

Central African Republic

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT REGRESSION IN PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2021, the Central African Republic made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Parliament passed legislation authorizing the ratification of the International Labor Organization Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment, which reaffirms the fundamental principles and rights at work, including the effective abolition of child labor. The government also created an alert system for reporting child labor violations. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, the Central African Republic is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it implemented a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Government security forces recruited children for support roles and coordinated with an armed group that recruited and used children in armed conflict. Children in the Central African Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use in armed conflict and forced labor in diamond mining, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work. Other gaps remain, as the Central African Republic does not meet the international standard for minimum age protections since the law does not cover children working in the informal sector.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Central African Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in recruitment and use in armed conflict and forced labor in diamond mining, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work. (1-3) 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	30.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	39.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		54.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018–2019. (5)

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, including handling fertilizers and pesticide (1)
	Working in forestry, including carrying tools (6,7,8)
	Fishing (1)
Industry	Diamond and gold mining, quarrying† (1-5)
	Working in sawmills, forges, and foundries, including sharpening sawblades and maintaining fires (6,7)
	Construction (7)
Services	Domestic work (1,9)
	Street work, including vending and portage (1,2,10)

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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 [†]	Recruitment of children by state security forces for support roles and intelligence gathering and by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as combatants, cooks, porters, informants, domestic workers, guards, and for sexual exploitation (1-3)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, vending, and mining, including in diamond mines (1,2,11,12)
	Forced labor of indigenous <i>Ba’aka</i> children in farming (13)
	Commercial sexual exploitation (1,2)

[†] 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.

Children in the Central African Republic are subjected to recruitment and use by non-state armed groups. (1,2) The government and 14 armed groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR) in 2019. (14,15) The APPR called for the immediate cessation of recruitment of child soldiers by all parties involved in the conflict. (15) However, the armed groups' attempted overthrow of the government following the December 2020 elections stalled implementation of the APPR. (1,10,9) In December 2020, major rebel groups formed the *Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement* in response to the country’s constitutional court finding ex-president Francois Bozizé ineligible to be a presidential candidate in the December 2020 election due to his documented history of human rights abuses. Anti-Balaka-affiliated armed groups and ex-Séléka factions—including the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique*; *Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice*; *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique*; *Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique*; and unaffiliated elements—continued to recruit children in greater numbers as combatants, informants, cooks, and sex slaves. (1,2) In 2021, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) child rights division verified and documented the recruitment and use of 316 children (254 boys and 62 girls) by all parties to the conflict, including the Russian-supported Wagner Group forces, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), and a variety of non-state armed groups. (1) Eight children were identified as being used by government and pro-government forces to support checkpoints and run errands, including by FACA, FACA/*Forces de Sécurité Intérieure* (FSI), and by Wagner Group personnel working in cooperation with the government. (16,17) Wagner forces also reportedly forced a child to gather intelligence against an armed group. (18,17) In addition, media reports indicated that in December 2021, Wagner Group and FACA forces used forced child labor to do construction and improvements on a Wagner military base. (19,20)

Armed groups and criminal elements, including in some pastoralist groups, subjected children to forced domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. (2,10,21) In some instances, relatives or family friends exploited children to generate additional income. (1,10) 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 subjected to commercial sexual exploitation. (1,2) *Maisons de joie* are typically private residences at which alcohol and food are served to middle and upper-class customers. (1,2) Children in rural areas are forced to work in artisanal diamond and gold mines, often for long hours and without protective equipment. They are exposed to hazardous chemicals, including silver nitrate, and suffer from injuries and waterborne diseases. (1,9)

In 2021, ongoing civil conflict in the Central African Republic increased child vulnerability to labor exploitation. An estimated 2.8 million people, including 1.3 million children, required humanitarian assistance during the reporting period. (22) 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. (14,22-25) Displacement and chronic food insecurity are aggravating risk factors for child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (1,2,22)

