

Congo, Democratic Republic of the

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2017, the Democratic Republic of the Congo made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the year, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo adopted a revised Mining Code which includes penalties for employing child laborers or selling ore mined with child labor. The government also separated as many as 2,360 children from armed groups, and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was removed from the UN's list of state armed forces that use child soldiers. However, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is receiving this assessment because it continued a practice that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. For at least the second year in a row, labor inspectors failed to conduct any worksite inspections. Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence makes children more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Furthermore, there were numerous reports of ongoing collaboration between members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and non-state armed groups known for recruiting children, and the Armed Forces carried out extrajudicial killings of civilians, including children, due to their perceived support or affiliation with non-state armed groups. Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in the forced mining of gold, tin ore (cassiterite), tantalum ore (coltan), and tungsten ore (wolframite), and are used in armed conflict, sometimes as a result of forcible recruitment or abduction by non-state armed groups. Other gaps remain, including a lack of trained enforcement personnel, financial resources, poor coordination of government efforts to combat child labor, and laws mandating free primary education are not enforced.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in the forced mining of gold, tin ore (cassiterite), tantalum ore (coltan), and tungsten ore (wolframite), and are used in armed conflict, sometimes as a result of forcible recruitment or abduction by non-state armed groups. (1; 2; 3; 4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the DRC.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	35.8
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	77.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	37.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		70.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (5)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2013–2014. (6)

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	Farming, including tilling fields, planting seeds, watering crops, carrying heavy loads, [†] weeding, harvesting crops, and use of chemical products and machetes in the production of beans, corn, manioc, rice, and sweet potatoes (7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12)
	Fishing, including maintaining fishing tools, baiting hooks, transporting heavy loads, using explosives, and salting, smoking, and packaging fish (7; 8; 10)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Herding and raising livestock such as chickens, goats, and pigs, including feeding, cleaning cages or stalls, and disposing of waste (8; 13; 10)
	Hunting (7; 13)
Industry	Mining,† including carrying heavy loads,† cleaning, digging, sifting, sorting, transporting, using explosives, washing, and working underground† in the production of diamonds, copper, cobalt ore (heterogenite), gold, tin ore (cassiterite), tantalum ore (coltan), and tungsten ore (wolframite) (1; 2; 7; 14; 15; 16; 11; 17; 18; 19)
	Working as auto mechanics and in carpentry and craft workshops (7)
	Working on construction sites and road construction (7)
Services	Domestic work (7; 11)
	Driving motorcycle taxis (9)
	Street work, including vending, garbage scavenging, and carrying heavy loads (7; 8; 20)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced mining of gold, cassiterite, coltan, and wolframite, sometimes as a result of debt bondage (1; 21; 19; 4)
	Forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1; 7; 22; 15; 18; 23; 19; 24; 4; 25)
	Use in illicit activities, including for spying, carrying stolen goods, and smuggling minerals (15; 26; 27; 4)
	Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as checkpoint monitors, combatants, concubines, domestic workers, field hands, human shields, looters, porters, spies, and tax collectors at mining sites (23; 27; 19; 28; 29; 30; 31; 32; 33)

† 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 2017, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) were removed from the UN’s list of state armed forces that use child soldiers. (34) However, the UN Mission for the Stabilization of the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) estimates that there are as many as 125 indigenous and foreign non-state armed groups operating within the DRC. (33) Some of these armed groups—including *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), *Force de Résistance Patriotique en Ituri* (FRPI), Kamuina Nsapu Mayi Mayi groups, *Nduma Défense du Congo* (NDC/Renove), Nyatura, Raia Mutomboki, and other armed groups—continued to abduct and recruit children for use in armed conflict. (27; 29; 35; 31; 3) UNICEF and other international organizations estimate that 40 percent to 70 percent of the militias in central DRC include children, some as young as age 5. (27) Research indicates that there was ongoing collaboration between members of the FARDC and non-state armed groups known for recruiting children, including coordinating operations or selling arms and munitions. (4; 36; 37; 38; 33; 39) Children may sometimes join armed groups or engage in child labor in artisanal mines hoping to earn money for school-related expenses. (2; 16; 17; 40; 27; 41; 42; 19) Although there is strong evidence of children engaged in armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced labor in mining, there is a lack of information on the overall nature of child labor because a comprehensive, stand-alone, child labor survey has never been conducted in the DRC. (10)

