



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Combined third to seventh periodic reports submitted by the Central African Republic under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2022*

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. The formal recognition, or establishment, of children's rights is an initiative of the United Nations General Assembly whose primary aim is to encourage the Governments of Member States to address the problems and concerns of children in their countries, as a guarantee of the continuity of the human race.
2. The Central African Republic was among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child following the General Assembly of 1989 in New York, and it ratified the Convention in 1992.
3. Since its ratification of the Convention, the Government of the Central African Republic has made children's rights one of its policy priorities. All the programmes and projects developed by government agencies are designed to ensure respect for children's rights at the national level. This has enabled the Government to take several positive steps in line with the recommendations and principles set forth in the Convention.
4. The difficult social and political situation in the Central African Republic for more than two decades, marked by mutinies, rebellions and changes in political regime, compounded by the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) health crisis, natural disasters and the adverse effects of the war between Russia and Ukraine, has hampered the implementation of the Government's policies for children. Many violations of children's rights have occurred, including the six most serious forms of violation: the involvement of children in armed conflict, killings, abductions, the destruction of schools and of hospitals and the separation of families.
5. The Government is doing everything in its power to maintain lasting peace, including by signing political peace agreements with armed groups.
6. Despite all these efforts, however, much remains to be done to ensure that children's rights are fully respected, as is called for by the Convention.
7. This report provides an overview of the actions taken by various child protection actors from the time the second periodic report was issued until the submission of the seventh periodic report. It focuses on the Committee's recommendations, the progress achieved and the difficulties and challenges encountered.

II. Information on action taken in follow-up to the concluding observations (CRC/C/CAF/CO/2)

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 5 of the concluding observations

8. While the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in 2000, particularly those concerning policy and coordination (para. 17), monitoring (para. 21), discrimination (para. 29), the right to a name and nationality (para. 37), health (para. 55), standard of living (para. 69), education (para. 71), child labour (para. 79) and children in armed conflict (para. 83), has been limited, the Central African Republic has continued its efforts to address them. Information on these efforts is provided below.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 7 of the concluding observations

9. The Central African Republic has a fairly comprehensive legal framework for the protection of children, including:
 - Act No. 06.32 of 15 December 2006 on the protection of women against violence in the Central African Republic.
 - The Criminal Code (Act No. 10.01 of 6 January 2010).

- Act No. 20.014 of 15 June 2020, on the Child Protection Code. Article 2 of this Act, which prohibits discrimination and upholds the best interests of the child, states that the Act applies to every child living within the national territory, without distinction based on nationality, sex, race, colour, language, ethnicity, religion, the political or other opinions of their parents or legal guardians, or their origin, social status, disability, birth or any other circumstance.

10. It applies to all children in family, school and work settings, whether they have a disability, are living with HIV/AIDS, are living on the streets, are displaced, are refugees, are in conflict with the law, are living in times of peace or crisis or are experiencing extraordinary circumstances or natural disasters.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 9 of the concluding observations

11. A draft national child protection policy is in the process of being finalized. The overall objective of this national policy is to improve children's living conditions and development. The main pillars of the policy are:

- (a) Enhancement of the legal framework
- (b) Human and institutional capacity-building
- (c) Access to basic social services
- (d) Initiatives to support vulnerable groups
- (e) Monitoring and evaluation

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 11 of the concluding observations

12. The National Council for the Promotion and Protection of Children was established to coordinate and consolidate all child protection efforts.

13. This institution falls under the authority of the Prime Minister owing to its multisectoral nature. Its technical secretariat reports to the ministry responsible for child protection.

14. Formerly known as the National Council for Child Protection, the institution's mandate was expanded to include the promotion of children's rights and thus became the National Council for the Promotion and Protection of Children. This expansion was carried out with financial support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

15. The process of redefining this mandate involved all the sectors involved in child protection services. The Government then held advocacy meetings with its usual partners (UNICEF, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs)), who committed to providing substantial support to ensure the effective functioning of the Council.

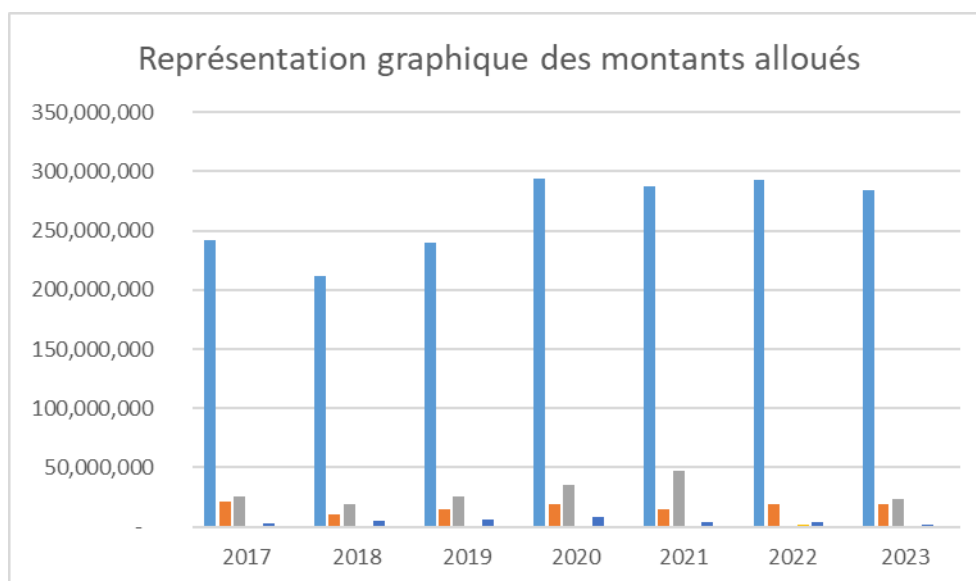
Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 13 of the concluding observations

Funding allocated to social sector ministries (in thousands of CFA francs) between 2017 and 2023

<i>Year</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Advancement of women</i>	<i>Social affairs</i>	<i>Humanitarian services</i>
2017	241 917 627	21 292 093	25 462 696	919 590	310 168	3 101 685

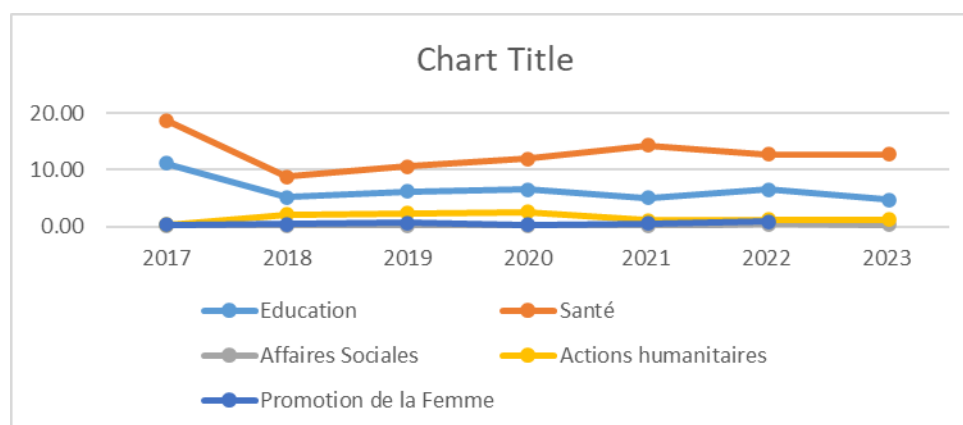
Year	Budget	Education	Health	Advancement of women	Social affairs	Humanitarian services
2018	211 452 045	10 878 846	18 666 370	819 403	382 108	4 428 561
2019	239 936 628	14 975 874	25 373 825	161 172	361 610	5 706 624
2020	293 609 314	19 331 258	35 256 367	948 718	302 079	7 681 803
2021	287 505 793	14 486 160	47 674 395	1 711 953	380 924	3 555 251
2022	292 626 535	19 210 318	37 429 265	2 746 910	1 230 498	3 661 910
2023	283 831 408	18 824 928	23 131 094	785 059		2 104 088

Source: Central African Institute of Statistics and Economic and Social Studies, Finance Acts.



