

In 2020, the Central African Republic made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In addition to publishing data on labor inspections, child labor violations, and funding, the Central African Republic's Ministry of Labor doubled the size of its labor inspectorate in 2020. The government also began to implement an expansive child protection code, and expanded mechanisms to coordinate anti-trafficking and other child protection efforts. However, children in the Central African Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use in armed conflict by non-state armed groups and in diamond mining, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work. Additionally, the Central African Republic does not meet the international standard for minimum age protections since it does not include children working in the informal sector. Moreover, an estimated 1.3 million children lacked access to education because of ongoing instability.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Central African Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use in armed conflict by non-state armed groups and in diamond mining, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work. (1-7) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Central African Republic.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	31.0 (373,742)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	63.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	28.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		40.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (8)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 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 (10)
	Working in forestry, including carrying tools (11)
	Fishing, activities unknown (10)
Industry	Diamond and gold mining, quarrying† (10,12-14)
	Working in sawmills, forges, and foundries, including sharpening sawblades and maintaining fires (11,15)
	Construction, activities unknown (10,15)
Services	Domestic work (12)
	Street work, including carrying heavy loads, garbage scavenging, and market vending (10,12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as combatants, cooks, porters, informants, domestic workers, guards, and for sexual exploitation (12,16)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, markets, and mining, including in diamond mines, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (10,12,16-18)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced labor of indigenous <i>Ba’aka</i> children in farming (6)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,10,12,16-20)

† 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.

The government and 14 armed groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in 2019. (21,22) The peace agreement called for the immediate cessation of recruitment of child soldiers by all parties involved in the conflict. (22) However, violence surrounding the December 2020 elections has stalled implementation of the peace agreement. (10,23) The government also maintains limited control of territory outside the capital, Bangui. Non-state armed groups contest about 80 percent of the territory. (7,24) Anti-Balaka-affiliated armed groups and ex-Séléka factions—including the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC); *Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice*; *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique*; *Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique* (UPC); and unaffiliated elements—continued to recruit children as combatants, informants, cooks, and sex slaves. (12) In December, major rebel groups formed the *Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement* in response to ex-president Francois Bozizé being determined ineligible to be a presidential candidate in the December 2020 election. Violence around the contested election led to an increase in the recruitment and use of children in armed combat. (10,23) During the reporting period, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) documented the recruitment of 256 children, including 94 girls, into the ranks of FPRC in Birao, and a dozen others among anti-Balaka forces in Bria. (7,12,25) Moreover, due to lack of funding and persistent insecurity, as many as 25 percent of children released since 2014 have not received reintegration support. (26,27)

Armed groups and criminal elements, including in some pastoralist groups, subjected children to forced domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. (7,10,16) In some instances, relatives willfully exploited children in their extended families to generate additional income. (10) Girls may be trafficked into forced domestic work, especially in rural areas in which government presence is limited or non-existent. In *maisons de joie* (“houses of joy”), girls as young as age 13 are subject to commercial sexual exploitation. (7,16) *Maisons de joie* are typically private residences at which alcohol and food are served to middle- and upper-class customers. (16) The armed group UPC exploited child laborers at mining sites under their control. Children in rural areas were forced to work in artisanal diamond and gold mines, often for long hours and without protective equipment. (16) Children as young as age 9 are exposed to silver nitrate in gold mines, and often sustain injuries as a result. (6,7) An estimated 2.8 million people, including 1.3 million children, required humanitarian assistance during the reporting period. At least 100,000 IDPs were directly linked to post-electoral violence, and the Central African Republic’s IDP population ballooned to 681,930, half of whom were children. (21,23,25,26,28-30) Displacement and chronic food insecurity are aggravating risk factors for forced labor and sex trafficking. (6)

Schools closed in March 2020, amidst nationwide lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many schools reopened briefly in October to administer exams. (10) An estimated 1.4 million children left the school system during the reporting period, with many unable to return due to conflict and economic hardship. (28) Prior to the pandemic, 9 percent of children enrolled in the 2019–2020 school year had dropped out of school. (28,30) The combined effects of resurgent violence in the north, structural fragility, and the pandemic have exacerbated this trend. The loss of income has compelled children to seek employment or remain at home. (28,29,31) The pandemic has also disrupted reintegration and rehabilitation services for victims of forced labor and armed group recruitment. (31)