The government has mandated free primary education, but these laws were not implemented throughout the country, and some families are required to pay for school uniforms, tuition, and additional fees, which may be prohibitive. (2; 7; 8; 10; 16; 43; 44; 45; 46; 41) Schools throughout the DRC are overcrowded, understaffed, structurally damaged by conflicts, occupied by internally displaced persons, or require students to travel long distances. (2; 27; 23; 47; 46; 28; 31; 3) Children and teachers also face difficulty in accessing education due to their large-scale internal displacement and fear of violence, being forcibly recruited, or sexually assaulted at or on their way to school. (48; 23; 43; 49; 27; 47; 46; 50; 31) Since September 2016, non-state armed groups carried out at least 646 attacks against schools, and the FARDC was responsible for attacking at least 4 schools and using 4 other schools as army bases. (29; 51; 38) Because of ongoing conflicts, some children were unable to take the end-of-year exams required to advance to the next grade. (27; 47)

During the reporting period, the government’s focus was on widespread conflict in the central and eastern regions and unrest related to the delayed presidential elections, which may have impeded its efforts to combat child labor. (27; 29; 35; 33) As a result, DRC has nearly doubled its number of internally displaced persons in 2017, from 2.5 million to almost 4.5 million, of whom 2.7 million are children. (27; 29; 35; 52) UNICEF estimates that only 14 percent of children under age 5 have birth certificates. Low rates

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of birth registration leave many children vulnerable to child labor because it makes age verification difficult during the FARDC recruitment campaigns and hinders efforts to identify and separate children associated with armed groups. (8; 46; 19; 43; 33)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The DRC 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 DRC's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including its compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 6 of the Labor Code; Article 50 of the Child Protection Code (53; 54; 55)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 10 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work (56)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 8–15 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work; Articles 26 and 299 bis of the Mining Code; Article 8b of the Decree on Validation Procedures for Artisanal Mines; Article 125 of the Labor Code (55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 60; 53)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 53 and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 16 and 61 of the Constitution; Article 8 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work (45; 53; 54; 56)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 53, 162, and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Article 174j of the Penal Code; Article 8 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work (53; 54; 56; 61)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 53, 61, 169, 173, 179–180, 182–183, and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 174b, 174j, 174m, and 174n of the Penal Code; Article 8 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work (53; 54; 56; 61)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 3 of the Labor Code; Article 8 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work; Articles 53, 187–188, and 194 of the Child Protection Code (53; 54; 56)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes*	18	Article 7 of the Law on Armed Forces; Article 27 of the Law on the Military Status of the Congolese Armed Forces; Articles 53, 71, and 187 of the Child Protection Code (53; 62; 63)
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 27 of the Law on Armed Forces; Articles 53, 71, and 187 of the Child Protection Code (53; 62)
Non-state	Yes	18	Articles 53, 71, and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Article 190 of the Constitution (45; 53)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Compulsory Education Age	No	12‡	Article 38 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 7.21, 12, and 72 of the Law on National Education; Article 43 of the Constitution (45; 64; 53)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 38 of the Child Protection Code; Article 43 of the Constitution; Article 38 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 12 and 72 of the Law on National Education (45; 53; 64; 53)

* No conscription (12)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (44; 53; 64)

In December 2017, the National Assembly and Senate adopted a revised Mining Code which explicitly punishes individuals for using child labor in mining or selling ore mined with child labor, and the President passed it into law in March 2018. (60; 65)

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, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in the DRC impeded the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Employment, Labor, and Social Welfare (MOL)	Investigate cases related to child labor, including its worst forms. (8; 43) Refer cases of child labor to the MOJ for prosecution. (67)
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (MOJ)	Enforce criminal laws related to child labor. (8; 48) Oversee five juvenile courts in Kinshasa and assist the International Criminal Court in conducting investigations and prosecutions against individuals who allegedly used children in armed conflict. (67; 46; 68; 33; 69) In 2017, 10,933 child protection cases were initiated in child protection courts; however, it is not known how many were related to the worst forms of child labor. (33)
Ministry of the Interior's Police Unit for Child Protection and Combating Sexual Violence (PEVS)	Combat conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence against women and children, protect children and women who are victims of physical abuse, and ensure the demobilization of children. Ministry of the Interior refers all cases to the MOJ for prosecution and assists victims in seeking justice. (70; 71; 72; 68)
Office of the President's Personal Representative on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment	Support and coordinate the efforts of government officials and international bodies to combat sexual violence and the use of children in armed conflict. (73) In 2017, improved access to a hotline for victims by making the number shorter and negotiating with telecommunications companies to make calls toll-free. Released data on sexual violence disaggregated by military and civil courts; of the 519 victims involved in 547 cases filed in military courts, 399 were minors. (33)
Ministry of Gender and Family (MOGF)	Oversee and investigate cases related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (68)
Ministry of Defense (MOD)	Investigate and prosecute military officials suspected of recruiting and using child soldiers in military courts, and lead the implementation of the Action Plan to End the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. Through its Department of Child Protection (DISPE), coordinate actions with UNICEF. (68)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in the DRC impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (12)	Unknown (68)
Number of Labor Inspectors	200 (12)	200 (68)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown (12; 54)	Yes (68)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown (12)	Unknown (68)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	No (12)	N/A (68)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (cont)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Refresher Courses Provided	No (12)	No (68)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	0 (12; 43)	0 (68)
Number Conducted at Worksites	N/A	0 (68)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (12)	0 (68)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	N/A	N/A (68)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	N/A	N/A (68)
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (12)	No (68)
Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A	N/A (68)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (12)	Yes (68)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (12)	No (68)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (68)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (68)