Percentage of funding allocated to social sector ministries (in thousands of CFA francs) between 2019 and 2023

Year	Education	Health	Social affairs	Advancement of women	Humanitarian services
2017	11.12	18.76	0.12	0.38	0.38
2018	5.14	8.83	0.18	0.39	2.09
2019	6.24	10.57	0.15	0.67	2.37
2020	6.58	12.01	0.13	0.32	2.61
2021	5.04	14.34	0.11	0.52	1.13
2022	6.56	12.79	0.49	0.94	1.25
2023	4.68	12.79		0.28	1.21



Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 15 of the concluding observations

16. Following the validation of the standard operating procedures for child protection case management in April 2022, the ministry responsible for child protection has been providing training on the procedures for all public and private entities involved in child protection, in Bangui and outside the capital (Bouar, Bozoum, Bocaranga, Paoua and Bossangoa). To date, at least 145 social workers and 50 other persons have been trained in case management and database management coaching.

17. Pursuant to a newly adopted Organic Act, a department dedicated to database management and partnerships with institutions and organizations responsible for child protection has been established within the ministry responsible for child protection.

18. The primary purpose for this department is the setting up of a database on child protection and reintegration, with data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location and ethnic origin.

19. There are also statistical offices in other government agencies, including those dealing with health, national education and justice.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 17 of the concluding observations

20. The establishment of an independent monitoring observatory for children's rights, with its own budget, is currently under way. This observatory will establish procedures for processing complaints in accordance with international standards.

21. To ensure the observatory's more effective operation, a partnership will be established between the Government and the relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations system to provide appropriate oversight.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 19 of the concluding observations

22. The Government has developed a communications strategy, together with an action plan, focusing on the following areas of children's rights:

- Girls' rights
- Sexual exploitation of girls
- Early warning system at the elementary and secondary school levels
- Child marriage

23. Under this strategy, the Government, acting through the ministry responsible for child protection, has carried out advocacy, training and awareness-raising initiatives. These initiatives have yielded the results laid out in the paragraphs that follow.

24. In the areas of children's rights, the prevention of violence against children and the early identification of vulnerable children, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation by humanitarian personnel, and the harmful effects of violence against children:

- Around 31,722 community actors, including 3,996 members of the community network for child protection (RECOPE) (788 women).
- A total of 605 staff members from partner NGOs were trained on children's rights. +33,000, 780,000 community leaders were involved in addressing violence against children, including child marriage.
- A total of 13,683 people were educated and trained in technical skills to combat violence against children.

- Ten early warning committees were established in Bangui to prevent school violence in five schools (in collaboration with the Ministry of Education).
 - Ten female reporters were given training on technical communication skills to raise awareness among their peers about combating violence and harmful traditional practices, including child marriage.
 - A total of 92,085 people, including 46 staff members of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, the Family and the Protection of Children, were briefed on COVID-19 prevention measures, as well as child protection case management, including psychosocial first aid in the context of COVID-19.
 - A total of 12,986 people were educated about sexual abuse and exploitation, and the recruitment of children by armed forces and armed groups.
 - A total of 108 people from 44 organizations and clusters were trained on the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, and in the identification and provision of support for victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.
 - A total of 55,895 people participated in community outreach on the protection of children.
 - A total of 108,306 people were educated about children's rights (52,894 women and 51,014 men).
 - A total of 323 child protection professionals were trained in child safety and assistance.
25. A total of 1,289 facilitators of child-friendly places have been trained in how to provide psychosocial support to children affected by conflict.
26. A total of 1,020 people, including 21 focal points and 20 members of the internal security forces, have been given training on the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.
27. Regarding temporary foster families:
- A total of 840 temporary foster families have been trained in alternative care for separated and unaccompanied children.
 - A total of 2,514 members (400 women and 2,114 men) of RECOPE have been trained and supported.
 - A total of 55,895 people have benefited from community outreach. These included 21,555 children (of whom 10,561 were girls), 21,743 adults, 617 community-based childhood protection workers, 309 social workers and local officials.
28. A total of 192 professionals providing public social services and NGOs have received training on child protection case management in Bangui and in the Ouham and Ouham Pendé prefectures. The implementation of this plan is continuing despite the challenges involved.
29. The Ministry of Territorial Administration has carried out similar initiatives in certain municipalities and among the general public:
- A total of 42 civil registry and health officials were given training on the registration process for routine births.
 - A total of 25 chairs of special delegations were trained in Bangui on the implementation of the Child Protection Code.
 - A total of 102 staff members from the Civil Registry and Health Services, together with community leaders, were given training on birth registration.
 - Training has also been organized for judicial actors (criminal investigation police, social workers). In this regard, the following may be noted:
 - A total of 85 police officers and gendarmes from security services have been trained on how to protect and care for children in the justice system and how to address violence.

- A total of 131 members of the internal security forces received training on child protection to help prevent and respond to violence against children, including gender-based violence.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 21 of the concluding observations

30. In the Central African Republic, the Labour Code and the Mining Code make up the legal framework that governs employer-employee relations across all industries.
31. In 2022, the Ministry of Labour, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), adopted a three-year plan to combat child labour in all its forms in the Central African Republic.
32. The Mining Code does not provide for criminal penalties. The Labour Code, the Child Protection Code and the Criminal Code are relied upon to combat child exploitation.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 23 of the concluding observations

33. A strategy to combat child marriage was developed in 2017 and subsequently implemented. Awareness-raising campaigns against harmful traditional practices such as the early or arranged marriage of girls under the age of 18 are regularly organized through all channels.
34. Community-based child protection networks have been established by NGOs, with a mandate to report potential cases of child marriage.
35. In addition, a hotline (4040) has been set up to allow anyone who learns of a possible child marriage to report it to the appropriate authorities.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 25 of the concluding observations

36. Article 172 of the Child Protection Code prohibits discrimination. Anyone who commits an act of discrimination is subject to a fine ranging from 200,000 to 500,000 CFA francs (CFAF).
37. In addition, as part of the observance of theme days, the Government continues to carry out large-scale awareness-raising and educational campaigns targeting families, children, communities and various entities to eliminate all forms of discrimination nationally.
38. All national and community radio stations devote airtime to the issue of combating discrimination against children.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 27 of the concluding observations

39. The Government of the Central African Republic places particular emphasis on the best interests of the child. This position is reaffirmed in article 4 of the Child Protection Code, which states that “the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions and measures taken in respect of the child by the courts, administrative authorities, public institutions and civil society organizations dedicated to child protection. In all decisions made regarding children, keeping a child within the family unit is essential for promoting the child’s healthy development and the responsibility of parents, guardians, custodians or any other person entrusted with the child’s care, upbringing, education and supervision.”
40. Thus, all government programmes and projects introduced by government agencies incorporate the principle of “the best interests of the child”. Related initiatives include the

programme to combat maternal and infant mortality, which prioritizes child survival and measures providing for free education for children. In addition, court decisions regarding child custody must ensure the child's health, education and moral upbringing.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 29 of the concluding observations

41. The Government of the Central African Republic, which is deeply committed to child welfare, is concerned about the killing of children. Harsh penalties are therefore imposed on anyone who commits any offence that infringes upon a child's right to life and survival, as set forth in the Criminal Code and the Child Protection Code, particularly article 180.

