

Central African Republic

Country Overview

Politics

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a presidential republic in Central Africa. Independent candidate, Faustin-Archange Touadera was re-elected president in December 2020 amid violence between government and rebel forces.¹ Although the government and some international partners alleged the elections were credible, some opposition groups as well as international human rights organizations do not agree, citing voting fraud and widespread violence.² CAR has a long history of political instability with the most recent coup occurring in March 2013.³ The next presidential election is scheduled to take place in 2025.

Economy

The World Bank classified CAR as a low-income country.⁴ The civil wars in 2012 and 2013 led to an economic collapse, but CAR's GDP has been steadily increasing since 2015 accumulating to 2.38 billion USD in 2020.⁵ While economic activity slowed in 2020 as a result the COVID-19 pandemic, it remained positive at 0.8 percent, due in large part to the agricultural sector's performance, particularly in cotton.⁶ Of CAR's labor force of approximately 1.9 million,⁷ an estimated 77.3 percent were employed in agriculture in 2019.⁸ CAR's agriculture sector plus its forestry and mining (diamonds) sectors form the backbone of the economy. Diamonds, precious stones and metals, vehicles, wood, machinery, and railway locomotives were key exports in 2020.⁹

Development institutions have financed infrastructure projects to improve trade as well as fiscal management projects to improve transparency and economic recovery in CAR resulting in some improvements.¹⁰ Ongoing security challenges and post-electoral disputes have hindered economic development along with its landlocked geography, poor transportation system, and unskilled workforce.

Social/Human Development

The Central African Republic ranked second to last—188 out of 189 countries—on the Human Development Index (HDI) with a score of 0.397 in 2019, placing it in the low human development category.¹¹ CAR's HDI score is below average for its development category as well as for the average of Sub-Saharan Africa.¹² As of 2018, the World Bank estimated that 37.4 percent of the country's adult population (age 15 and above) was literate.¹³ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that as of December 2021 there were 691,791 internally displaced persons (IDPs) within CAR¹⁴ – a number that has



been steadily increasing compared to 590,00 persons in 2019.¹⁵ An estimated 33 percent of internally displaced persons live in IDP sites where they are susceptible to security risks by armed groups. According to the U.S. Department of State, an estimated one-third of internally displaced persons at IDP sites reported being concerned about their safety in 2020.¹⁶ According to the World Bank, 2.8 million people, more than half of the population, were expected to need urgent humanitarian assistance in 2021, with 1.9 million in acute need. Around 80 percent of the population lives in multidimensional poverty.¹⁷

There are nine predominant ethnic groups in CAR: Baya (28.8 percent), Banda (22.9 percent), Mandjia (9.9 percent), Sara (7.9 percent), M'Baka-Bantu (7.9 percent), Arab-Fulani (6 percent), Mbum (6 percent), Ngbanki (5.5 percent), and Zande-Nzakara (3 percent). The remaining two percent of the population is from other ethnic groups.¹⁸ The population is largely Christian at 89 percent of the population, with 9 percent Muslim, 1 percent of folk religion, and 1 percent unaffiliated. The majority Christian faith is strongly connected with animistic beliefs and practices.¹⁹

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2021)

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2

According to the 2021 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, trafficking risk among children may be found in export supply chains including agriculture, artisanal gold, and diamond mining.

Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/central-african-republic/>

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

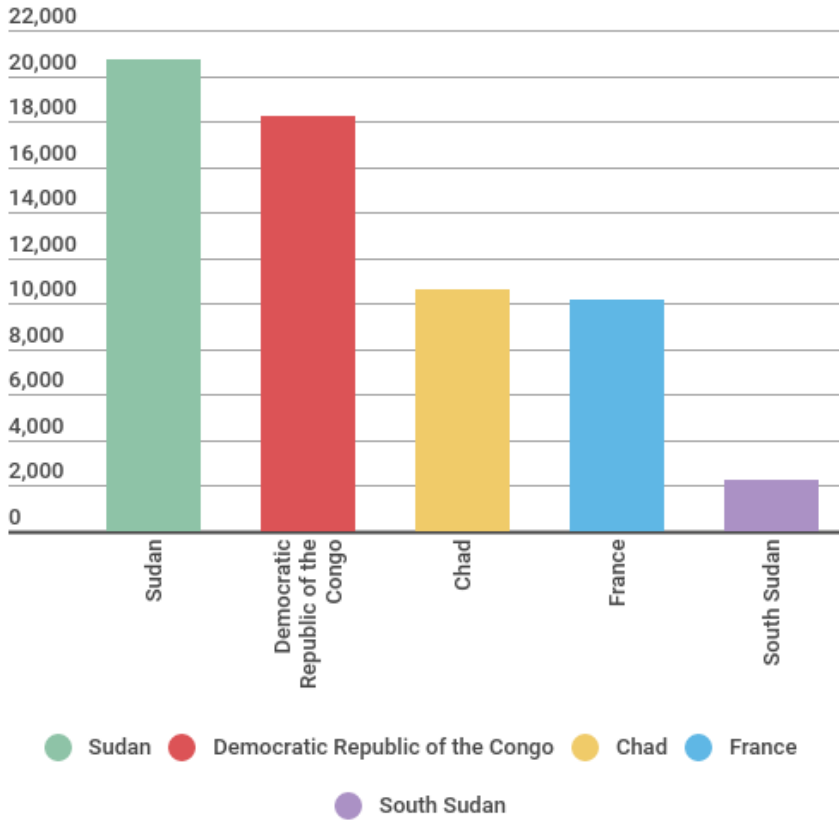
CAR has negative net migration of -3.28 migrants per 1,000 people²⁰. As of 2020, around 1.8 percent (88,500) of CAR's total population were migrants.²¹

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), among the 1.9 million persons of concern in CAR, 57 percent (1.1 million) of these are stateless persons as of 2021.²²

The largest identifiable countries of origin for migrants to CAR are Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, France, and South Sudan.²³ However, the largest portion of migrants to CAR are from "Other" countries at 24,881 people, meaning the origin data is unknown or incompatible with United Nations' standardization.



