



# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – *Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement*

In 2023, the Central African Republic made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government trained police officers, gendarmes, leaders of law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders on the 2022 anti-trafficking law. It also worked with international donors and partners to rebuild damaged schools, train teachers, and increase birth registration to improve children’s access to education. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, the Central African Republic is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because government security forces continued to use children in support roles and to coordinate with an armed group that recruited and used children in armed conflict. In addition, the government provided no funding to its labor inspectorate to conduct inspections during the reporting period. Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence makes children more vulnerable to child labor. The government also did not publish complete data on its civil and criminal child labor law enforcement efforts, and it lacks a coordinating body, policies, and programs that address all relevant forms of child labor in the country.



## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

### Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	30.8% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	68.1%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	39.7%

Children in the Central African Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use in armed conflict and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining and agriculture.

### Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



#### Agriculture

Working in agriculture, including sowing, weeding, harvesting, and handling fertilizers and pesticide.† Working in forestry, including carrying tools. Herding livestock and working in fishing.



#### Industry

Diamond and gold mining,† including digging, washing ore, carrying heavy loads, and processing, sometimes resulting in exposure to mercury.† Quarrying.† Working in forges† and sawmills,† including sharpening sawblades. Working in construction.



#### Services

Domestic work and street work, including vending, portage, and loading and unloading vehicles.



#### Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Recruitment by state security forces for use in armed conflict, including as domestic workers, checkpoint assistants, and errand runners. Recruitment by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as combatants, cooks, porters, informants, and domestic workers, and for sexual exploitation. Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, vending, and mining. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.

† 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.

In 2023, the Government of the Central African Republic failed to cease its use of children in armed conflict. In 2019, the government and 14 armed groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, which included a call for all parties to immediately cease recruitment of child soldiers. Nevertheless, during the reporting period, the United Nations verified and documented the recruitment and use of 103 children by all parties to the conflict, including pro-government Wagner Group forces, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), and a variety of non-state armed groups. While non-state armed groups committed the majority of violations, government and pro-government forces were found to have used 23 children in support roles, including domestic work, assisting at checkpoints, and running errands.



## **SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR**

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in the Central African Republic's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

### **Legal Framework**

Establish, by law, free basic education through lower secondary school.

Increase the age to which education is compulsory from 16 to 18 to align with the minimum age for work.

### **Enforcement**

Ensure that the labor inspectorate is fully funded so it can carry out its mandate to enforce labor laws.

Conduct worksite inspections, including routine and unannounced inspections, in both the formal and informal sectors, to identify child labor violations.

Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient material resources, including transportation, office facilities and supplies, and computers, to enforce child labor laws.

Ensure that inspectors use their own transportation, rather than accepting transportation from employers, to ensure impartiality of inspections.

Ensure that regional labor inspection offices are under the supervision and control of a central authority, and that regional directorates submit periodic reports on inspection activities.

Train Ministry of Mines inspectors on child labor laws and referral mechanisms to ensure that they enforce national prohibitions against child labor in mining and connect children found performing hazardous work with appropriate services.

Publish complete labor law enforcement data, including labor inspectorate funding, number and type of inspections conducted, number of child labor violations found, number of violations for which penalties were imposed, and number for which penalties were collected.

Publish complete criminal law enforcement data, including the number of investigations, number of prosecutions, number of convictions, and penalties imposed.

Ensure that formal penalties or sanctions are imposed for child labor law violations, rather than conciliation, as appropriate.

Ensure that referral mechanisms for children found in child labor situations are well-funded and fully operational.

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.

### **Coordination**

Establish a coordinating mechanism that addresses all worst forms of child labor, including in mining, agriculture, and domestic work.

### **Government Policies**

Adopt a policy that addresses child labor in all relevant sectors, including in agriculture and domestic work.

Ensure that signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation uphold their commitments to cease the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and release children currently in their ranks.

### **Social Programs**

Improve access to education for all children, regardless of displacement status or religious affiliation, by eliminating school-related fees; making additional efforts to provide all children with birth registration; ensuring that religious minorities are not denied access to education; improving basic educational infrastructure throughout the country, including buildings and adequate furniture, sanitary facilities, teachers, and supplies; and ensuring that schools are safe spaces and free from armed groups.

Expand programs to assist former child soldiers and children associated with armed groups, support their reintegration into society, and improve coordination among relevant actors.

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.



## CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Conflict-affected children in the Central African Republic face increased risks of child labor, especially its worst forms, due to the instability created by ongoing violence and the threat inherent in the presence of armed groups. These children may be susceptible to direct recruitment and use in armed conflict, or may be exploited in forced labor in mining, domestic work, or sexual slavery by armed groups that control the area where they live. Girls in the Central African Republic also face higher risks of commercial sexual exploitation independent of conflict situations, including in urban centers like Bangui, where girls as young as age 12 are subjected to exploitation in brothels for the wealthy.



## BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children face numerous barriers to accessing education in the Central African Republic, including chronic shortages of basic infrastructure, a shortage of teachers, school-related fees, labor exploitation by teachers themselves, security concerns, and destruction and occupation of some school buildings by armed groups, government security forces, and Wagner Group elements. While the government has achieved a measure of stability in the capital region, violence and insecurity in the rest of the country exacerbate barriers to education, especially for girls, who fear sexual assault when traveling long distances between home and school. The lack of access to sanitation and sanitary products also pose obstacles to girls attending school. Finally, despite recent efforts to implement free birth registration, the government still lacks sufficient capacity to reach all children, especially in rural areas, leaving many children without the identity documents required to enroll in school. There has also been reporting that children in Muslim families or with names perceived to be Muslim face discrimination in obtaining identity documentation.





## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Central African Republic has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, the Central African Republic's laws do not meet international standards on education because they do not guarantee free public education through lower secondary school and the compulsory education age is lower than the minimum age for work.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, <b>18 Years</b>		Articles 389–394 of the Labor Code; Articles 61 and 64 of the Child Protection Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, <b>18 Years</b>		Article 263 of the Labor Code; Articles 63–66 of the Child Protection Code; Order on Hazardous Child Labor
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Article 261 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code; Order on Hazardous Child Labor
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 7 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 63 and 173 of the Child Protection Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Article 151 of the Penal Code; Articles 3, 5–10, 15, and 44 of Law on Combatting Trafficking in Persons
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 262, 263, and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 90–92 and 111 of the Penal Code; Articles 63 and 67 of the Child Protection Code
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Articles 262, 263, and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 63 and 173 of the Child Protection Code
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, <b>18 Years</b>		Decree N° 85.432, Declaration to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict

**Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)**

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	 *	Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code; Article 75 of the Child Protection Code; Declaration to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 75 and 179 of the Child Protection Code
Compulsory Education Age, <b>16 Years</b>		Article 43 of the Constitution; Articles 37 and 49 of the Child Protection Code
Free Public Education		Article 43 of the Constitution; Articles 49 and 54 of the Child Protection Code; Education Sector Plan (2020–2029)

\* Country has no conscription

On August 30, 2023, the Central African Republic adopted a new constitution. While the previous constitution provided for free public education at all levels, the new constitution only provides for free public education at the primary level, which covers the first 6 years of formal education. This does not meet the international standard of free public education through lower secondary school and leaves children vulnerable to exploitative labor. Children are also only required to attend school up to age 16. This standard makes children ages 16 and 17 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work without restrictions until age 18. Legislation implementing the new constitutional guarantees and requirements on education has not yet been put in place.



**ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR**

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in the Central African Republic took actions to address child labor. However, insufficient financial, human, and material resources hindered enforcement efforts.

**Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

**Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Protection (MOL):** Monitors and enforces laws related to child labor through its General Directorate of Labor and Social Welfare and seven regional labor directorates. Reporting suggests that MOL lacked the financial, human, and material resources needed to fulfill its mandate.

**Ministry of Justice (MOJ):** Oversees Juvenile Court, which maintains sole jurisdiction over criminal cases involving juvenile plaintiffs, defendants, witnesses, and victims of crime, including former child soldiers. Also oversees a special police unit responsible for monitoring children’s safety and welfare in large cities and industrial or mining areas and for recording criminal offenses against children. Judges are responsible for working with the police, the Child Protection Unit, the Children’s Prosecutor, and social workers to refer child victims to services. In partnership with the Ministry of Interior, MOJ oversees the Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence to Women and Children, an interagency enforcement body responsible for operating a 24-hour hotline, supporting investigations into child trafficking allegations, and connecting victims with medical and social services. During the reporting period, police and gendarmes received training on trafficking in persons and child labor.

### Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	No
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	No	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

An **unknown** number of labor inspectors conducted **0** worksite inspections in 2023. It is also **unknown** whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions were initiated, or perpetrators were convicted.

Research indicates that the government did not allocate funds for labor inspections during the reporting period, effectively removing the inspectorate’s ability to enforce the country’s labor laws. Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence puts children at risk of child labor.



### COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p><b>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</b></p> <p>The Central African Republic established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, there is a lack of a coordinating mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor in the country, including in mining, agriculture, and domestic work.</p>	<p><b>National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons:</b> Interministerial working group with representatives from key ministries, including MOL. Coordinates implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Children and provides day-to-day coordination of state agencies. During the reporting period, conducted awareness-raising and training activities for the judicial sector and the public. While the committee makes an effort to address child labor broadly in its anti-trafficking work, it lacks the capacity and mandate to effectively address all relevant forms of child labor in the country.</p>
<p><b>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</b></p> <p>The Central African Republic established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover child labor in all sectors, including in agriculture and domestic work.</p>	<p><b>Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic:</b> 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. Led to the adoption of the National Strategy for Community-Based Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups and the creation of Community Child Protection Networks and a Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation coordinating body. Following several years of stalled action, the government held a meeting to restart implementation of the agreement in 2023, and local authorities, national defense and security forces, and peacekeepers participated in MINUSCA training on monitoring and reporting grave violations against children in armed conflict. However, MINUSCA reported that armed groups continued to recruit and use children in armed conflict during the reporting period.</p>

**Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)**

<p><b>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</b></p> <p><i>† Policy was adopted during the reporting period.</i>  <i>‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</i></p>	<p><b>Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Roadmap:</b>† Action plan developed to accelerate commitments toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030 and the eradication of child labor by 2025. During the reporting period, MOL worked closely with stakeholders to develop this roadmap for the Central African Republic, which includes adopting regulations that address the worst forms of child labor, adopting a national social protection policy, strengthening anti-trafficking coordination bodies, mapping stakeholders, expanding awareness campaigns to educate communities about the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking, conducting a nationwide human trafficking study, creating warning committees on mine sites and high-risk areas, building shelters for victims in the provinces, expanding protection capacity, and improving data management and tracking for human trafficking cases.</p> <p><b>National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Children (2022–2023):</b> Adopted in April 2022, established provisions to counter child trafficking, with a specific focus on preventing children from being recruited and used in conflict. Included awareness-raising programs for both the public and military forces, specialized training for FACA members, and a communication channel for officials to share information about the use of children in armed conflict and draw attention to potentially problematic situations. Provided assistance to children previously associated with armed groups and their families to prevent revictimization, including through economic and educational opportunities. In 2023, the government conducted awareness activities for 5,759 community members and leaders, NGO representatives, members of local peace committees, religious leaders, national defense and security forces, and members of the judiciary.</p>
<p><b>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</b></p> <p>The Central African Republic funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors in which child labor has been identified, including in commercial sexual exploitation and child labor in mining, throughout the country.</p> <p><i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p><b>UNICEF Programs:</b> Coordinate the removal of children from forced labor situations, in partnership with NGOs, 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 are most at risk for child labor exploitation and armed group recruitment. Support shelters that provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to vulnerable children and former child soldiers. During the reporting period, worked with the government to provide community reintegration support to children formerly associated with armed groups; raised awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls; trained teachers and provided school materials; provided cash transfers to families, including 3,149 children; and continued to lead fact-finding surveys to gather information on child labor across the country.</p> <p><b>War Child Programs:</b> Work to demobilize and reintegrate children associated with armed groups. Mobilize community-based child protection committees and provide mental health services to children affected by armed conflict. Assisted 372 children during the reporting period.</p> <p><b>Pilot Project to Support the Modernization of the Civil Registry in the Central African Republic:</b> EU-funded pilot program implemented by CIVIPOL-RCA, with the cooperation of the Government of the Central African Republic. Aims to map current systems in place; build capacity of stakeholders responsible for issuing and managing vital records; better understand how to account for indigenous populations, refugees, and displaced persons in the civil registry; and provide operational support to improve the issuance and registration of birth certificates. During the reporting period, the program issued birth certificates to children in the pilot area.</p>

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit [dol.gov/ILABprojects](https://dol.gov/ILABprojects)  
 For references, please visit [dol.gov/ChildLaborReports](https://dol.gov/ChildLaborReports)