42. Crimes committed by members of armed groups are systematically investigated, and the perpetrators prosecuted. The Special Criminal Court, a transitional justice mechanism, has already heard more than a hundred cases involving crimes committed during the conflicts, including crimes against children, and a landmark ruling has been handed down in this regard.

43. As part of efforts to support communities displaced by conflict, unaccompanied children and children separated from their families receive assistance from partner NGOs operating in the respective areas.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 31 of the concluding observations

44. The views of the child remain a fundamental principle in any decision concerning children. Awareness-raising segments on this theme are regularly organized on the radio or through other channels for parents, either in conjunction with observance days for the Convention on the Rights of the Child or during radio broadcasts.

45. In the same vein, the Junior Parliament, whose mandate had not been renewed for several years, was revitalized with the election of new members in November 2022 and the establishment of an executive board comprising representatives from all segments of the child population, including minorities and children with disabilities. This children's forum serves as a platform for them to convey their views to the highest authorities.

46. Representative bodies have also been established in schools. One example is the girls' network, which allows girls to share their concerns and bring them to the attention of the school authorities.

47. A total of 350 pilot centres have been established for so-called "educating mothers' associations", composed of school administrators, community leaders, parents and students (one girl and one boy), whose mission is to raise awareness about and provide support for girls and young children in order to promote their enrolment and retention in school. Seventy-eight are already operational.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 33 of the concluding observations

48. Recognizing the need for children to be registered at birth, the Government of the Central African Republic accorded due attention to the issue of birth registration in the Child Protection Code, particularly in article 18, which states that every child has the right to be registered with the civil registry within 180 days of birth and that births may be registered and birth certificates obtained, without charge, throughout the country and also at the country's diplomatic and consular missions. The time limit for reporting births, which was 30 days under the previous law, has been extended considerably to facilitate the registration of newborns.

49. Sector ministries and civil society organizations have regularly organized awareness-raising sessions for parents on the importance of birth registration and the need to obtain birth certificates for their children within the time limits prescribed by law. These

resulted in the registration of 14,118 children at birth and the issuance of birth certificates to 8,811 undeclared children through the late registration procedure. (2018: 9,365 children in Bangui, of whom 5,237 were girls; in Salanga, 864 children were issued late registration certificates. 2019: 8,343. 2021: 25,126 children, including 4,000 late registration certificates.)

50. UNICEF has consistently supported government agencies and NGOs working on the issue of birth registration nationally.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 35 of the concluding observations

51. In the Central African Republic, the Constitution of 30 March 2016 guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as enshrined in article 70 of the Child Protection Code. Every child has the right to express their opinion on any matter that affects their life, to join an organization of their choice and to practise any religion, including any other than that of their parents.

52. National, private and community radio stations reserve weekly time slots for children, who are free to express themselves on the air.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 37 of the concluding observations

53. Articles 142 and 143 of the Child Protection Code criminalize inhuman and degrading treatment of children.

54. The Government, with the support of partners, including MINUSCA, regularly organizes training and capacity-building workshops for the criminal investigation police with the aim of curbing these abuses.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 39 of the concluding observations

55. Corporal punishment is prohibited by law, including in schools and all other educational facilities for children. Only reprimands that are proportionate to the child's misbehaviour are permitted. The Act of 10 December 1997, on the education system, and the internal regulations of each school, strictly prohibit the use of corporal punishment.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 41 of the concluding observations

56. Given the scale of the problem of child sexual exploitation in the country, the Central African Republic expressly provides for the protection of children against all forms of sexual exploitation under article 67 of the Child Protection Code.

57. A number of training sessions have been held for protection workers on exploitation and sexual abuse and on the management of cases of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse involving minors, including any relevant procedures.

58. In addition, a road map for the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, currently being developed, will outline the key actions needed ultimately to eradicate such violations.

59. A national system has been established to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation by MINUSCA staff, the defence and security forces, United Nations agencies, implementing partners and the Government. There is also a unit responsible for investigating cases of sexual exploitation of children allegedly perpetrated by peacekeepers and United Nations personnel. Confirmed cases are prosecuted and punished in accordance with the headquarters agreement establishing MINUSCA.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 43 of the concluding observations

60. Article 105 of the Family Code addresses only the duties of officers at secondary civil registry offices. It makes no mention of the possibility that the perpetrator of an abduction or kidnapping might marry the person he has abducted, and that, as his wife, that person would not have the right to file a complaint.

61. Furthermore, the Central African Republic strongly opposes any cultural practices that are harmful to children, particularly the sexual exploitation of girls and female genital mutilation. In addition to the Criminal Code, article 67 of the Child Protection Code provides that children are protected against all forms of sexual exploitation, including:

- Forced marriage and early marriage
- The inducing, encouraging or coercing of a child to engage in sexual activity
- The use, recruitment or coercion of a child for paedophilia-related purposes
- The distribution of pornographic films involving children
- Exposure to obscene songs and performances

62. Furthermore, article 19 of Act No. 06.032 of 15 December 2006, on the protection of women against violence in the Central African Republic, provides for 2 to 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of CFAF 100,000 to CFAF 1,000,000 of anyone who performs, attempts to perform or facilitates cutting or any other form of female genital mutilation. The penalty is doubled in the case of repeat offences.

63. In addition, the Central African Republic has a national technical committee dedicated to combating gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices and child marriage. Established by Interministerial Order No. 007 of 21 April 2005 and amended by Order No. 013/PM/18 of 7 June 2018, this committee has been tasked with supporting the implementation of legal, administrative and social measures, as well as policies and programmes, to address gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices. The committee also ensures the implementation and monitoring of activities relating to international and national legal instruments aimed at protecting women and girls.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 45 of the concluding observations

64. Articles 68 and 69 of the Protection Code provide for the protection of children in need of special protection, including children with disabilities, children with albinism and children accused of practising quackery and witchcraft. Special protective measures are implemented through the guardianship mechanisms provided for in the Family Code, foster care or any other appropriate care arrangement that prioritizes the best interests of the child, taking into account the child's level of maturity. A specialized criminal investigation unit handles cases involving children accused of practising witchcraft; in most cases, it refers the children to the international NGO, Triangle Génération Humanitaire, for comprehensive care. Similarly, there is an association for children with albinism that advocates for their interests.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 47 of the concluding observations

65. A draft family policy has been prepared by the Government of the Central African Republic with the support of partners, with the aim of enhancing the well-being of the entire population by improving health, educational and socioeconomic conditions, thereby promoting family well-being.

66. The policy objective is to establish a framework for the implementation and monitoring of programmes aimed at protecting and supporting families, so that they can fulfil their role as the natural foundation of society and a key driver of the country's development.

67. The policy is designed around the following key areas:

- Strengthening of family relations
- Preservation of culture and positive traditional values
- Peace, democracy and safety within the family
- Child protection
- Protection of vulnerable groups
- Promotion of family education
- Promotion of health and nutrition
- Promotion of gender equality
- Enhancement of families' economic and financial capacity

68. Under these policy objectives, the Government is currently developing, as part of a project to support communities affected by displacement, a social protection programme for families based on cash transfers. In the first phase of the project, 15,000 direct beneficiary households, representing 50,000 final beneficiaries, received assistance, which in turn enabled them to meet their children's basic needs. The next phase, which has already begun, is currently under way and is expected to ultimately benefit 200,000 people.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 49 of the concluding observations

69. The ministry responsible for child protection has issued a set of guidelines for temporary foster families that were developed by child welfare professionals working with children without families and are being implemented.