Teachers fled conflict zones in Vakaga, Haut-Mbomou and parts of Ouham and Ouham Pendé, where infrastructure was destroyed and children were confined to their houses. (28,29) At least 14 schools were affected by electoral violence in 2020. Fewer than three in five children in the Central African Republic complete their primary education, and only 6 percent graduate from secondary school. (10) An estimated 1.3 million

children lacked access to education because of ongoing instability. (25,32) The continued occupation of school buildings by non-state armed groups presents additional challenges. (12,33) The state's limited reach outside the capital impeded efforts to distribute educational resources in rural areas. (12,33,34)




The Central African Republic's 2020 Child Protection Code provides free birth registration for all children. (35) However, the country's birth registration rate, stymied by endemic poverty and administrative collapse, remains one of the lowest in Africa. (36) Electoral violence and the pandemic further hampered efforts to re-open civil registration centers in the provinces. (10) Despite the new provision, the Family Code and a Presidential Decree mandate that schools will only accept children with documented proof of identity, such as a birth record/certificate. Based on this legal requirement, undocumented children were denied access to education and other social services. (12) Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education has attempted to improve access to education by providing free school admission to children from IDP camps, waiving school exam fees for children affected by conflict, and expanding programs to provide birth registration, which may be required for school enrollment. (12,17,37,38) However, children continue to experience difficulties accessing education due to school fees, an absence of teachers, security concerns, destruction or looting of school materials and buildings by armed groups, and the unavailability of schools, especially in rural areas or IDP camps. (12,18,25,39,40)

The government did not collect or publish data on child work, child labor, or the worst forms of child labor in 2020. (10)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Central African Republic has ratified all 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 (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Central African Republic's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 259 of the Labor Code; Article 63 of the Child Protection Code (35,41)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 263 of the Labor Code; Articles 65–68 of the Child Protection Code (35,41)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 261 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code (41,42)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 7 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 65 and 175 of the Child Protection Code (35,41)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 151 of the Penal Code (43)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 262–263 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 90–92 and 111 of the Penal Code; Article 69 of the Child Protection Code (35,41,43)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 262–263 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 65 and 175 of the Child Protection Code (35,41)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Decree N° 85.432, Declaration to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict (44)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 22 of the Constitution; Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 77–79 of the Child Protection Code (35,41,45)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 77–79 and 181 of the Child Protection Code (35,41)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Ordinance N° 84/031 Orienting the Teaching System; Article 13 of Law N° 97/014 Orienting the Education System; Articles 40 and 52 of the Child Protection Code (35,45–47)
Free Public Education	Yes		Ordinance N° 84/031 Orienting the Teaching System; Articles 52 and 57 of the Child Protection Code (35,46,47)

* No conscription (45,48)

The Child Protection Code (*Code de la Protection des Enfants*, CPE) was adopted by the National Assembly on February 27, 2020. (35,49) The law, which took effect on June 15, reinforces existing prohibitions on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The CPE designates all former child soldiers as victims, and establishes separate judicial and social protection mechanisms to facilitate demobilization and reintegration. (35) The CPE also penalizes the worst forms of child labor with up to 3 years' imprisonment and a fine of \$3,673 (2,000,000 FCFA). (35,50) The legislation further guarantees children ages 5 to 18 the right to free education, and makes primary education compulsory. (35) By the end of the reporting period, the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Social Welfare, Health, and Education had prepared five draft sectoral plans to guide the implementation of the CPE. (10)