Although the DRC has documented cases of child labor, for the second year in a row no labor inspections were conducted during the reporting period due to an absence of funding and transportation. The Labor Inspectorate received insufficient funding for labor inspector salaries, which meant that not all of the 200 labor inspectors were active during the reporting period. (68) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of the DRC's workforce, which includes more than 30 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, the DRC should employ about 758 labor inspectors. (74; 75; 76) In July 2017, the government lifted the suspension on civil servant applications and the Ministry of Employment, Labor, and Social Welfare (MOL) anticipates that some of these new candidates will be allocated to the Labor Inspectorate to replace those nearing retirement. (68) Although the Prime Minister initially approved a request from the MOL's Inspector General to hire additional labor inspectors in 2017, the approval was later suspended. (68) The MOL has not hired new inspectors for the past 4 years and approximately 75 percent of existing inspectors are based in Kinshasa. (33)

Lastly, implementing decrees for the Child Protection Code have not been adopted, and the penalties for criminal violations for the worst forms of child labor, which are one to three years of imprisonment and fines as high as \$123, were insufficient to serve as deterrents. (23; 24; 66; 55; 56; 43)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in the DRC 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 training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	No (12)	No (68)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (12)	N/A (68)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (48)	No (68)
Number of Investigations	0 (12)	Unknown (68)
Number of Violations Found	1,846 (48)	1,031 (68)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (12)	1 (77)
Number of Convictions	0 (12)	1 (33)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (68)

In 2017, Ntabo Ntaberi Cheka, founder of Nduma Defense of Congo, surrendered to authorities and is awaiting prosecution for crimes against humanity, including the recruitment of children for armed conflict. A warrant for his arrest was first issued in 2011

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and the UN has documented at least 154 children who were recruited by Nduma Defense of Congo. (77) In December 2017, a sitting parliamentarian in South Kivu who led an armed group was also convicted for raping 40 young girls and murdering civilians; he and 10 of his combatants were sentenced to life imprisonment and ordered to pay \$5,000 in reparations to each victim. (78; 79)

A lack of coordination among ministries in conducting investigations, collecting data, and providing services to victims hinders the government’s ability to adequately combat the worst forms of child labor. (33) Research indicates that the justice system lacks the independence, knowledge, capacity, and resources to investigate and prosecute child labor violations. (24; 80; 19; 81; 33) The UN has expressed its concern that investigations into former members of the FARDC accused of child recruitment in armed conflict have been stalled due to a lack of funding. (82; 33) The UN has also noted that the government appears to be preventing the leader of the Bakata Katanga armed group from returning to prison after his escape in 2011 and subsequent surrender in 2016, although he was convicted in 2009 for using child soldiers. (33)

In 2017, the FARDC and the police arrested 302 children, many for their alleged association with armed groups. (33) These children were detained for periods of one day to one year, held in cells with adults, interrogated, and beaten. (27; 46; 83; 31; 3; 32; 4; 33) Members of both the national police and government-backed non-state armed groups carried out extrajudicial killings of civilians in central DRC, including children, due to their perceived support or affiliation with non-state armed groups. (29; 84; 36; 35; 85; 32; 38; 39)

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 lack of coordination among agencies.