70. In addition to those children placed with foster families, other children without a family are placed in specialized care facilities. The table below provides a glimpse of the facilities available:

<i>Name of organization</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Name and contact information of the person in charge</i>
Centre de la Mère et de l'Enfant	Face Hôpital Général	Mme Isabelle Lucie DACKO 75 50 24 16
Goutte de lait	Rue quartier Kpéténé (proximité Eglise Saint Jacques)	Sœur Agnès YETIKOUA 75510370/72562458
YAMBAMBI MBIGAZO	Avenue David Dacko (à côté Ecole St Charles Fille)	Sœur Hortense Gaby 75510381 Sœur Anne Marie 75516339
Missionnaires de la Charité	Face MINUSCA	Sœur Naomie 72727040/75208233
Mission d'Accueil de Bimbo (Da ti ndoyé ti Jésus)	PK 9 Sortie Sud	Sœur Lucienne Wolfouer Tel 75 04 39 88
Village d'Enfants SOS	Quartier Gbangouma 7 ^{ème} arrondissement.	M. Brice NZIBILLA Tel. 72 12 04 02
Fondation Albert BURKHARDT	Samba PK 15 Sortie Sud	GBEGBE Michel Tel : 75 50-15-28
Action Chrétienne pour la Compassion.	Yembi 1, PK 13 route de Damara	BOUBANDE Marie Thérèse 75 50 16 36
Fondation Voix du Cœur : Centre d'Accueil des garçons Fondation Voix du Cœur : Centre d'Accueil des filles	Sica I et Damala	Madame PADOUNDJI Yvette Belvia 72 47 48 70 Madame Gisèle BAKIN 72507626

<i>Name of organization</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Name and contact information of the person in charge</i>
Centre de la Mère et de l'Enfant	Face Hôpital Général	Mme Isabelle Lucie DACKO 75 50 24 16 Madame Léonie DJOLLO 75382812
Centre Rééducation Handicapé Moteur	4 ^{ème} Arrdt Bangui	Sœur Merveille MBALLA 72872200
Mbo Ngoulet	7 ^{ème} Arrondissement	M. Jules GUERE 75413167/72615572
Centre Orphelinat pépinière	PK 12	Madame Françoise EMAYE 72153698/75784430
DON BOSCO	Damala	Directeur Etude : 72819449
Centre Saint Kizito	Berberati	Sœur Noella
Maman tongolo	Bangassou	Sœur Yolande
Missionnaires de la Charité	Mbaiki en face de l'église Cathédrale Jean d'Arc	Cf soeurs missionnaires de la charité face MINUSCA

71. In addition, the Government has established a code of ethics and professional conduct specifically for childcare centres. In this regard, a systematic assessment of the capacity of childcare facilities is required prior to any placement of a child.

72. A programme has been introduced to provide ongoing capacity-building for protection actors.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 51 of the concluding observations

73. Adoption is now governed by law, specifically, articles 522 ff. of the Family Code. With regard to the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

74. The Central African Republic will take the necessary steps to ratify it in accordance with national law.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 53 of the concluding observations

75. The Government is working to address concerns about persons with disabilities in the country as effectively as possible.

76. Under national legislation, 30% of civil service positions are reserved for qualified persons with disabilities.

77. Functional rehabilitation centres for people with disabilities have been established. A new referral centre has just been built in Bangui at PK11 sortie nord with financial support from the International Committee of the Red Cross. Measures to ensure that all new administrative buildings include features, such as ramps and elevators, to facilitate access for persons with reduced mobility have been in place for more than 10 years. Through research conducted in regions Nos. 3, 4 and 6 in partnership with the international NGO, Humanity and Inclusion, it has been possible to identify, among other things, the barriers to inclusion faced by persons with disabilities, including children, in the various stages of the post-conflict recovery and inclusive community development processes. The study concluded with pragmatic proposals and recommendations, along with a remediation plan, which were shared with the Government.

78. The Government, acting through the Ministry for Humanitarian Action responsible for vulnerable groups, including people with reduced mobility, pygmies and people with sensory disabilities, plans to organize a national forum on care for such groups.

79. On this occasion, the focus will be on defining the strategic priorities for their care in the light of the changing context.

80. In addition, the Central African Institute of Statistics and Economic and Social Studies has included issues regarding children and people with disabilities in its routine data collection.

81. In addition, the statistical yearbook of the Ministry of Education contains comprehensive data on children with disabilities who are enrolled in school.

82. The development of a comprehensive social protection policy that includes children with disabilities is under way.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 55 of the concluding observations

83. The Government has identified health as one of the priority areas to be addressed in its efforts to support its people. In this context, several strategic documents have been drafted with the support of technical and financial partners: the first National Health Development Plan, the second National Health Development Plan, the Health Sector Transition Plan and the Interim Plan for the Health Sector. These Plans have supported the implementation of various important initiatives.

84. While certain national health indicators have improved following implementation of the various development plans, much work remains to be done in the legitimate pursuit of development and the creation of productive human capital capable of driving socioeconomic development and cementing social peace.

85. To combat infant mortality, the Ministry of Health, with the support of its partners, has implemented several strategies:

- Free care in 10 areas for children under 5 years of age and for pregnant and breastfeeding women
- The 2019–2030 National Health Development Plan, which focuses on combating endemic and epidemic diseases in the Central African Republic
- A number of strategic plans, including plans to combat tuberculosis, HIV and malaria (with financing from the Global Fund) and a five-year immunization plan (with support from the Gavi Alliance), as well as community-based surveillance

86. With regard to access to primary healthcare services, the healthcare policy is based on cost recovery. There are three levels of public healthcare facilities.

- The first level is divided into two tiers: The first tier consists of health centres, of which there are approximately 700. Each health centre serves a catchment area of approximately 10,000 residents and is primarily staffed by qualified paramedical personnel. Health posts are satellite facilities of health centres.

87. Health centres offer the so-called “minimum package of services” and refer patients to the district hospital. The second tier of care is provided by the district hospital, which is headed by a doctor. It is responsible for the so-called “supplementary services package”. Patients are referred to the Regional University Hospital and then referred back to the health centre.

- The second level is represented by the Regional University Hospital, which offers primary care services for the district hospital and advanced specialized care. Patients are referred to the capital’s central hospitals and referred back to the district hospital.
- In the capital, Bangui, there are public diagnostic and health facilities: five central hospitals, the National Laboratory of Clinical Biology and Public Health, the National

Blood Transfusion Centre and the reference centre for sexually transmitted infections and antiretroviral therapy. They make up the third level of healthcare.

88. The Armed Forces Health Service implements the National Health Policy. The military healthcare system consists of four medical centres in Bangui (equivalent to level 2 health facilities) and a garrison infirmary in Bouar (equivalent to primary care facilities).

89. Malaria is one of the leading causes of illness and death among children under 5 years of age in the Central African Republic. The disease maintains a steady transmission rate (1 case per 1,000 residents) throughout the country.

90. In 2018, 89.5% of patients suspected of having malaria underwent a parasitological test; 95% of patients with uncomplicated malaria received first-line antimalarial medicine; 80% of patients with severe malaria were treated at health centres and hospitals; 36% of pregnant women receiving prenatal care received at least three doses of Fansidar; 797,164 insecticide-treated mosquito nets were distributed to 269,378 households in Bangui; and 73,453 long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets were distributed in Kémo (Dékoa, Mala and Ndjoukou), 4,340 in Ouadda-Djallé and 12,520 in Haut-Mbomou (Zémio and Djémah).