Although the Labor Code prohibits work by children under age 14, the law does not apply to children outside of formal employment relationships. This fails to meet international standards, which require the protection of all children under minimum age for work laws. (41,51) Despite a 2016 study on hazardous work, the Central African Republic has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (12,41,52) Moreover, the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (44) Research was also unable to locate original copies of laws establishing the compulsory education age at 15. (35,47)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Through its General Directorate of Labor and Social Welfare and seven regional labor directorates, monitors and enforces laws related to child labor. (15)
The Juvenile Court*	Established under the 2020 Child Protection Code (CPE) to field all cases involving the health, safety, morals, and education of children. Maintains sole jurisdiction over criminal cases involving juvenile plaintiffs, defendants, witnesses, and victims of crime, including former child soldiers. (45,52) The court also oversees a special police unit for children, which is responsible for monitoring children's safety and welfare in industrial or mining areas. (45) This unit is also responsible for identifying criminal offenses against children. The judges will work with the police, the child protection brigade, the Children's Prosecutor, and social workers to refer child victims and monitor compliance with diversion measures. (35,41)
Internal Security Forces Police and Gendarmes	Enforces all laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Newly created Child Protection Units, under the expanded jurisdiction of the juvenile court system, will also be responsible for identifying criminal offenses against children. (51)
Ministry of Justice	Protects children through its Rapid Response for Child Protection team, and combats the worst forms of child labor through its courts and tribunals. (38,53)
Special Criminal Court	Investigates serious human rights abuses committed since 2003, including the use of children in armed conflict. Hybrid court includes international and national judges and prosecutors. (54,55)
Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence (UMIRR)	Combats sexual violence against women and children. This mixed unit includes representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Gender, and Humanitarian Action (MSA); the Ministry of Justice; and law enforcement (gendarmerie, police, and civilians), and is tasked with fighting violence against women and children. (7,38) During the reporting period, the government partnered with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) and the IOM to provide training to police, gendarmerie, UMIRR, and community leaders on recognizing signs of human trafficking. MINUSCA also trained security forces on preventing all forms of grave violations against children, participated in monitoring mechanisms, advocated for child protection, and worked with regional leaders to sensitize the local population and armed groups on children's rights. (7,10) UMIRR falls under the joint authority of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Public Security and is part of a state organization supporting investigations into conflict-related sexual violence. UMIRR refers cases to the ordinary court system or to the Special Criminal Court. (56)

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

The CPE also established a National Council for the Promotion and Protection of Children, which will report directly to the Prime Minister, and a Children's Parliament. (35)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in the Central African Republic took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of MOL that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including adequate financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (12)	\$254,545 (10)
Number of Labor Inspectors	70 (12)	145 (10)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (41)	Yes (41)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (12,41)	Yes (10)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (12)	Yes (10)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (10)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	58 (12)	130 (10)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (12)	90 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (12)	15 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (12)	0 (10)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (12)	N/A (10)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (10)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (5)	No (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (41)	Yes (41)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (12)	Yes (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (10)

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In addition to publishing data on labor inspections, child labor violations, and funding, the MOL doubled the size of its labor inspectorate in 2020. (10) The increased number of labor inspectors was the result of a partnership agreement between the MOL and World Vision. World Vision provided logistical support that allowed inspectors to travel outside Bangui. (57) The government hired 70 additional labor inspectors, bringing the total number of labor inspectors employed to 145. (10) In 2020, 28 labor inspectors received training on the worst forms of child labor, violence, and harassment in the workplace. (10) An additional 30 inspectors underwent initial training organized by the African Regional Training Center for Labor Administration during the reporting period. (10)

Nevertheless, inadequate financial and material resources, including transportation, office facilities and supplies, and computers, hindered the government's efforts to combat child labor. (38,58,59) Moreover, the passage of Decree No. 12.177 in 2012 effectively removed regional labor directorates from the general directorate's chain of command. Thus, regional directorates are no longer required to submit periodic reports on inspection activities, as required under ILO C. 81. (58,60) Finally, civil unrest prevented labor inspectors outside Bangui from visiting artisanal mining sites. (7)

During the reporting period, the country's seven regional labor directorates conducted 130 investigations and identified 15 child labor law violations. (10) However, labor inspectors did not issue formal penalties or sanctions, with community reconciliation remaining the principle avenue for mediation. (10,41) Article 260 of the Labor Code empowers labor inspectors to refer violators to a magistrate court if a medical doctor determines a child laborer was exposed to hazardous conditions. Violators face up to 5 years in prison if found guilty. (10,41) A complaint mechanism for filing and responding to reports of child labor exists, but there was no evidence that it was operational during the reporting period. Due to limited resources, most children found in child labor were referred to NGOs. (12)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Central African Republic took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient human resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (12)	No (10)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (12)	Yes (10)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (10)
Number of Investigations	1 (12)	Unknown (10)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (12)	Unknown (10)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (12)	Unknown (10)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (12)	Unknown (10)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (12)	Unknown (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (10)

In 2020, the CPE created specialized children's police units to monitor industrial or mining areas for hazardous conditions. (10,35,49,52) The CPE also broadens social protections and creates new enforcement mechanisms for victims of sexual exploitation, forced labor, or human trafficking, and includes provisions for at-risk groups such as demobilized child soldiers, children of religious and ethnic minorities, and non-residents. (7,12,35) Under the new law, children associated with armed groups are entitled to state social protection services and immunity from prosecution. (12,35,61)