Fewer than 60 percent of children in the Central African Republic complete their primary school education, and only 6 percent graduate from secondary school. (10,26) The combined effects of resurgent violence throughout the country, structural fragility, and the pandemic have exacerbated this trend. The loss of income has compelled

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children to seek employment or remain at home. (1,22,27-30) The pandemic has also disrupted reintegration and rehabilitation services for survivors of armed group recruitment. (30)




During the reporting year, most of the country's schools were closed for several months as a result of military operations. (22) Although state security forces have extended their presence through most of the national territory since February 2021, government and rebel forces frequently trade control of territory in many parts of the country. (1) As a result, most schools remained closed. Other barriers to education include displacement due to conflict and the occupation of some school buildings by armed groups, including Wagner forces. (1) Children also 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. (9,12,29,31,32)

The Central African Republic's 2020 Child Protection Code (CPE) provided free birth registration for all children. (33) However, the country's birth registration rate, stymied by endemic poverty and administrative collapse, remains one of the lowest in Africa. (34) The government also failed to fully implement this provision of the law, and many municipal governments continue to levy fees on birth registration and other vital records. (1) Despite this 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. (1,10) Moreover, in 2021, members of a minority Muslim population who lost identification documents while fleeing intra-communal violence or internal conflict faced discrimination when trying to obtain new identification documents. As a result, many were left undocumented and unable to register for school. (1) 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. (9,11,35)

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.

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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 (33,36)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 263 of the Labor Code; Articles 65–68 of the Child Protection Code (33,36)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 261 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code (36,37)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 7 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 65 and 175 of the Child Protection Code (33,36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 151 of the Penal Code (38)
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 (33,36,38)
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 (33,36)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Decree N° 85.432, Declaration to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict (39)
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 (33,36,40)
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 (33,36)
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 (33,40-42)
Free Public Education	Yes		Ordinance N° 84/031 Orienting the Teaching System; Articles 52 and 57 of the Child Protection Code (33,41,42)

* Country has no conscription (40,43)

The Presidential Minister Counselor for Child Protection worked with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to draft a Trafficking in Persons law. The bill, which was submitted to the National Assembly for a vote in 2022, will add an additional element to the legal framework prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation of children. (1,19) Separately, in September, Law 21.003 was adopted. This legislation authorized the government to ratify ILO Convention 190, which includes protections for domestic workers. (1)

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. (36,44) A draft revision of the Labor Code is pending before the National Assembly. This revised code would raise the minimum age of employment, although it does not address the minimum age for hazardous work. (1) However, under Article 260 of the Labor Code, labor inspectors may require a physician to examine a child to verify whether the work for which they are charged exceeds his or her strength. (1)

The Central African Republic has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (1,9,36,45) 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. (33,36) Research was unable to locate original copies of laws establishing the compulsory education age at 15. (33,42)

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.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Monitors and enforces laws related to child labor through its General Directorate of Labor and Social Welfare and seven regional labor directorates. (1,7,36)
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. (33) 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. (33,40) This unit is also responsible for identifying criminal offenses against children. The judges are responsible for working with the police, the child protection brigade, the Children's Prosecutor, and social workers to refer child victims and monitor compliance with diversion measures. (33,36)
Internal Security Forces Police and Gendarmes	Enforce all laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Child Protection Units, under the expanded jurisdiction of the juvenile court system, are responsible for identifying criminal offenses against children. (33,44)
Ministry of Justice	Protects children through its Rapid Response for Child Protection team and prosecutes cases involving the worst forms of child labor through its courts and tribunals. (35,46)
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. (47,48)
Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence (UMIRR)	Aims to suppress sexual violence against women and children, including child trafficking. Includes representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA); the Ministry of Justice; and law enforcement (gendarmerie and police). (1,19,21,35) Operates a 24-hour hotline to report cases and provides social services to survivors of human trafficking. (1,19) Operates in Bangui, the capital city, and Bouar, a town in the northwestern part of the country. (19) 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. Refers cases to the ordinary court system or to the Special Criminal Court. (21,49)