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (NCCL)	Oversee the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor and monitor its implementation. (86; 87) Led by the MOL and includes representatives from 12 other ministries, local NGOs, and civil society. (88; 86; 87; 68) Although the NCCL did not formally convene during the reporting period due to a lack of funding, it participated in ad hoc activities, including the creation of the National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labor in Artisanal Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites (2017–2025). (33)
Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity, and Humanitarian Action (MINASA)	Monitor humanitarian programs and coordinate with key actors to promote social services to vulnerable groups, including street children, trafficking victims, and child soldiers. (88; 89; 68)
Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (UEPN-DDR)	Coordinate the identification, verification, and release of children associated with armed groups, and refer them to social services providers for family reunification and reinsertion by collaborating with the MOGF, MONUSCO, UNICEF, and NGOs. (90; 68; 33) Led by the MOD’s Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups unit. (90; 33) In 2017, continued to work with NGOs and international groups to identify and separate children from armed groups. (4; 68)
Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG)	Coordinate the implementation of the Child Soldiers Action Plan and, through its provincial JTWGs, coordinate implementation at the provincial level in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Orientale provinces. Led by the MOGF and includes representatives from four other ministries and the UN. (80; 68) In 2017, developed and adopted age verification procedures and held numerous workshops to train the FARDC and the police, which prevented at least 85 boys from being recruited into the FARDC. Also opened provincial offices in Kasai and North Kivu and created a 2018 roadmap for monitoring and preventing grave violations against children by state agents. (33)
Working Group on Trafficking in Persons	Analyze human trafficking trends and discuss strategies to develop comprehensive trafficking legislation and an inter-ministerial coordinating body. Led by the IOM and the U.S. Embassy; includes representatives from relevant ministries, civil society organizations, law enforcement officials, and other DRC government officials. (68) Met several times in 2017. (33)
Inter-ministerial Commission (IMC) Responsible for Addressing the Issue of Child Labor in Mines and on Mine Sites in DRC*	Coordinate government efforts to eradicate child labor in the DRC’s mining sector, serve as an advisor to other ministries combating child labor in mining, and liaise with international bodies such as the OECD, UNICEF, and ILO. (50) In 2017, held a workshop to validate the National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labor in Artisanal Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites (2017–2025). (91)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

In 2017, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior sought to establish an inter-ministerial committee to coordinate government efforts against human trafficking, draft a national action plan, and strengthen enforcement efforts. (92) The overlapping objectives and duplication of efforts, combined with a lack of resources and trained personnel, have impeded the

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government's efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. (48; 92) The UEPN-DDR is meant to take the lead on child soldier issues; however, research indicates that this did not always happen in practice. (33)

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 mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor‡

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2012–2020)	Developed by the NCCL in consultation with UNICEF to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the DRC by 2020. (7; 93) Promotes the enforcement of legislation on the worst forms of child labor, awareness raising, and empowering communities to stop child labor practices; universal primary education; prevention and reintegration services; improved monitoring and evaluation efforts; and improved coordination of stakeholders. (7; 93) In 2017, at the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labor, the government pledged to mobilize the resources necessary to implement this plan, and indicated its intention to conduct awareness-raising campaigns in 2018 and 2019 regarding the hazards of child labor in agriculture, mining, and armed conflict. (94)
Action Plan to End the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (Child Soldiers Action Plan)	UN-backed plan that aims to prevent and end the use of children in armed forces, provide support and reintegration services, pursue accountability for perpetrators, and create a partnership framework for the UN and the government. (95; 96) Includes standard operating procedures for age verification to help the FARDC avoid underage recruitment. (3; 4) In 2017, MONUSCO and the FARDC worked with military prosecutors to bring charges against elements who use children in armed conflict; following these efforts, MONUSCO screened and secured the release of more than 100 children from detention. (84) Also during the reporting period, provided training on child protection and age verification to more than 1,240 FARDC and police officers. (33)
UEPN-DDR's National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Plan (PNDDR) DDR III	Aims to provide rehabilitation and reintegration services to demobilized combatants, including children. (97; 98; 99; 4) Implemented with the support of the UN and international partners in support of the 2013 Framework Agreement for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the DRC and the Great Lakes Region. (98; 100; 101) Requires children separated from armed groups to be immediately transferred to UNICEF. (33) In 2017, separated as many as 2,360 children from armed groups. (4; 68)
National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labor in Artisanal Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites (2017–2025)†	Ministry of Mines policy that aims to eradicate child labor in artisanal mines by 2025 through strengthening the regulatory framework, improving data collection on the prevalence of child labor in the mining sector, promoting responsible sourcing regulations, improving child protection, and building stakeholder capacity. (102) In 2017, the government and IOM validated 93 new artisanal mining sites in the eastern DRC as free of conflict and child labor, raising the total number of certified mining sites to 417. (33)
IMC's Triennial Action Plan (2017–2020)†	Aims to eradicate child labor in mining by 2020, particularly in the tin, tantalum, tungsten, cobalt, and copper sectors by monitoring existing policies and strengthening measures to remove children from mining sites. (103)
National Action Plan Against Sexual Violence in Conflict	MOGF policy in support of UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security that aims to combat sexual violence against girls associated with armed groups and ensure prosecution of perpetrators. (104) In 2017, the President's Special Advisor on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment worked with Child Soldiers International to publish a practical guide for child protection actors to facilitate the demobilization and reintegration of girls associated with armed groups. (105)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (15; 24; 106; 107)

