to 5 years and a fine of 200,000 to 2,000,000 francs CFA (USD 370.11 to USD 3,701.10). The Penal Code also establishes penalties including imprisonment from 2 to 5 years and 100,000 to 800,000 francs CFA (USD 185 to USD 1,480.44) if a school official commits a sex offense involving a female student.<sup>1003</sup>

The labor law does not specifically prohibit trafficking.<sup>1004</sup> However, traffickers can be prosecuted under anti-slavery laws, mandatory school-age laws, the prostitution provisions of the Penal Code, and the Labor Code.<sup>1005</sup> In addition, Article 212 of the Penal Code established a penalty of imprisonment from 5 to

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<sup>995</sup> *Instituant le Code du Travail de la République Centrafricaine*, 61/221, (June 2, 1961). See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 6d.

<sup>996</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial reports of States parties due in 1994: Central African Republic*, November 18, 1998; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/fb066e7732d518c0802567a6003b7aad?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/fb066e7732d518c0802567a6003b7aad?Opendocument). Children may work in traditional agriculture or home services starting at age 12. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 6d.

<sup>997</sup> NATLEX, *Central African Republic: Elimination of child labour, protection of children and young persons*, in NATLEX, [database online] [cited May 20, 2005]; available from [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex\\_browse.details](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details). See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial reports of States parties due in 1994*, para. 62.

<sup>998</sup> *Le Code Minier*, (February 1, 2004).

<sup>999</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Background Notes: Central African Republic*, Washington, D.C., February 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4007.htm>. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "New Constitution Adopted, 15 to Vie for Presidency", IRINnews.org, [online], December 20, 2004 [cited May 26, 2005]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=44736>.

<sup>1000</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial reports of States parties due in 1994*, para. 61.

<sup>1001</sup> *Journal Officiel de la République Centrafricaine: Projet de Constitution*.

<sup>1002</sup> ILO-IPEC official, email communication to USDOL official, November 14, 2005.

<sup>1003</sup> This section of the Penal Code was amended in 1964. *Code Penal de la République Centrafricaine*, (2000), Articles 196-214. The ILO's Committee of Experts has raised questions about what provisions in the country's law protect children under 18 from prostitution. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial reports of States parties due in 1994*. See also CEACR, *Direct request, Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Central African Republic (ratification: 2000)*, ILO, Geneva, 2004, Clause (b)1; available from <http://webfusion.ilo.org>.

<sup>1004</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

<sup>1005</sup> CEACR, *Direct request*.

10 years for any person who abducts or causes the abduction of a child younger than 15 years of age.<sup>1006</sup> Revised text of the Penal Code on child trafficking was submitted to the Ministry of Justice in January 2003, but it has not yet been approved.<sup>1007</sup>

The U.S. Department of State reported that enforcement of child labor laws occurs infrequently, and the government lacks sufficient resources for enforcement.<sup>1008</sup> Community brigades have been established to punish persons responsible for forcing children into prostitution. However, few cases have been prosecuted due to the reluctance of victims' families to press charges.<sup>1009</sup> The government does not currently investigate trafficking cases.<sup>1010</sup>

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

The government issued a decree at the end of 2004 authorizing the establishment of a national committee on orphans and other vulnerable children and established a variety of programs with the assistance of international donor institutions in an attempt to rehabilitate the social services in the country, including education.<sup>1011</sup> The government acknowledges the incidence of child labor in the country and is seeking to raise awareness about this issue.<sup>1012</sup> The government has also established a plan to combat trafficking by creating a mobile border unit to regulate the entry and exit of children.<sup>1013</sup>

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	6/28/2000	✓
Ratified Convention 182	6/28/2000	✓
ILO-IPEC Member		
National Plan for Children		✓
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

The government has committed to improving the crippled educational system and specifically focusing on educating girls.<sup>1014</sup> The government endorsed the country's National Plan of Action for Education in April 2004, which runs until 2015 and is intended to achieve the following goals: protection and education of pre-school-aged children; universal basic education; the availability of relevant training for youth and adults; increased literacy; a reduction in the disparity between boys and girls' participation in education; improved educational quality; and widespread citizen education on HIV/AIDS.<sup>1015</sup> Additionally, the government has issued a National Education Plan, funded by UNICEF, targeting the education of girls.<sup>1016</sup>

<sup>1006</sup> *Code Penal de la Republique Centrafricaine*, Article 212.