91. Malaria-related deaths are on the rise, increasing from 17 deaths per 100,000 people in 2003 to 72 deaths per 100,000 people in 2017. Children under 5 years of age account for 58% of deaths from this disease.

92. Data on transmission reveal three ecological environments: (i) a forest or equatorial environment in the south, where transmission is year-round and morbidity ranges from 30% to 90%; (ii) a tropical environment in the centre, where transmission is seasonal, occurring during the rainy season, which lasts 6 to 8 months, and the morbidity rate is 30–40%; and (iii) a Sahelian environment in the north, where transmission occurs during the rainy season, which lasts 3 to 4 months, and the morbidity rate is approximately 30%.

93. With regard to vector control and in seeking to achieve the goal of universal coverage of the population with long-lasting insecticide-treated nets, the Government organized five mass distribution campaigns in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022.

94. The data show that: (i) the percentage of households with at least one long-lasting insecticide-treated net rose from 41% in 2017 to 77% in 2022, with higher rates in urban areas (75%) than in rural areas (67%); and (ii) the usage rate of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets is 70% in Bangui and 74% in regions Nos. 1, 2 and 3.

95. Indoor spraying and environmental management are lacking. Chemoprophylaxis is used as intermittent preventive treatment for pregnant women and infants. With the support of its partners, the Government plans to distribute sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine free of charge in public facilities, non-profit religious facilities and private facilities.

96. However, significantly fewer third doses of intermittent preventive treatment are given to pregnant women than first doses. The same trends were observed in the 2016 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, with a first dose coverage rate of 67% and a third dose coverage rate of only 38%. Intermittent preventive treatment for infants was not implemented owing to a lack of funds.

97. With regard to access to healthcare, including the training of medical staff and the provision of psychosocial services to children who are victims of female genital mutilation or sexual or gender-based violence, the Government has recruited more than 250 qualified employees, including 10 doctors, through the Project to Support the Strengthening of the Health System (SENI) and the Project to Support the Strengthening of the Health System and Service Delivery (SENI PLUS), with support from the World Bank. This personnel has already been deployed to health facilities in order to provide quality care.

98. Thanks to these efforts, a number of health facilities have been built or renovated, including the renovation of the Damara Secondary Hospital, the Grimari District Hospital and the Baoro Health Centre, and the construction and equipping of operating rooms at the Grimari Hospital.

99. Also with funding from the SENI project, specifically in the towns of Bambari, Bouar and Kaga Bandoro, activists are carrying out activities to combat female genital mutilation and gender-based violence.

100. The Government provides vaccines and injection supplies with support from UNICEF, the Gavi Alliance and the World Health Organization. Activities related to the promotion of blood donation and the production and distribution of blood products are primarily carried out by the National Blood Transfusion Centre, which does not have a decentralized structure and also faces shortages of reagents and blood bags.

101. Since 2012, the crisis stemming from the military and political unrest that has shaken the country has led to the destruction and vandalism of cold-chain equipment and facilities, as well as the mass displacement of personnel. Data from the health map show that of the 866 operational health facilities, 421 are Expanded Programme on Immunization centres, representing 49% geographic coverage. The Expanded Programme on Immunization covers 11 preventable diseases in children aged 0 to 11 months and 2 preventable diseases in pregnant women.

102. Since 2018, there has been an improvement in the Expanded Programme on Immunization indicators. The completion rate rose from 4% in 2017 to 93% in 2018, and Penta 3 coverage of the geographic areas covered by the Expanded Programme on Immunization, which stood at 43% in 2017, rose to 73% in 2018. The Penta 1/Penta 3 dropout rate remains high at 26%.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 57 of the concluding observations

103. Without any intervention, the rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV ranges from 15% to 35% if the child is not breastfed. However, it can reach between 30% and 45% if there is a long period of breastfeeding. Transmission can occur during pregnancy, labour, delivery and breastfeeding.

104. The Programme for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission is an essential prevention tool that comprises four pillars:

- Pillar 1: Primary prevention of HIV infection among women of childbearing age
- Pillar 2: Prevention of unintended pregnancies among women infected with HIV
- Pillar 3: Prevention of HIV transmission from mothers living with HIV to their children
- Pillar 4: Provision of appropriate treatment, care and support to women living with HIV and their children and families

105. In 2021, a total of 242 health facilities in the Central African Republic provided services to prevent the transmission of HIV from infected mothers to their children. The services provided by the facilities included screening during prenatal consultations, the initiation of antiretroviral therapy for women who had been newly diagnosed with HIV, screening in the delivery room and antiretroviral prophylaxis for children born to HIV-positive mothers.

106. The table below shows the number, by region, of health facilities providing clinical services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV during prenatal consultations and childbirth.

<i>Region</i>	<i>No. of health facilities</i>
1	39
2	65
3	40

<i>Region</i>	<i>No. of health facilities</i>
4	44
5	4
6	25
7	25

107. As noted above, 137,537 women received prenatal consultations in 2021, representing a prenatal consultation coverage rate of nearly 82%. A total of 125,377 pregnant women were tested for HIV, and 876 women already knew that they were HIV-positive at the time of their prenatal consultation. Of those women whose HIV status was unknown and who were tested, 95% or more received their results in each health region, with the exception of regions No. 4 and No. 6, in which the rates were 87% and 83%, respectively. Nationally, however, only 93% of pregnant women who did not know their status and were tested during prenatal consultations received their results.

108. The prevalence of HIV among all women who received prenatal consultations in 2021 was 4.7%. However, there were significant differences from one health region to another, with a prevalence, at the time of the prenatal consultation, of 6.5% in Bangui (region No. 7) and prevalences of over 5% in the northwest and west of the country (regions No. 3 and No. 2). The central part of the country, comprising regions No. 1 and No. 4, was less affected by HIV.

109. According to the national guidelines, women who test positive for HIV should receive long-term antiretroviral therapy under option B+. Under that treatment regimen, which was developed by the World Health Organization, HIV-positive pregnant women receive routine triple therapy and breastfeed their infants, who receive antiretroviral prophylaxis.

110. Only region 4 had good coverage with respect to prevention of mother-to-child transmission under option B+, with 98% of eligible women started on antiretroviral therapy. In other regions, the proportion of women who tested positive and were started on antiretroviral therapy – 75% – was insufficient, representing a missed opportunity to control the HIV epidemic at the national level. In total, half of the women who should have been provided with antiretroviral therapy during their pregnancy had missed that opportunity.

111. The rate of retention in care of HIV-positive women until childbirth is estimated by calculating the ratio of the number of HIV-positive women who gave birth at health facilities to the total number of women seen in prenatal consultations. This ratio is likely an overestimation, as the relevant database is not sufficiently detailed to permit women who did not receive prenatal consultations but tested positive in the delivery room to be excluded from the calculation. However, this overestimation is likely to be minor, as, according to the national health information system, only 4% of women who gave birth at health facilities had not received a prenatal consultation in 2021. While not exhaustive, these data provide an indication of the scale of the issue.

112. A total of 29% of the 6,492 HIV-positive women who had received a prenatal consultation gave birth at a health facility. Only region No. 5 had a high rate of retention in care of HIV-positive women until childbirth. However, this is likely an error, given the other figures reported for this region. The rate of retention in care of HIV-positive women until childbirth was relatively high in regions No. 4 and No. 7, with rates of 42% and 31%, respectively.

113. The prevalence of cases of syphilis recorded in prenatal consultations varied substantially by region. It peaked at 5.9% in region No. 3 and 4.0% in region No. 2. The lowest prevalence rates were recorded in region No. 4, with a rate of 1.2%, and region No. 6, with a rate of 1.8%.

