

In 2013, the Central African Republic made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government's transitional authorities adopted a National Strategy to End the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict. However, children in the Central African Republic continue to engage in child labor in agriculture, and in the worst forms of child labor in armed conflict. Widespread violence and instability limited the Government's ability to address the worst forms of child labor. Armed groups on all sides of the conflict increased the use of child soldiers. The National Strategy to End the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict was not implemented during the reporting period. Legal protections against child labor were not adopted, and research found no evidence that enforcement actions were taken or that policies and programs to address child labor were implemented.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Central African Republic (CAR) are engaged in child labor in agriculture, and in the worst forms of child labor in armed conflict.(1-5) 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.	51.1 (602,932)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	53.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	33.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		45.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(6)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS 3 Survey, 2006.(7)

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 on cotton,* coffee,* cassava,* and peanut* farms (4, 8)
	Gathering mushrooms,* hay,* firewood,* and caterpillars* (4)
	Fishing,* activities unknown (4, 5)
Industry	Diamond and gold* mining† (4, 8-11)
Services	Domestic work (4, 12)
	Portering and vending (4, 9)
	Working in restaurants and markets (12, 13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use of under-age children in armed conflict (1-4, 13-16)
	Domestic service, work in agriculture, restaurants, markets, and mining, including diamond mines, as a result of human trafficking (12, 13)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (12, 13)
	Forced labor of Ba'aka children in agriculture and domestic service (4)
	Use of child soldiers as a result of forced or compulsory recruitment (3, 4, 16-18)
	Use of children in illicit activities for criminal and rebel groups, including carrying stolen goods (4, 9, 17, 18)

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

‡ 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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In March 2013, Seleka rebels, a coalition of several rebel groups, ousted the sitting president and formed a new government.(19, 20) Escalating violence by various armed groups, including between Seleka elements and the Anti-Balaka self-defense group, caused most government institutions to close.(4, 21) Most residents of the capital, Bangui, have been forced to flee the violence.(21-23) During the reporting period, the UN estimated that half of CAR's population had been made homeless by the conflict and needed aid.(24) In January 2014, a Transitional National Council selected a new interim president. In addition, by January 2014, a multinational peacekeeping force was present in parts of the country.(25) However, the ongoing conflict continues to affect the Government's ability to address the worst forms of child labor.

Research found many cases of child soldiers in CAR. Moreover, the UN has noted that during the reporting period, the recruitment and use of child soldiers occurred on all sides of the conflict.(19, 24, 26, 27) In January 2014, the UN estimated that more than 6,000 child soldiers were involved in armed conflict.(27) Between March and June 2013, approximately 3,500 children were recruited by ex-Seleka elements.(28) During the reporting period, self-defense groups across the country, including the Anti-Balaka, have expanded to include many children.(19, 23, 24, 27)




The ongoing conflict has resulted in more boys and girls being forced into armed groups to serve as child soldiers, including participating in hostilities, carrying supplies, and being sexually exploited.(27, 29, 30) Children are also abducted for forced labor and/or forced soldiering by the Lord's Resistance Army, a Ugandan rebel force that has moved into CAR.(3, 4, 16, 23)

There is a severe lack of schools and teachers especially in rural areas, which prevents many children from accessing education.(9, 31, 32) Furthermore, during the reporting period, an estimated 800,000 children lacked access to education due to the ongoing conflict. In addition, many children do not have birth registration certificates, which may limit their access to education.(4)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON 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 relevant 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	Labor Code (18, 33, 34)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Labor Code (9, 11, 33)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Labor Code (31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Penal Code (12, 13)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Labor Code; Penal Code (12, 13, 31, 33)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Labor Code (31)

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

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	Yes	18	<i>Legislation title unknown</i> (35)
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Act No. 97/014 of 1997 (4, 9)
Free Public Education	Yes		<i>Legislation title unknown</i> (4, 36)

The Government has not ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.(37) Children younger than age 18 are prohibited from working between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., and from working in mines (18, 34, 38, 39). The Government does not have a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children.(9, 11) The Labor Code prohibits the production of pornography, but not the possession and distribution of child pornography.(12, 31) Education is tuition free, but students must pay for their own supplies, books, and transportation, which may prevent some children from accessing school.(4) In addition, research did not uncover a public version of the Government’s legislation for minimum age regarding compulsory military recruitment and free public education.