Due to ongoing violence and the operation of non-state armed rebel groups, the government did not control a significant amount of its territory during the reporting period. This restricted the geographic reach of the enforcement agencies' operations. (19)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, the exceptionally low number of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in the Central African Republic may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$254,545 (10)	\$1,727 (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	145 (10)	167 (1)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (36)	Yes (36)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	130 (10)	28 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	90 (10)	10 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	15 (10)	Unknown (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (10)	Unknown (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (10)	Unknown (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (10)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (36)	Yes (1,36)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (1)

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Labor inspectors received training on a new law authorizing implementation of ILO Convention 190, and on the CPE. An additional 40 inspectors, including 7 regional labor directors, underwent additional training under the auspices of the African Regional Training Center for Labor Administration. (1) During the reporting period, the government created an "alert" system for reporting child labor violations. This mechanism is linked to the Ministry of Labor (MOL), the Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence (UMIRR), the Ministry for the Protection of Women, Gender, and Protection of the Child, and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA). (1) In addition, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Social Welfare to establish a child welfare case management standard operating procedure. (1)

Nevertheless, the budget allocated to labor inspectorates decreased significantly during the reporting period. (1) Inadequate financial and material resources, including transportation, office facilities and supplies, and computers, hindered the government's efforts to address child labor. (1,35,50) 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. (51) Moreover, civil unrest prevented labor inspectors outside Bangui from visiting artisanal mining sites. (1) In 2021, the labor inspectorate conducted 28 inspections. The exceptionally low number of worksite inspections conducted in the Central African Republic may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws. (1) Labor inspectors often do not issue formal penalties or sanctions, with community reconciliation remaining the principle avenue for mediation. (10,36)

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 survivors. (12,52-54)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Central African Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of human resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (10)	No (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (10)	N/A (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (1)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (10)	329 (17)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	1 (1)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	1 (1)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	No (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (1)

In 2021, UMIRR brought charges against an alleged human trafficker in the Bimbo Criminal Court in Bangui. The alleged trafficker was tried and found guilty of child trafficking. (19) This was the Central African Republic's first completed prosecution and conviction of a human trafficking crime. While the law provides a prison sentence of five-to-ten years for trafficking in persons, the convicted trafficker received a suspended sentence of one year in prison. (19) UMIRR is also currently investigating the case of a customs official accused of trafficking in persons, including the trafficking of 11 girls for commercial sexual exploitation. (19) The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (1)

The CPE created specialized children's police units to monitor industrial or mining areas for hazardous conditions. (10,33,55) The CPE also broadens social protections and creates new enforcement mechanisms for cases of sexual exploitation, forced labor, or human trafficking; and includes provisions for at-risk groups such

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as demobilized child soldiers, children of religious and ethnic minorities, and non-residents. (9,21,33) Under the law, children associated with armed groups were entitled to state social protection services and immunity from prosecution. (9,33,56) The country's criminal court partnered with international organizations to establish a mechanism to refer victims of child soldiering to welfare services instead of prison. (1) As of October 2021, however, five former child soldiers were detained in the Ngaragba prison, as the government was unable to find alternative holding and rehabilitation centers. Two were detained in 2019, one in 2020, and two in July and August 2021. (1)

During the reporting period, the government took steps to implement the CPE by developing cross-sectoral plans to incorporate elements of the code om various sectors including justice, social welfare, birth registration, and education. As part of this effort, the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare are developing a child protection code of conduct for teachers and other personnel. (1) However, limited resources and technical capacity, coupled with ongoing violence, slowed implementation of the law. (1) The 2020 Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan extends UMIRR's authority to include human trafficking, and UMIRR has investigated and referred cases to the High Court of Bangui. (21) Despite limited funding, UMIRR continuously investigated and referred the victims of gender-based violence to psychosocial assistance, though no convictions were reported. (56) During the reporting period, the MOL and World Vision hosted a workshop and training on identifying and protecting children from the worst forms of child labor. Participants included Ministry of Defense personnel from the Central African Armed Forces and UMIRR, and Ministry of the Interior personnel, including 16 police and gendarmerie units. (1) In addition, the government worked with NGOs to provide 12 trainings on trafficking in persons for officials from UMIRR and the Ministries of Disarmament and Demobilization; Defense; Foreign Affairs; Mining and Geology; Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises; Labor; Youth; Gender; and Communications. (19) UMIRR operated a reporting hotline for victims of human trafficking. (13,57)