114. A total of 56% of HIV-positive women had received family planning services following childbirth. However, family planning coverage rates for women living with HIV who had given birth varied substantially by region. In region No. 4, the rate was more than 100%, indicating a probable reporting error. Region No. 6 similarly had a high coverage rate

of 90%. Although, in most regions, more than half of those women infected with HIV had received family planning services, region No. 3, which had a coverage rate of 47%, and Bangui, which had a coverage rate of 39%, did not offer most women infected with HIV post-partum contraception.

115. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) diagnostic tests performed on children born to HIV-positive mothers at 6 weeks of age make it possible to identify children infected with HIV at an early stage and start providing them with early antiretroviral therapy to improve their chances of survival. A total of 1,035 infants born to HIV-positive mothers who gave birth in a hospital setting received early infant HIV testing, representing 52% of the infants exposed to HIV who were born at a health facility. Although newborns exposed to HIV underwent this test in region No. 4, as did 77% of those born in region No. 7, only 4% of newborns exposed to HIV received the test in region No. 5. In this region, all five of the newborns who were tested were found to be HIV-positive, suggesting that testing had been based solely on the presence of suggestive symptoms. In general, the PCR test positivity rate was lower in regions with a high PCR testing coverage rate for newborns exposed to HIV, with positivity rates of 7% in region No. 4 and 11% in region No. 7. Nevertheless, 152 newborns tested positive following hospital births in situations where transmission could have been prevented. The number of children accidentally infected despite the provision of medical care to the mother could be twice as high, since only half the newborns exposed to HIV were tested.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 59 of the concluding observations

116. The Government has introduced the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, the aim of which is to consolidate peace, restore the social contract between the Government and the people and ensure economic recovery. The Plan has been in operation since 2017 and is currently in its second phase.

117. The Plan provides for poverty reduction strategies that incorporate the perspective of children's rights. This has enabled the Government to mobilize resources totalling \$3.502 million, 56% of which has been disbursed to fund 745 completed programmes and projects with a focus, inter alia, on child survival and development, in particular the decree establishing targeted free healthcare for children under 5 years of age and programmes with aims such as the empowerment of women and girls and the provision of support to girls who are survivors of gender-based violence and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 61 of the concluding observations

118. Act No. 97.014 of 10 December 1997 on the education system establishes that primary education is compulsory and free for all school-age children without distinction.

119. In practice, parents are not charged any fees when their child enters school, apart from the contribution of CFAF 1,800 or CFAF 2,450 per family depending on education level.

120. The Government, acting through the Ministry of Education, with support from partners such as the World Food Programme, the World Bank and UNICEF, has put in place a number of school retention programmes, especially for girls. These are:

- The School Feeding Programme (of the country's 3,367 State schools, 1,355 have benefited from the Programme, representing 144,000 children out of a total of 1,237,988 at the primary level).
- The Accelerated Education Programme, the purpose of which is to bring children who have dropped out back to school and ensure their continued education. The Programme is in the pilot phase and currently involves 350 schools in six prefectures.
- A programme to make education accessible to girls. This programme is part of the MAÏNGO project, which is currently being launched, and is aimed at reducing the

financial barriers that impede girls from attending school by providing them with education grants from grade 4 to grade 10.

121. A total of 375 primary schools and 54 junior secondary schools have been selected for a four-year period in connection with the programme.

122. Regarding the quality of teaching, the ministry's 2017 sectoral plan provides for the training of 16,000 teachers by 2030. With the expansion of the regional pedagogical centres, efforts are under way to train 2,000 teachers per year, or 100 teachers per pedagogical centre.

123. Another 2,000 teachers are to be recruited by early April 2023, following which a second round of recruitment will automatically begin.

124. With support from UNICEF, 5,000 teachers received capacity-building in the provision of psychosocial assistance.

125. In addition, communities have received training on the SAFE SCHOOL initiative, a strategy to protect school facilities from attacks and occupation.

126. Regarding attacks on school facilities, article 180 of the Child Protection Code prohibits all attacks against and occupation of schools and hospitals and the blocking of humanitarian aid, as they undermine the best interests of the child.

127. Paragraph 2 of this article establishes that any person found guilty of perpetrating such an attack or occupation or of obstructing humanitarian aid to the detriment of the best interests of the child is liable to between 10 and 20 years' imprisonment and/or a fine of between CFAF 5 million and CFAF 20 million.

128. For its part, MINUSCA, in partnership with the Government, frequently holds training and awareness-raising sessions for leaders of armed forces and groups on the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

129. There are plans to build 1,133 classrooms, to be allocated as follows:

- Preschool: 89 classrooms
- Primary: 800 classrooms
- Junior secondary: 244 classrooms

130. The classrooms will be built across 12 prefectures.

131. A total of 231 classrooms are currently under construction and are scheduled to be completed by March 2023. The remaining 902 will be built in 2024.

132. Under the emergency basic education support project, there are plans to provide 1,050 classrooms, 410 latrines, 18,900 study benches, 1,050 teachers' desks and 1,050 chairs across six prefectures.

133. The Emergency Programme for Sustainable Recovery for the period 2014–2016, adopted in July 2014 by the Transitional Government and subsequently updated, placed particular emphasis on education, specifically:

- Early childhood development
- The consolidation of universal primary education
- Increased availability and quality at other levels of education
- The development of literacy programmes
- The development of short vocational training courses
- The professionalization of the various streams of higher education
- The effective implementation of the bachelor's, master's and doctorate reform

134. Implementation of the Programme is continuing with support from the World Bank.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 65 of the concluding observations

135. In the context of the most recent military and political crisis to have shaken the country, internally displaced and refugee children are receiving community support through the assistance provided by NGOs working in emergency situations.

136. Refugee and unaccompanied children are immediately placed with temporary foster families. They receive protection from the community and NGOs. The process of reuniting them with their families is managed by the International Committee of the Red Cross in partnership with the Government and all NGO stakeholders.

137. With the support of humanitarian organizations, temporary transit centres have been established to provide psychological assistance to children who have been victims of or witnesses to atrocities during conflict.

138. In addition, an early warning system has been established in communities to identify boys and girls at an age where they are at risk of being recruited or raped. Parents take precautions from the earliest signs of crisis to protect their children from recruitment and kidnapping.

139. The Government, through the Ministry for Humanitarian Action and with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has implemented a project to support returnees. As a result, approximately 20,000 people affected by conflict have been repatriated since 2017. These refugee repatriation operations are ongoing.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 67 of the concluding observations

140. At the initiative of the international community and the International Support Group on the Central African Republic, the Government and armed groups entered into a political peace agreement, which was negotiated in Khartoum and signed in Bangui on 6 February 2019. Furthermore, another peace initiative, known as the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic (the Luanda road map), has been undertaken with support from the Heads of State of the Economic Community of Central African States. The goal of these various peace agreements is not only the complete surrender of armed groups but also a definitive end to hostilities and to the involvement of children in armed conflict.

141. Moreover, the legislature of the Central African Republic has made the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups a punishable offence under various laws in force, including the Criminal Code and article 179 of the Child Protection Code.

142. Paragraph 2 of that article establishes that perpetrators of such acts are liable to between 10 and 20 years' imprisonment and/or a fine of between CFAF 5 million and CFAF 20 million.

143. With regard to coordination, the Government, in collaboration with partners such as the World Bank and the Department of State of the United States of America, has established an implementation unit for the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. Unfortunately, a children's component was not incorporated into this programme owing to a lack of funding.