The 2020 Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan extends the Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence's (UMIRR) authority to include human trafficking, and UMIRR has investigated and referred cases to the High Court of Bangui. (7,10) Despite limited funding, UMIRR continuously investigated and referred the victims of gender-based violence to psycho-social assistance, though no convictions were

reported. (61) In addition, the IOM trained civilian and law enforcement officials in human trafficking detection, including some child labor issues, during the reporting period. (7,10)

Nevertheless, during the reporting period, an indeterminate number of children were remanded to Bangui's Ngaragba prison for their alleged association with armed groups. These arrests are in contravention of both the CPE and international covenants to which the Central African Republic is signatory. (10,35,61) Of these children, 23 were ultimately released from prison; 6 of these were accused of child soldiering. A judge referred the children to a shelter in Bangui, but authorities did not properly implement the order. (61) By the end of the reporting period, approximately 25 children remained in prison, of which 9 were accused of "association with criminals." (61) Furthermore, juvenile criminal offenders were imprisoned with adults, despite a 2016 decree that prohibits this practice; separate juvenile cells and prisons exist in theory, but many were destroyed by violence. In addition, all prisons are overcrowded, requiring minors to share space with adults. (10,18,37,57,61) The non-enforcement of the law before the tribunal remains a problem. Instead, judges used mediation as a recourse to alternative dispute resolution. (10)

The pandemic and electoral violence led to an increase in the recruitment and use of child soldiers and criminal child labor violations. The Ministry of Justice was notified, without any specific categorization, of approximately 500 cases of child rights violations, including sexual exploitation, allegations of witchcraft, and maltreatment by family members, during the reporting period. (10) The government did not otherwise release statistics on criminal law enforcement. (10) The country's criminal court also partnered with an international organization in February 2020 to prosecute, convict, and sentence 33 militants and armed group leaders to verdicts from 10 to 15 years imprisonment (28 militants) to life in prison (5 armed group leaders) for crimes against humanity, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers. (7) The UN monitored and documented two Central African Armed Forces child labor violations during the reporting period. The incidents were not documented by the UN as labor violations, but rather grave child rights violations, which includes the use of children by parties to a conflict. (57) MINUSCA reported that, to the best of their knowledge, the perpetrators were not arrested. (10)

There is approximately 1 police officer for every 1,300 Central Africans. Government authority is largely absent outside the capital, and many security forces outside Bangui may lack the resources and knowledge to enforce the law, including a lack of access to copies of relevant laws. (10,61,62) Moreover, judicial authorities lack the staff and resources to conduct investigations outside Bangui. (6,62-64) Cases were widely resolved outside of formal legal proceedings due to a lack of public trust, access, or knowledge about the justice system. (63,65,66)

The MOL is supposed to work with other ministries and UNICEF to provide assistance to victims of child labor, including its worst forms. Due to a lack of resources, the government relies primarily on MINUSCA, NGOs, and UNICEF to provide social services to victims. (5,18,67,68) UMIRR operated a reporting hotline for victims of human trafficking, with the Ministers of Telecommunication and Security and the trafficking in persons coordination bureau advocating for its expansion and implementation during the reporting period. (6,57)