Migrants to Central African Republic

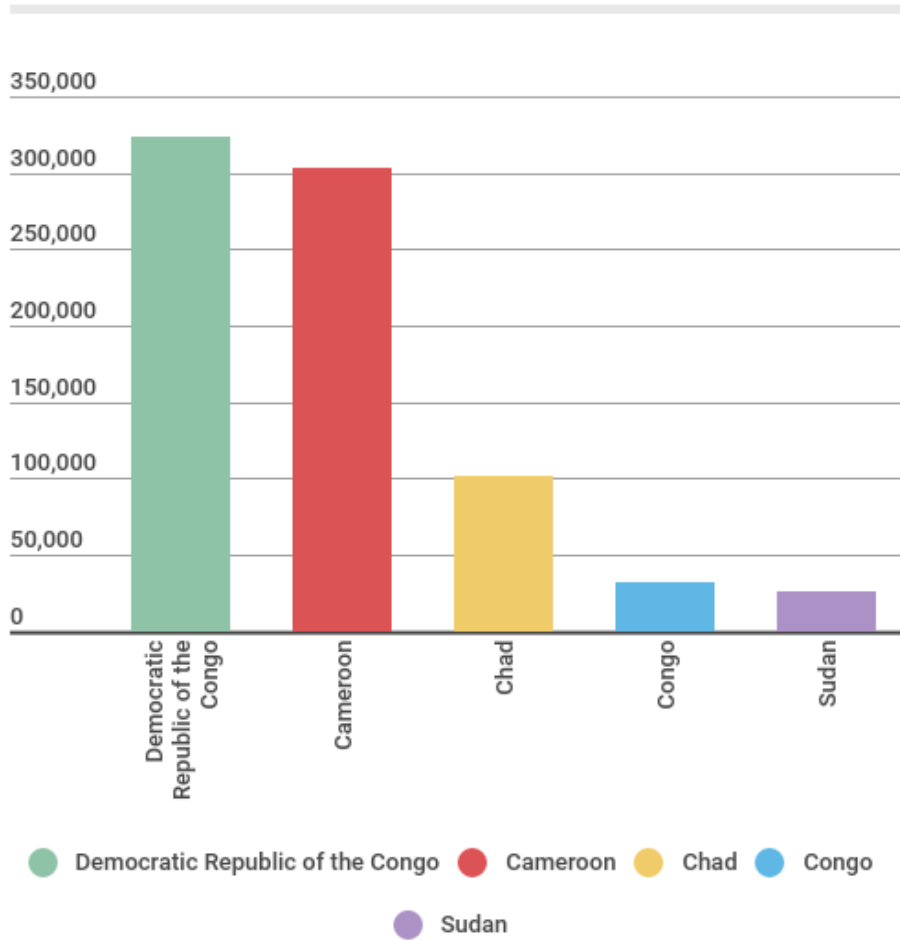


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The top destination countries for migrants from CAR are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, and Sudan.²⁵



Migrants from Central African Republic



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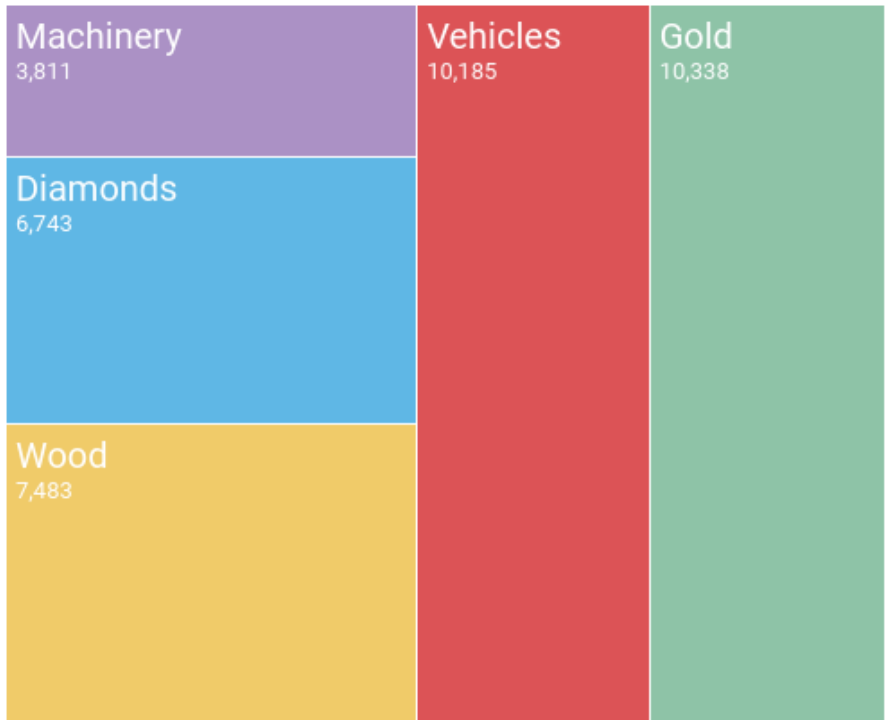
Exports and Trade

The top exports from Central African Republic in 2020 were gold, vehicles or vehicle parts, wood, diamonds, and machinery.²⁷ The official diamond export statistics are thought to largely underestimate the extent of gold and diamond production due to smuggling.²⁸



Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)