144. However, a UNICEF-funded programme of activities to prevent child recruitment and support the reintegration of children involved with armed forces and groups in the country has been operating since 2014, in collaboration with NGOs.

145. The programme covers the centre, north-east, south-east and north-west of the country, as well as the capital, Bangui. Through the programme, between 2014 and 2021, some 17,038 children involved with armed forces and groups, including 4,517 girls, were removed from their situation and provided with support.

146. The cost of funding the programme amounts to approximately \$35 million, which is provided by more than 20 donors.

147. In addition, a formative evaluation, commissioned by the UNICEF regional office, of the programme for the prevention of the recruitment of children involved with armed forces and groups in the Central African Republic for the period 2014–2021 was conducted with the aim of strengthening initiatives for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children who have left armed groups with a view to providing them with the necessary assistance for their physical and psychological recovery, as well as for their education and vocational training.

148. In the same context, in 2021 and 2022, a national strategy on the prevention of violence against children in periods of conflict and a national plan to prevent the most serious violations of children's rights in periods of conflict, outlining several areas for priority action, was developed and made available. However, implementation of the strategy and plan is ongoing, owing to the difficulty of mobilizing the necessary resources.

149. Similarly, the 2023 action plan of the ministry responsible for child protection includes actions aimed at achieving this goal.

150. The Special Criminal Court was established pursuant to Act No. 15.003 of 3 June 2015. To date, it has heard more than 300 cases, issued 54 arrest warrants and tried a landmark case involving a mass crime. Its mandate was renewed for a period of five years pursuant to Act No. 23.001 of 9 January 2023.

151. The country ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 27 September 2017.

152. Furthermore, it should be noted that the National Commission to Combat the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons was formally established pursuant to Act No. 21.020 of 7 August 2021.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 69 of the concluding observations

153. The infant mortality reduction programme, which is part of the national health development policy for the period 2019–2030, takes into account all segments of the national population, including minorities and Indigenous groups.

154. The same is true of the birth registration programme developed by the ministry responsible for territorial administration in partnership with UNICEF.

155. The Central African Republic ratified the International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) in June 2010.

156. At the national level, there are organizations such as Cooperazione Internazionale, Observatoire centrafricain des droits de l'homme and Maison de la Femme et des Pygmées that hold periodic awareness-raising activities on human rights for the benefit of those minorities.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 72 of the concluding observations

157. The Central African Republic has duly ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), article 2 (3) of which establishes that: "The minimum age specified in pursuance of paragraph 1 of this Article shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years."

158. However, the Convention itself contains a flexibility clause in article 2 (4), which states that: "Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 3 of this Article, a Member whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may, after consultation with the organisations of employers and workers concerned, where such exist, initially specify a minimum age of 14 years."

159. The Convention therefore recognizes that the intention is not to eliminate all work performed by children under the age of 18 years and that certain types of work that are

appropriate to children's age and carried out with adequate protection can be conducive to their development. As a result, the Convention has several "flexibility clauses" that make it adaptable in a number of respects. It is in this context that some developing countries, including the Central African Republic, have chosen initially to set a minimum age of 14 years as a transitional measure while they work to strengthen their education systems and economies. Of the 171 member States that have ratified the Convention to date, 51 have set the minimum age at 14 years, a decision made following consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations. In these countries, children are legally permitted to start working at the age of 14 years provided that they do not perform hazardous work and have completed their compulsory education.

160. However, a bill to bring these provisions into line with those of the Child Protection Code, which sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years, has been drafted and is in the process of adoption by the parliament.

161. Regarding efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, especially in the agriculture and mining sectors, it should be noted that the right to education for all is an obligation under the Constitution of 30 March 2016, as well as a national priority. Accordingly, efforts have been made to renovate school infrastructure – even in those areas most affected by conflict – to build the capacity of teaching staff and to assign officials to all school inspectorates to organize and coordinate educational activities.

162. At the strategic level, in May 2020, the Government approved the Education Sector Plan for the period 2020–2029, which places an emphasis on assessment of the extent of access to inclusive, quality education, the impact of recent conflicts on access to education, governance reform and the financing of the education system.

163. In the legal sphere, pursuant to Decree No. 20.077 of 13 March 2020, a national committee to combat trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic, which will also work on combating the worst forms of child labour – was established under the direct authority of the President of the Republic. Capacity-building among stakeholders and awareness-raising among economic and social actors have been conducted to deter the commission of offences against children. In addition, the Government:

- Promulgated Act No. 21.003 of 1 September 2021 authorizing the ratification of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), aimed at eliminating violence and harassment in the workplace, and organized a number of awareness-raising campaigns
- Adopted a national strategy to combat gender-based violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as a strategy to combat child marriage
- Promulgated a law on trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic
- Promulgated, in 2020, the Child Protection Code

164. Regarding the plan to reintegrate children involved in the worst forms of child labour into school, a number of persons, including children from armed groups, have been demobilized and reintegrated into economic and social life. Since 2014, the Government, with support from UNICEF, MINUSCA and other partners, has freed more than 15,000 children, 30% of whom are girls, from armed forces and groups. Many of those children have received training at the Office of the High Commissioner of the National Youth Pioneers and have gone on to establish their own businesses. More than 1,000 out-of-school young persons have completed – or continue to be enrolled in – any one of 12 trade qualification programmes offered by the apprenticeship development support project. In 2021, 2,000 children affected by violence, exploitation and abuse were released by armed groups.

165. Furthermore, in 2022, a project was undertaken to map practical training centres in the locations of the former apprenticeship centres for artisans and rural workers.¹

¹ Maps were produced by Enabel, the Belgian agency for international cooperation, and MINUSCA, respectively.

166. The Government is exploring ways to reintegrate unaccompanied or separated children into their families and communities, in addition to the establishment of alternative family-based services for such children.

167. The implementation of these various programmes and initiatives was made possible by the relevant technical assistance provided by UNICEF and ILO as part of their collaboration with the Government to help children.

168. Following the 110th International Labour Conference in Geneva in May–June 2022, the Government requested the support of ILO in implementing its three-year programme to combat child labour and its worst forms. A workplan has been adopted in collaboration with ILO and is currently being implemented.

169. In addition, in 2022, the Government and UNICEF signed an annual workplan aimed at strengthening social protection in general and the resilience of children in particular.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 73 of the concluding observations

170. In 2007, the Government conducted a study to estimate the number of children living or working on the streets. The study indicated that approximately 6,000 children – 3,000 in Bangui and 3,000 outside the capital – are in this situation. The study also revealed that these children find themselves living or working on the streets primarily as a result of family breakdowns, ill-treatment, placement in the care of third parties, the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty.

171. With the resurgence of the crisis, there has been an increase in the number of children in this situation. As a result, the ministry responsible for child protection, in partnership with UNICEF and other child protection organizations, is exploring options for establishing an appropriate response mechanism. To this end, a new study is being planned to update the relevant data and identify priority areas of activity.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 75 of the concluding observations

172. After becoming a party, in 2006, to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Central African Republic took steps to adapt its legislation and establish a mechanism to combat trafficking in persons, including children.

173. Following the prohibition of trafficking in children under article 151 of the Criminal Code, it was established as a separate offence under Act No. 20.014 of 15 June 2020, on the Child Protection Code, and Act No. 22.020 of 28 September 2022 on Trafficking in Persons.

174. The Government, fully aware that the trafficking and abduction of children and similar practices constitute one of the key components of trafficking in persons, established, pursuant to Decree No. 20.077 of 13 March 2020, a national committee to combat trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic under the direct authority of the President of the Republic, the Head of State.

