

In 2011, the Central African Republic made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, children continued to be used as child soldiers by armed forces. The Government had previously signed an agreement with UNICEF to demobilize child soldiers, and in 2011, recommitted itself to protect children through a separate general action plan with UNICEF. However, the Government did not prevent local authorities from supporting self-defense militias that use children. The Central African Republic did not conduct any child labor investigations and did not implement programs to withdraw children from the worst forms of child labor. Children continue to be involved in other worst forms of child labor, including in diamond mining as well as in forced labor 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		41.1

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(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 militias.(3-6) Children are also commonly engaged in dangerous work in fishing and agriculture.(7-10) 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, 11, 12) Children's work in agriculture may involve carrying heavy loads and applying potentially harmful pesticides, while fishing may expose children to waterborne diseases and drowning.(9, 10, 13)

Numerous children also work under harmful conditions in gold and diamond mines, transporting and washing gravel, digging

pits, using sieves, and carrying heavy loads.(12, 14-16) Many children also work long hours as domestic servants.(17, 18) Children employed as domestics may work long hours and are isolated in private homes where they are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(19) *Ba'aka* children (Pygmies) are forced into both agricultural labor and domestic service.(6, 17)

A high rate of orphanhood, including from HIV/AIDS, displaces thousands of children to the streets especially those of Bangui, the capital of CAR. Many of these children work as street vendors.(6, 17, 20) Children working on the streets may be exposed to many dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements.(21) Children, including street children, abandoned children and those dwelling in urban areas, are also exploited in prostitution.(11, 18, 20) Some children have also been forced to work as porters, including carrying stolen goods for criminal groups. (6, 10, 14)

Because of protracted conflict, spillover violence from neighboring countries and rebel groups, the Government of CAR has little control outside of the capital.(3, 6, 22, 23) 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 that one-third of the members of these groups are children who serve as combatants, lookouts and porters.(3, 4, 10) The Government did not prevent local authorities from supporting self-defense militias that use children and, according to the UN Secretary General, provided support in certain instances.(3-6, 24) The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict reported that some officials from the Ministry of Defense equipped a self-defense group in the community of Obo with items such as ammunition for hunting rifles and flashlights. The Monitoring Centre and Watchlist also reported that the Government provided

Central African Republic

certain self-defense groups with badges.(3) In June 2012, the UN Secretary General published a report that noted the national army of CAR reportedly used children for various purposes, including manning checkpoints.(5) 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, 25-27) The LRA forces children to work as soldiers, sex slaves and porters.(6) Children also are still reported to be recruited and used by other indigenous rebel groups such as the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace, (CPJP) the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR), the Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic, Democratic Front for the Central African People and the Movement of Justice for Central African Liberators. (3- 6, 10, 22, 25) Children were seen fighting in the CPJP and UFDR in clashes in September and October 2011. At least 63 children were killed in those clashes.(5)

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.(18, 27, 28) Children are trafficked between CAR and Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan for similar purposes.(28)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14.(29, 30) However, children who are at least age 12 may engage in light work in some forms of agriculture or domestic service.(30, 31) Children younger than age 18 are prohibited from working between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. and from performing certain kinds of work, including work in mines. (30, 32, 33) In addition, the law protects children younger than age 14 from performing work that involves carrying heavy loads.(8, 31) The Government has not issued a more specific list of prohibited hazardous work. In addition, the Labor Code does not apply to self-employed workers, including children.(14)

Education is compulsory until age 15.(14) 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.(11)

	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	No
	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 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.(34) The minimum age for compulsory or voluntary recruitment into the Government Armed Forces in CAR is 18.(4, 35) The Labor Code also prohibits the procurement or offering of a child for prostitution and the production of pornography.(34) The Penal Code includes a prohibition against assisting in or profiting from prostitution and human trafficking.(18, 28)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

In July 2011, CAR launched the National Council for the Protection of Children, which is charged with coordinating policies and strategies to protect children, including from sexual exploitation and child soldiering.(10, 18, 28) This council replaced the National Committee on Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children, which was created in 2004, with a mandate to coordinate social protection for children, but the latter has not been active.(18, 36) 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.(18) However, as noted by the ILO Committee of Experts, there has not been a labor administrator to coordinate efforts since