IV. Coordination of Government Efforts on Child Labor

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Child Soldier Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Mechanisms	The government works with Children Associated with Armed Forces or Groups (EAFGA), MINUSCA, UNICEF, and other partner agencies to demobilize and reintegrate children into community life. (7,12,22,38,67) However, research indicates that the EAFGA was not active during the reporting period. (10) In addition, the UN Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting engages with signatories to Action Plans to end grave violations against children, and monitors their implementation. (33) In 2020, WorldVision opened a new center to provide housing and social services for up to 30 demobilized child soldiers. (61) In accordance with the CPE, the Presidential Advisor for DDR coordinated with partners to initiate a process to release children held for their association with armed groups. (10)
National Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking	Coordinates drafting and implementation of the Central African Republic's national trafficking in persons (TIP) strategy and the National Action Plan to combat trafficking. Josiane Bemaka-Soui serves as the Presidential Advisor for TIP. (7,10) The president signed the action plan into law in March 2020, and the government allocated in-kind resources to implement plan components beginning in 2020. (7,16) However, it was not fully implemented due to multiple challenges, including lack of funding, the impacts of the pandemic, and ongoing civil unrest. (61) In addition to relevant ministries, including Justice and Interior, includes local and international NGOs and international organizations. The committee formally validated a 2020–2021 national action plan to combat human trafficking in March 2020. (7,10,16) The Presidential Advisor for TIP was also designated as the government focal point for Children's DDR during the reporting period. The Advisor established an informal coordination committee on child trafficking and DDR policies and programs. (10) The committee established ad hoc working groups to address these issues throughout the reporting period. (10) These efforts began to harmonize government-wide efforts to release scores of children detained for their association with criminal and armed groups. The Advisor sustained personal and vocal support to properly assist these children as victims instead of criminals. (10)
Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Gender, and Humanitarian Action (MSA)	Oversees child soldier reintegration and leads the government's anti-trafficking policy efforts through the National Council on Child Protection. Along with the Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children, refers victims of child trafficking to NGOs and maintains an orphanage for children at risk of child trafficking. (10,53) Rehabilitated human trafficking victims, including children, during the reporting period. (61)
Mechanisms for Monitoring Grave Violations of Children's Rights	The Country Task Force for Monitoring Grave Violations of Children's Rights is a national-level committee that meets twice per year at the strategic level and four times per year at the technical level to address children's rights, including the worst forms of child labor. (10) Provincial Child Protection Working Groups are regional government bodies that work to protect children from all violations, including the worst forms of child labor. (10,57) Held one meeting in 2020 and had continual advocacy with the government, which led to promulgation of the CPE into law. At the technical level, three meetings were held to analyze trends of children's rights violations. (57) Several sessions of training on monitoring, verification, and documentation of violations were conducted for child protection actors. Also, sensitization sessions on child rights and protection benefited community members and leaders, defense and security forces, and political actors. (57)

While the government has established mechanisms to address some of the worst forms of child labor—including human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and children in armed conflict—these efforts do not extend to other sectors, such as mining, in which child labor is prevalent. Research was unable to determine whether all coordinating bodies were active during the reporting period. (10,18,61)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic	Peace agreement signed by 14 armed groups and the Transitional Government in February 2019. Includes provisions to end the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, and to facilitate the separation of children from their ranks. (22,67,69) Armed groups listed by the UN for grave violations against children have signed Action Plans to implement these commitments. (70-72) The Action Plans cover the four areas for which the groups are listed, including recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals. (70-72) The <i>Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique</i> has appointed four commanders to serve as child protection focal points in areas under its control. (67,70) However, MINUSCA reported that armed groups continued to recruit child soldiers during the reporting period despite their pledges. (10)

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description
Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy	Based on the 2015 Bangui Forum, this policy aims to facilitate initiatives to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate child soldiers, in cooperation with UN agencies, other ministries, and armed groups. (15,37,48,66,73) Through its National Strategy for Community-Based Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups, provides temporary care to children separated from armed groups and establishes Community Child Protection Networks throughout the country. (73-77) During the reporting period, UNICEF and partners helped the government demobilize and reintegrate 700 child soldiers who were liberated from armed groups. (7,10)
National Strategy to Fight Gender-Based Violence in CAR (2018–2021)	Aims to achieve "zero tolerance" for gender-based violence, including commercial sexual exploitation. (75) Written by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children, in partnership with the UN Population Fund, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UN Women. (78) The EU funded the construction of a shelter for victims of gender-based violence, the House of Hope (<i>Maison de l'Espoir</i>), during the reporting period. (61)
National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (2017–2021)	Aims to re-establish peace and security, and support reconciliation by disarming and reintegrating children associated with armed groups, promoting legal reform, seeking justice for victims, and improving access to education. (17,48,75) While the government has made headway in DDR, research indicates that it made limited progress on improving access to education during the reporting period. (10)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (75)