<sup>1007</sup> Amnesty International, *Central African Republic: Five Months of War Against Women*, London, November 10, 2004.

<sup>1008</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 6d.

<sup>1009</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 658th Meeting*, Section 28.

<sup>1010</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*, Section 5.

<sup>1011</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Decree no 018/MFASSN/CAB/SG/DGAS 04*, Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, November 2004, Article 6.

<sup>1012</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Note a l'attention du Ministre a l'occasion de la celebration de la journee mondiale du travail des enfants pour l'annee 2005*, Ministry of Labor, Bangui, May 30, 2005.

<sup>1013</sup> Interview with Jean Pierre Sapoua, *Labor Inspector and Social Laws, Director of Studies and External Relationships*, May 12, 2005.

<sup>1014</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Plan d'Action 2005: Programme Scolarisation des Filles*, Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, Bangui, 2005.

<sup>1015</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Central African Republic*. See also Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, *Plan National d'Action de l'Education Pour Tous 2003-2015: Republique Centrafricaine*, Bangui, July 21, 2003; available from [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=20942&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=20942&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "National Education Plan Endorsed", IRINnews.org, [online], April 26, 2004 [cited May 20, 2005]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=40758>.

<sup>1016</sup> Government of the Central African Republic, *Plan d'Action 2005: Programme Scolarisation des Filles*.

The World Bank provided assistance in the educational sector, including refurbishment of schools, provision of supplies such as textbooks, training for teacher and institutional management.<sup>1017</sup> The IMF approved a package of aid programs for the country, which includes financing for education, including salaries for teachers.<sup>1018</sup> UNICEF continues to support a non-formal community schools program that is intended to promote girls' education as well as distribute supplies to students and teachers.<sup>1019</sup> UNICEF also has an action plan to provide care to AIDS orphans, who are often compelled to begin working at an early age.<sup>1020</sup>

UNICEF continued to provide access to water, sanitation, and school meals in the country's education system.<sup>1021</sup> The UNDP, UNICEF, and the Office of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children within the Ministry of Labor have proposed a 4-year project aimed at providing a better environment for orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS. The project targets approximately 5 percent of the estimated 110,000 HIV/AIDS orphans in the country to receive medical, nutritional and economic support in the hopes that the number of street children will decrease.<sup>1022</sup>

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<sup>1017</sup> World Bank, *Country Re-engagement Note for the Central African Republic*, July 14, 2004, 12, para. 37; available from <http://www-wds.worldbank.org>.

<sup>1018</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Government gets post-conflict aid of US \$8.5 million", July 27, 2004 [cited May 20, 2005]; available from [http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=42393&SelectRegion=Great\\_Lakes&SelectCountry=CENTRAL\\_AFRICAN\\_REPUBLIC](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=42393&SelectRegion=Great_Lakes&SelectCountry=CENTRAL_AFRICAN_REPUBLIC).

<sup>1019</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Education Sector Gets a Boost from UNICEF", [online], October 3, 2003 [cited May 20, 2005]; available from [www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=36942](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=36942). See also UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 658th Meeting*.

<sup>1020</sup> For a discussion of HIV/AIDS and its relationship to child labor, see UNICEF, *At a Glance: Central African Republic*, [online] [cited May 20, 2005]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/car.html>.

<sup>1021</sup> UNICEF, *Central African Republic: Donor Update*, July 16, 2004 [cited May 20, 2005]. See also UNICEF, *At a glance: Central African Republic*. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "WFP in Awareness Raising Campaign for School Feeding Programme", IRINnews.org, [online], January 29, 2004 [cited May 20, 2005]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=39197>.

<sup>1022</sup> UNDP, *Programme du Gouvernement de la Republique Centrafricaine*, Bangui, January 2005.