1999. (30, 37) There is also no system in place for the Ministry to track child labor complaints. (18, 30, 37)

The Ministry of Labor employed 73 labor inspectors in the Labor Inspection Unit. However, training for labor inspectors did not include any specific information on child labor and the inspectors are not provided with transportation funds. (10, 18, 30, 37) A 2008 study the latest year for which such information is available, was sponsored by the Ministry with support from UNICEF concluded that inspections are not conducted in a manner that effectively prevents child labor. (18) The Ministry did not conduct any child labor investigations in 2011. (10)

The Ministry of Justice, 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. However, the ministry does not provide its officers with any training in these areas and they lack sufficient office facilities and transportation to carry out investigations. (10, 30) The Government does 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. (10, 18, 28)

In January 2010, a senior inspector from the Gendarmes, a military force charged with civilian policing, was tasked by the Deputy Minister of Defense to investigate reports of child soldiers in self-defense militias. (38) However, in 2011, there were no enforcement actions reported that related to child soldiers. (10)

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. (38) The Government also has a separate Action Plan designed to combat trafficking in persons, including child trafficking. (38) In 2007, CAR signed an agreement with UNICEF and certain rebel groups to demobilize child soldiers. Since then, CAR has taken some steps to reduce the use of child soldiers. (28, 34, 39) CAR also participated in a regional conference, in June 2010, resulting in the N'Djamena Declaration. This Declaration binds signatory countries, including CAR, to eliminate the use of child soldiers

in their territories. (27) Most recently in 2011, CAR signed a general action plan with UNICEF for the protection of children. (28, 34, 39)

The Government has other relevant policies, particularly a National Action Plan for Education and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. (34, 40, 41) The National Action Plan for Education includes a policy of supporting informal schools in rural areas in order to permit children ages 8 to 15, who have never been to school before, to access education. (40) The question of whether this policy has an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed. Nonetheless, there is a severe lack of schools and teachers especially in rural areas, which prevents some children from accessing education. (14, 34, 42) The use of school buildings by armed groups, as well as attacks on schools during the recent conflicts, has also made schools inaccessible to children in some areas and increased risks to children in these locations. (43, 44)

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2011, the Government of CAR continued partnering with UNICEF on programs to protect, demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers. (28) International organizations are also working with the Government to reduce the large gaps in educational infrastructure by building schools and training parents to be informal teachers. (10, 42) During the reporting period, rebel groups also worked with UNICEF to reach agreements to end the use of child soldiers. In October, APRD which had demobilized approximately 1,300 children between 2009 and 2010, signed an action plan with UNICEF to end the recruitment and use of children. (5) A similar plan was signed by the CPJP in November. UFDR also reiterated its commitment to a 2007 action plan that it had signed with UNICEF for these same purposes. (5) CPJP and UFDR created implementation committees to release children, while APRD did not. (5) However, the APRD militia subsequently disbanded itself as of May 2012. (45)

Aside from the limited programs above, research found no evidence of government-supported programs for children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, or to prevent children from entering such work, including commercial sexual exploitation, domestic service, child soldiering, mining and agriculture. The scope of programming in CAR is not sufficient to address the multitude of children found engaged in the worst forms of child labor.

Central African Republic

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"> • Include a specific list of hazardous work prohibited to children. • Extend the Code to cover self-employed children. 	2009, 2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Establish a body to coordinate government efforts to combat all worst forms of child labor, or expand the purview of the new National Council for the Protection of Children in this regard.	2011
	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
	Create an inspection system that monitors and tracks reported cases of the worst form of child labor.	2010, 2011
	Conduct inspections on child labor.	2011
	Complete an investigation of militias' use of child soldiers, publish the results, and based on this information take vigorous steps to end this practice and rehabilitate victims.	2010, 2011
	Ensure that local officials and members of the Ministry of Defense do not support self-defense militias that are using children, especially those groups using children as combatants.	2011
	Create a system to identify child victims of trafficking and provide them with adequate shelter and protection.	2010, 2011
Policies	Assess the impact that existing policies may have on addressing child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011
	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
Social Programs	Implement programs that provide services to withdraw and protect children from the worst forms of child labor, particularly in child soldiering, mining, domestic service, agriculture and prostitution.	2009, 2010, 2011

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