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. (10,56) Moreover, judicial authorities lack the staff and resources to conduct investigations outside Bangui. (13,58) The non-enforcement of the law remains a problem. Instead, judges used mediation as a recourse to alternative dispute resolution. (10) Cases were widely resolved outside of formal legal proceedings due to a lack of public trust, access, or knowledge about the justice system. (58)

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 a lack of coordinating mechanisms that include all worst forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Presidency: Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation (DDRR) Coordinating body (UNPDDRR)	With the assistance of UNICEF and other partner organizations, includes activities under the Office of the Presidency to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate children used in armed conflict back into community life. (19,21) Coordinates child protection components of DDRR through the government's Presidential Minister Counselor for Child Protection. (19) During the reporting period, UNPDDRR's child protection unit identified child soldiers and oversaw UN-funded community-based integration programs. (19)
National Interministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking	Coordinates drafting and implementation of the Central African Republic's National Trafficking in Persons Strategy and the National Action Plan to Address Trafficking. (10,21) Includes a "Coordination Office" led by the president and including representatives from key ministries, including MOL. (19) National Inter-Ministerial Committee met twice per month, and the members of the Coordination Office met twice per week. The National Interministerial Committee also drafted an 18-month National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons that is scheduled to be adopted and commenced in 2022. (19)

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA)	Refers victims of child trafficking to NGOs and maintains an orphanage for children at risk of child trafficking. (10,46) Oversees child soldier reintegration and leads the government's anti-trafficking policy efforts through the National Council on Child Protection. In 2021, removed 33 children from a prostitution ring in Bangui, and provided them with counseling, life-skills training, and vocational training. (1)
Country Task Force for Monitoring Grave Violations of Children's Rights	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) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active during the reporting period.
Provincial Child Protection Working Groups	Regional government bodies that work to protect children from all violations, including the worst forms of child labor. (10,57) Research was unable to determine whether these working groups were active during the reporting period.

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. (1,12,56)

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 a lack of 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 (APPR)	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. (15,52,54) Armed groups listed by the UN for grave violations against children have signed Action Plans to implement these commitments. (59-61) The Action Plans cover the four areas for which the groups are listed, including (1) recruitment and use of children, (2) killing and maiming, (3) rape and other forms of sexual violence, and (4) attacks on schools and hospitals. (59-61) The <i>Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique</i> has appointed four commanders to serve as child protection focal points in areas under its control. (52,59) However, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) reported that armed groups continued to recruit child soldiers during the reporting period despite their pledges. (1) Political violence and resource constraints hindered the APPR's progress during the reporting year. (1)
Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy	Based on the 2015 Bangui Forum, aims to facilitate initiatives to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate child soldiers, in cooperation with UN agencies, other ministries, and armed groups. (7,10,43) 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. (10,62) During the reporting period, UNICEF and partners helped the government demobilize and reintegrate 1,468 child soldiers who were liberated from armed groups. (1) In addition, some armed groups who previously signed action plans to end gross child rights violations continued to work with the UN to facilitate the release of children. (1)
National Strategy to Fight Gender-Based Violence in CAR (2018–2021)	Aimed to achieve "zero tolerance" for gender-based violence, including commercial sexual exploitation. (10,62) Written by MSA, in partnership with the UN Population Fund, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UN Women. (10,63) As part of the policy, the government operated a shelter for survivors of gender-based violence, the House of Hope (<i>Maison de l'Espoir</i>), in 2020. (56) Research was unable to determine what activities were undertaken as part of this policy during the reporting year.
National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (2017–2021)	Aimed to re-establish peace and security. Supported reconciliation by disarming and reintegrating children associated with armed groups, promoting legal reform, seeking justice for victims, and improving access to education. (10,11,43,62) During the reporting period, the government and its partners continued to implement this policy, holding multiple coordination meetings with partners. (1)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (62)