The government did not integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the UN Development Assistance Framework (2013–2017). The National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor has yet to be approved by the National Labor Council, so its implementation has been severely constrained by a lack of dedicated funding. (108; 33)

VII. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem and in all relevant sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor‡

Program	Description
Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor (MAP 16)*	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO to conduct research and develop new survey methodologies, improve awareness, and strengthen policies and government capacity to combat child labor and forced labor in 10 countries. (109) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
World Bank-Funded Projects	Projects in support of re-establishing peace and stability. Includes Reinsertion and Reintegration Project (2015–2019), a \$21 million project that aims to assist with social reintegration for the child combatants identified as part of DDR III; Support to Basic Education Program (2013–2017), a \$100 million project implemented by the Ministry of Primary, Secondary, and Vocational Education that aimed to increase access to education; Human Development Systems Strengthening (2016–2020), a \$41.1 million project that aims to increase birth registration and improve school infrastructure; and Education Quality Improvement Project (2017–2021),* a \$100 million project that aims to improve the quality of primary school education. (101; 110; 111; 112)
Programs to Support Vulnerable Children†	Government and donor-supported projects that aim to improve child protection. Includes a \$4 million government of Japan-funded program that aims to provide education, vocational training, reintegration kits, and school feeding programs to 13,000 children and construct a training center for youth in North Kivu Province; a \$97 million government of Canada-funded program that aims to assist 95,000 at-risk youth living near mining sites; and a 2017 MSA and NGO program to reintegrate children removed from the street into communities and reunify children formerly associated with armed groups with their families. (113; 114; 33; 4)
Back to School Campaign*	Ministry of Education program in collaboration with UNICEF that aims to improve access to education for students in areas affected by conflict by distributing school kits and establishing temporary learning spaces. In 2017, provided 55,951 children with school kits. (115)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (68)

The scope of existing child disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs is insufficient; the entire process is slow, funding is inadequate, and collaboration between partners is weak. (24; 116; 40; 46; 50; 41) Children separated from armed groups remain vulnerable to re-recruitment and stigmatization, and girls, who make up an estimated 30 to 40 percent of children associated with armed groups, need to be specifically targeted in the DDR process. (40; 46; 41; 30; 42) Research also indicates that the government needs to strengthen its efforts to assist street children, integrate child labor issues into existing agricultural programs, and implement programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in forced labor in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (23; 25; 24; 46; 19)

VI. 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 DRC (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish by law a compulsory education age that extends to the minimum age for employment.	2013 – 2017
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by conducting routine and unannounced inspections and ensure that inspectors have adequate resources and transportation to conduct inspections throughout the country.	2015 – 2017
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors in accordance with the ILO's technical advice and ensure that they receive adequate training and funding to carry out their duties.	2011 – 2017
	Increase penalties for the worst forms of child labor so they are sufficiently stringent to serve as a deterrent.	2013 – 2017
	Issue appropriate decrees to ensure that enacted laws are implemented, including those that provide for free education throughout the country and require demobilized children to be handed over to child protection actors for social services and reintegration assistance.	2009 – 2017

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that judges, prosecutors, and investigators receive adequate training and resources to investigate and prosecute child labor issues.	2011 – 2017
	Cease the practice of subjecting children to physical violence and/or detention for their alleged association with armed groups, and ensure that enforcement officials do not carry out extrajudicial killings.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure that the FARDC does not support non-state armed groups that perpetuate the worst forms of child labor, including child soldiering.	2017
Coordination	Improve coordination among relevant ministries to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that they receive adequate resources and trained personnel to combat the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure that the UEPN-DDR is able to coordinate the government's DDR III program as intended.	2015 – 2017
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing policies and ensure the implementation of relevant policies.	2011 – 2017
Social Programs	Conduct a stand-alone child labor survey.	2013 – 2017
	Improve access to education for all children by regulating classroom size, training additional teachers, building additional schools, and ensuring that schools are safe and students are not subjected to sexual abuse or forcible recruitment while at or on their way to school. Make additional efforts to prevent schools from being attacked and occupied by armed groups.	2012 – 2017
	Ensure that all children are registered at birth or have identification documents.	2012 – 2017
	Expand efforts to address the needs of demobilized children and incorporate stigmatization, gender, and re-recruitment concerns into programs to reintegrate such children.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure that existing social programs are implemented as intended and establish or expand efforts to address exploitative forced child labor in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2017

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