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 Labor (MOL)	Monitor and enforce laws related to child labor.(12)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Investigate cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking, and the use of children in illicit activities. The MOJ shares this responsibility with CAR’s security forces.(18, 34)

Research found no evidence that law enforcement agencies took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

Research identified a lack of systems to enforce child labor laws. Moreover, the ILO Committee of Experts has noted that, since 1999, there has not been a labor administrator to coordinate the labor inspection efforts of the Ministry of Labor (MOL).(34, 40) There is also no system in place for the MOL to track child labor complaints.(12, 34, 40) Information was not available on the number of labor inspectors employed by the MOL’s Labor Inspectorate Unit, on whether labor inspectors had received any training on child labor, or on whether inspectors have the necessary resources to conduct their inspections. However, in previous years, training for labor inspectors did not include any specific information on child labor, and the inspectors lacked the resources necessary to carry out inspections — including funds for transportation — and in some cases, chairs, desks, doors, and lights for their offices, some of which are inaccessible due to flooding when it rains.(12, 34, 40) Given the state of insecurity in CAR during the reporting period, it appears unlikely these gaps were addressed.

Criminal Law Enforcement

Information was not available on the efforts of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to protect children, on the number of arrests and prosecutions involving children victims, or on whether actual punishments were consistent with those prescribed by law.(34) However, in previous years, the MOJ did not train its officers in these areas; the officers also lacked sufficient office facilities and transportation to carry out investigations.(34) Moreover, the Government did not have any means to identify victims of trafficking and was unable to provide data on the number of arrests and prosecutions of the individuals involved in trafficking children, including in using these children in commercial sexual exploitation or other illicit activities.(12, 13) In previous years the Government did not report having arrested or prosecuted individuals for these acts and, given the state of insecurity in CAR during the reporting period, it appears unlikely these gaps were addressed during 2013.(41)

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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 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Council for the Protection of Children (NCPC)	Coordinate policies and strategies to protect children, including from sexual exploitation and child soldiering.(12, 13) Research found no evidence the NCPC met or took actions during 2013.

In 2013, research found no evidence of a body that coordinates Government efforts to combat all forms of child labor.

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 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Combat Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	Addresses child sexual exploitation and abuse, including measures to address trafficking for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.(42)
National Action Plan for Education*	Aims to improve enrollment and completion rates for primary school. Also calls for the establishment of informal schools in rural areas to provide education access to children ages 8 to 15 who have never attended school.(31, 43)
National Poverty Reduction Strategy*	Serves as a primary strategy for determining national development policy.(31, 44)
National Strategy to End Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict†	Aims to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Calls for negotiating with armed groups and securing the release of children.(23)
N'djamena Declaration of Regional Conference: Ending Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Forces and Groups; Contributing to Peace, Justice and Development	Represents a commitment among the signatory countries, including CAR, to eliminate the use of child soldiers in their territories.(45)

*The impact of this policy on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

In November 2013, the Government's transitional authorities adopted the National Strategy to End the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict.(23) However, as of May 2014, the National Strategy was not being implemented.(41) Moreover, given the state of insecurity in CAR, it is unlikely that any of the above policies were implemented during the reporting period.

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

Research found no evidence of programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.

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 8).

Table 8. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Laws	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013
	Create a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children.	2013
	Amend the Labor Code to prohibit possession and distribution of child pornography.	2009 – 2013
	Make publically available the Government's legislation for minimum age for compulsory military recruitment and free public education.	2013

Table 8. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Complete an investigation of the use of child soldiers, publish the results, and, based on this information, take vigorous steps to end this practice and rehabilitate victims.	2010 – 2013
	Create an inspection system that monitors and tracks cases of child labor.	2010 – 2013
	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 – 2013
	Create a system to identify child victims of trafficking.	2010 – 2013
Coordination	Establish a body to coordinate government efforts to combat child labor, or expand the purview of the National Council for the Protection of Children in this regard.	2011 – 2013
Government Policies	Assess the likely impact of existing policies on education and poverty on addressing child labor.	2009 – 2013
	Implement existing policies, including the National Strategy to End Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict.	2013
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in fishing to inform policies and programs.	2013
	Complete an investigation of the use of child soldiers, publish the results, and, based on this information, take vigorous steps to end this practice and rehabilitate victims.	2010 – 2013
	Increase the number of children able to access schooling by— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eliminating the costs associated with education ■ Taking measures to ensure safe schools ■ Providing adequate numbers of teachers and schools ■ Providing birth registration certificates to all children. 	2009 – 2013
	Fund and implement programs that provide services to withdraw and protect children from child labor and the worst forms of child labor, particularly in child soldiering.	2009 – 2013

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