During the reporting period, the resurgence of violence hindered the ability of the government to implement existing policies throughout its territory. (1) Research found no evidence of a policy on other forms of child labor, such as in mining or domestic work. In addition, a draft of a national policy addressing the elimination of child labor has yet to be adopted. (45,46)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, 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 the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
UNICEF Programs	Coordinate the removal of children from forced labor situations and provide necessary social services for their rehabilitation, enrollment in schools or vocational training programs, and placement in stable homes. Provide basic education and vocational skills training to children who were most at risk for child labor exploitation and armed group recruitment. (10,24) Support shelters that provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to vulnerable children and former child soldiers. (18) In 2021, 114,118 children and their caregivers accessed psychosocial support through UNICEF-supported Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) and other community-level outreach activities. CFS were placed in areas where children were most affected by crises, such as IDP camps. (1) Moreover, 1,289 community volunteers working in CFS were trained in 2021 on the minimum standards on mental health and psychosocial assistance to children in humanitarian settings. (1)
Shelters for Unaccompanied Children†	MSA and UNICEF-supported centers that provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to vulnerable children and former child soldiers. (64) In 2021, UNICEF supported a host family program supporting vulnerable children and former child soldiers. (1)
Birth Registration Campaign†	Aims to provide birth registration to children in the Central African Republic in accordance with the CPE. During the reporting year, the Civil Registration Directorate organized a workshop with 25 mayors on birth registration provisions of the CPE. (1) UNICEF printed and distributed birth certificates in support of the civil registration office. Due to these efforts, the civil registration office documented 25,126 children in 2021, a 10 percent increase from the previous year. (1)

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

The absence of resources and government authority throughout much of the country significantly hindered the government's ability to address child labor. (1) Coordination with non-government actors to support children used in armed conflict and the scope of programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. (35,68) Due to a lack of funding and persistent insecurity, as much as 25 percent of children released since 2014 have not received reintegration support. (23,69) Research found no evidence that the government has programs to assist children engaged in other worst forms of child labor, such as in mining or commercial sexual exploitation. (1)

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	Publish the laws establishing the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2017 – 2021
	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 – 2021
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2021
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient financial resources to enforce child labor laws.	2009 – 2021
	Publish complete labor enforcement data, including the number of child labor violations found, penalties imposed, and penalties collected.	2021
	Publish complete criminal law enforcement data, including the number of investigations conducted, violations found, penalties imposed and collected, prosecutions initiated, and convictions obtained.	2014 – 2021
	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 – 2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections.	2021
	Ensure that civil penalties are imposed for child labor law violations.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that referral mechanisms for children found in child labor situations are well-funded and fully operational.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that children used in armed conflict are not imprisoned and are granted access to social services providers and humanitarian assistance.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that judicial and criminal law enforcement officials receive sufficient funding and training and ensure that citizens can report violations and access formal judicial processes throughout the country.	2016 – 2021
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to address all forms of child labor, including in mining.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2020 – 2021
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2021
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement the National Strategy to Fight Gender-Based Violence and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2021
	Ensure that signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation uphold their commitments to these plans, including ceasing the recruitment and use of children.	2020 – 2021
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 – 2021
	Ensure that social programs to address the worst forms of child labor are funded and implemented in accordance with their mandates.	2018 – 2021
	Expand programs to assist former child soldiers and children associated with armed groups, support their reintegration into society, and improve coordination among relevant actors.	2013 – 2021
	Allocate sufficient resources and implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and child labor in mining, throughout the country.	2009 – 2021

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