175. A second-generation action plan, accompanied by an operational plan for the period 2022–2023, is currently being implemented and will enable the Government and all stakeholders to continue implementing a strategic vision centred on four key areas, namely (i) prevention; (ii) protection; (iii) prosecution; and (iv) partnership.

176. Meanwhile, in 2020 and 2021, the national committee to combat trafficking in persons carried out several activities aimed at raising awareness, building the capacity of actors and, in particular, expanding the operations of the joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence against women and children established pursuant to Decree No. 15.007 of 8 January 2015 to certain cities outside the capital.

177. Article 7 of the Decree establishes that the joint rapid response unit is responsible for “preventing and punishing all forms of sexual violence committed against women and children, regardless of the context or the social or marital status of those individuals, including widows and orphans”. This initiative is part of an effort to bring social, law enforcement and judicial services closer to children and victims of gender-based violence throughout the country.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 77 of the concluding observations

178. A section of the central prison is reserved for children. Social workers are assigned to the section ensure that children receive appropriate follow-up support. NGOs also provide support due to staff shortages.

179. Juvenile courts are presided over by ordinary court judges. A special prosecutor’s office for children has been established within the Bangui court of major jurisdiction (*tribunal de grande instance*). However, there remains a need to train judges that specialize in juvenile cases, as there are no such judges in the country.

180. The Child Protection Code provides for a diversion procedure, but leaves it to the judge’s discretion to determine whether it should be applied.

181. Two presidential pardons were granted in 2021 and 2022 for children in conflict with the law who had been imprisoned. These releases were followed by referrals to appropriate centres to prepare the children for family reunification.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraph 79 of the concluding observations

182. The Child Protection Code contains provisions relating to the Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

Information on action taken in follow-up to paragraphs 80–82 of the concluding observations

183. The Central African Republic, recognizing the importance of all instruments related to child protection – to most of which it is already a party – is committed to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. For example, titles II and III of the Child Protection Code, which contain provisions regarding children’s participation in all proceedings concerning them, including the possibility of bringing cases before international courts and tribunals, pave the way for the ratification of the Optional Protocol. Advocacy efforts in this regard are currently under way.

184. With regard to cooperation with respect to regional instruments, particularly with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, it should be noted that the Central African Republic has become a party to most regional instruments and has even begun the process of domesticating them. The Government takes note of the need to enhance this cooperation.

III. Progress made by the Central African Republic since the submission of its second periodic report

185. It should be noted that, despite the recurring security issues that the Central African Republic has faced in recent years, significant progress has been made in terms of sectoral, legislative and institutional policies, which have contributed to the promotion and protection of children’s rights in the country.

186. In terms of child protection policies and programmes, the following steps have been taken:

- The ministry responsible for child protection revised the national child protection policy (2018)
- The ministry responsible for health adopted the national health policy for the period 2019–2030
- The ministry responsible for national education adopted the national Education Sector Plan for the period 2020–2029, which includes four new priority areas, namely:
 - Increased access to education and training and improved equity between boys and girls
 - Recruitment and training of a sufficient number of teachers
 - Improved quality of teaching
 - Reform of the governance and funding of the education system

187. Additional developments with respect to policies and programmes include:

- The adoption of the national strategy to combat gender-based sexual violence and the related action plan
- The adoption of the third National Health Development Plan, which promotes free healthcare for mothers and children under the age of 5 years
- The continuation of operations to remove children involved with armed groups from those situations and reintegrate them into society and the economy
- The designation of focal points within ministerial departments for combating trafficking in persons
- The conduct, where necessary, of criminal hearings and trials of alleged perpetrators of trafficking in persons
- The construction of the Maison de l’Espoir, a temporary shelter for victims of gender-based violence and trafficking in persons
- The conduct of a national consultation on certain contentious issues, such as dowries, polygamy and inheritance
- The review of the Family Code with a view to strengthening legal provisions that support the protection of women and children

188. Action taken by the Government includes:

- The conduct of a study accompanied by an action plan to prevent grave forms of violation against children in periods of conflict
- The continuation of the process of demobilizing children involved with armed groups (specify the progress made)
- The provision of support for the drafting of the rules of evidence and procedure of the Special Criminal Court
- The provision of support for the establishment of a mechanism for the protection of victims and witnesses before the Special Criminal Court
- The mapping of the actors involved in the fight against trafficking in persons
- The provision, for victims of gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, of the 4040 hotline managed by the Danish Refugee Council and the 4044 hotline managed by MINUSCA
- Efforts to restore State authority throughout the country, as reflected by the redeployment of the defence and security forces and government services at the local level, including those responsible for justice, health and education.

189. At the institutional level, the following measures have been taken:
- The creation of a national council for the promotion and protection of children
 - The establishment of a ministry responsible for the advancement of gender equality and the protection of families and children
 - The establishment, by decree, of a national office for the coordination of the fight against trafficking in persons under the authority of the Head of State
 - The designation of the minister responsible for child protection as the government focal point for the coordination of efforts to combat trafficking in persons
 - The strengthening of the minors unit
 - The expansion of the operations of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children, particularly in Nana-Mambéré
 - The establishment of a mechanism for the protection of victims and witnesses by the Special Criminal Court
190. Partners have taken the following action:
- The mapping and regular documentation of human rights violations
 - The provision, by MINUSCA, of support for the implementation of a plan to prevent grave forms of violation against children in periods of conflict
 - The implementation of a project to map practical training centres in the locations of the former apprenticeship centres for artisans and rural workers; the provision of technical and financial support for the implementation of the first- and second-generation action plans to combat trafficking in persons
 - The provision, by UNICEF, of support to the programme for the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children involved with armed forces and groups
191. The following legislative and regulatory measures have been taken:
- The promulgation of Act No. 22.015 on trafficking in persons
 - The revision of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure in 2010
 - The revision of the Family Code, particularly with regard to the recognition of the rights of women and children in relation to de facto unions
 - The adoption of the Act authorizing the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
 - The adoption of Act No. 20.014, on the Child Protection Code, which is fully consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - The adoption of the Legal Aid Act
 - The adoption of the rules of evidence and procedure of the Special Criminal Court responsible for prosecuting and convicting the perpetrators of crimes and acts of violence against children
 - The amendment of the Labour Code and social legislation, taking into account the need to protect children from the worst forms of child labour
 - The adoption, by the National Assembly, of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)
192. In terms of the environment, family and culture, the following action was taken:
- Affirmation of the child's place in the community
 - The revision of the provisions regarding the minimum age for marriage, which was raised from 16 to 18 years in the Family Code
 - The extension of the deadline for birth registration from 30 to 180 days

- The initiation of the process to establish the national council for the promotion and protection of children
- The affirmation and consideration of the best interests of the child in all programmes and projects initiated by the different ministerial departments

193. The following challenges and constraints have been encountered in efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Central African Republic:

- The resurgence of military and political crises
 - Ongoing insecurity in certain parts of the country due to the actions of armed groups
 - Failure by political actors and armed groups to comply with agreements
 - Threats made against local government officials responsible for providing basic social services, including healthcare, education and road repair services
 - Displacement of families owing to insecurity
 - Low levels of resource mobilization by NGOs working to provide support to people in distress
 - The insufficient duration of projects for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children involved with armed forces and groups
 - Limited use of prenatal consultation services by women in the Central African Republic
 - Persistent sociocultural constraints
 - The situation with regard to girls' education and technical training
 - The channelling of donor funding to international organizations
 - The paucity of the State's own resources
 - The limited budget allocated to the child protection sector under the Finance Act
 - The lack of qualified personnel
 - Difficult working conditions faced by civil servants and government employees
 - The weak level of coordination
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