The government did not include child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the National Strategy for the Education Sector (2008–2020). (79) Research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, and a draft of a national policy addressing the elimination of child labor has yet to be adopted. (52,53)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including with the adequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
UNICEF Programs	Coordinated the removal of children from forced labor situations and provided necessary social services for their rehabilitation, enrollment in schools or vocational training programs, and placement in stable homes. These programs provided basic education and vocational skills training to children that were most at risk for child labor exploitation and armed group recruitment. (10,23) During the year, UNICEF supported a pilot program to remove children from forced mining in Bozum, and provided them with social services through a local partner. (10) Research indicates that 50 former child soldiers and street children drilled wells under a UNICEF-run vocational training and rehabilitation program. (80) UNICEF provided direct social services to approximately 2,500 children during the year, and worked with the Ministry of Social Welfare to improve its case management system. (10,23,28) UNICEF also provided 592,000 children with formal and non-formal education, and 532,120 children with individual learning materials. Finally, UNICEF supported the government's efforts to administer final national examinations in remote areas. (28,30,81)
Shelters for Unaccompanied Children†	MSA- and UNICEF-supported centers that provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to vulnerable children and former child soldiers. (2) In 2020, 184,696 children affected by conflict were able to continue schooling through the establishment of temporary learning spaces. (23)
Education Programs	Programs to restore educational infrastructure include: a \$23.4 million, EU-funded Education Program to rehabilitate and equip more than 300 schools in 4 prefectures and the capital; a Bangui Ministry of Mines and Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research program to construct schools in mining zones; and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Education Clusters, led by UNICEF and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, to provide access to education in conflict-affected areas. (23,37,38,74,79,82-84) In 2020, the government supported the UNICEF-funded programs "Temporary Spaces for Learning and Child Protection (STEPS)" and "Child Friendly Spaces." (10) Programs were closed from approximately April to August due to the pandemic, and re-opened following the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation guidelines. Together, they reached more than 200,000 children with psychosocial support, learning materials, and access to formal or non-formal education. (10,23,40,75)
Birth Registration Campaign†	In support of the 2014 decree mandating free birth registration to children born during the 2012–2014 conflict, re-opens civil registration centers in areas affected by conflict and provides registration to children. (37) The June 2020 CPE further mandates free birth registration for all children. The pandemic and electoral violence hampered efforts to re-open civil registration centers in the provinces. (12,61,75)

† Program is partially funded by the Government of the Central African Republic.

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Although the government participates in a program that assists former child soldiers, coordination with non-government actors is weak, and the scope of this program is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. (5,38,66,76) The absence of resources and government authority throughout much of the country significantly hindered the government's ability to combat child labor, and research found no evidence that the government has programs to assist children engaged in other worst forms of child labor. (38)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the Central African Republic (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws establishing the compulsory education age are publicly available.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2017 – 2020
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, and ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive.	2013 – 2020
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2020
Enforcement	Ensure that enforcement agencies have sufficient staff, resources and training to enforce laws related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2009 – 2020
	Initiate targeted inspections based on available child labor prevalence data, and expand inspections to include the informal sector.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that the complaint mechanism for filing and responding to reports of child labor functions in accordance with its mandate, as required by ILO C. 182, and that penalties are imposed for child labor violations.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that regional labor inspection offices are under the supervision and control of a central authority, and that regional inspectors are able to conduct inspections outside of Bangui, where many mining operations take place.	2018 – 2020
	Report criminal law enforcement data, including the number of investigations conducted, violations found, penalties imposed and collected, prosecutions initiated, and convictions obtained.	2014 – 2020
	Ensure that courts and security services are sufficiently funded, that security forces are sufficiently trained, and that citizens can report violations and access formal judicial processes throughout the country.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure that children are not imprisoned for their association with armed groups, are not kept in detention centers with adults, and are granted access to social services providers and humanitarian assistance when released from armed groups.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure non-state armed groups who are signatories to UN Action Plan to End Grave Violations Against Children uphold their commitments to these plans, including ceasing the recruitment and use of children.	2020
	Ensure that referral mechanisms for children found in child labor situations are well-funded and fully operational.	2019 – 2020
	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat all forms of child labor, including in mining, and ensure that existing coordination mechanisms are active.	2019 – 2020
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2020
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2020
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Strategy for the Education Sector.	2009 – 2020
	Ensure that social programs to address the worst forms of child labor are funded and implemented in accordance with their mandates.	2018 – 2020
Social Programs	Conduct a nationwide child labor prevalence survey to inform policies, programs, and enforcement actions.	2020

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Improve access to education for all children, including in rural areas, regardless of IDP status or religious affiliation, by eliminating school-related fees, making additional efforts to provide all children with birth registration, ensuring that ethnic and religious minorities are not denied access to education, establishing an adequate number of teachers and classrooms throughout the country, and ensuring that schools are safe spaces and free from armed groups.	2009 – 2020
	Expand programs to assist former child combatants and children associated with armed groups, support their reintegration into society, and improve coordination among relevant actors, while ensuring children are not inadvertently subjected to child labor under Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs,	2013 – 2020
	Allocate sufficient resources and implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor throughout the country.	2009 – 2020

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