2020

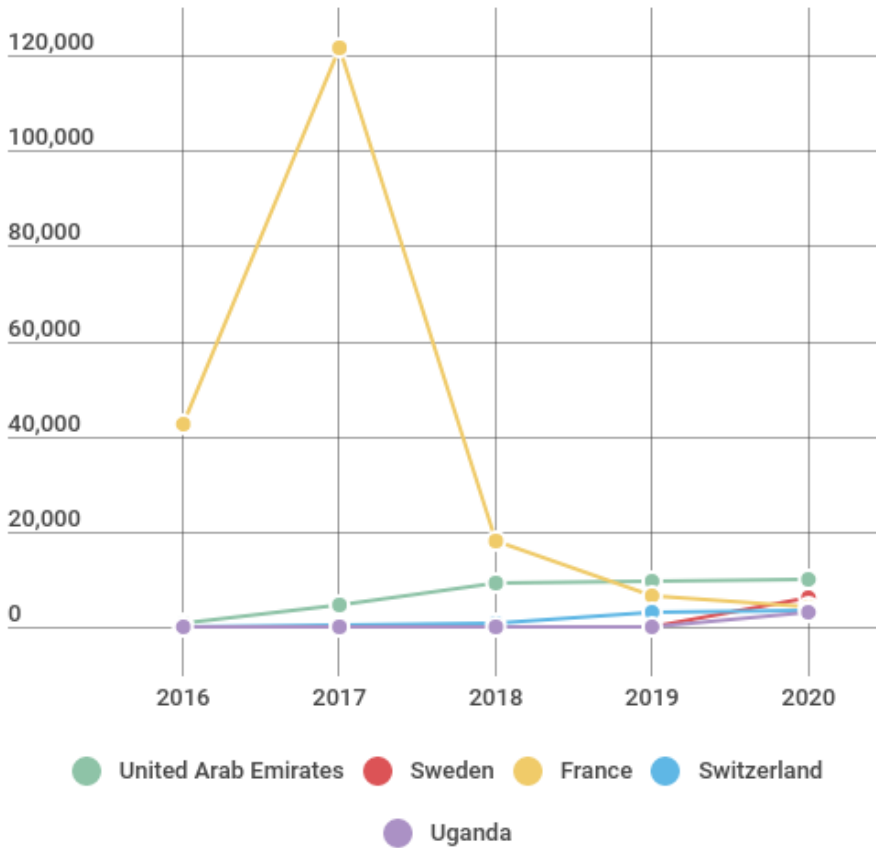


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The top importing countries from Central African Republic in 2020 were United Arab Emirates, Sweden, France, Switzerland, and Uganda.³⁰ China also follows closely behind Uganda.



**Central African Republic Export Partners
(USD/Thousands)**



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Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights

Freedom of Association

The U.S. Department of State reports that the CAR government generally respects the constitutionally provided freedom of association, but that a law prohibits nonpolitical organizations from uniting for political purposes. Several categories of workers including senior state employees, security forces, and



foreign workers who have been in the country for less than two years are prohibited from forming or joining unions without authorization. Only a small portion of the workforce, mainly civil servants, exercised their right to join a union.³²

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) rates Central African Republic at 5+ in its 2021 Annual Global Rights Index, the highest risk score on their scale. 5+ indicates there are “no guarantee of rights due to the breakdown of the law”.³³

Working Conditions

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Central African Republic’s monthly minimum wage for the public sector at XAF 35,000 (USD 60) as of 2019—the same rate since at least 2015.³⁴ Minimum wage for the private sector varies by sector and type of work; however, the minimum wage for all sectors is below the World Bank’s standard for extreme poverty.³⁵ This minimum wage only applies to the formal sector, which leaves the wide-ranging informal sector—the bulk of economic activity—almost wholly unprotected by minimum wage standards.³⁶ The ILO reports that only 1.4 percent of the total population in CAR is covered by at least one social security protection benefit.³⁷ The law sets a workweek of 40 hours a week, while household employees can work 52 hours per week. Additionally, the law sets out general health and safety standards, but these are not clearly defined. Furthermore, labor violations are common in all sectors, particularly mining and agriculture, as the government does not effectively enforce legislation around working conditions.³⁸

Discrimination

The law states that it is illegal in CAR to discriminate based on race, national or social origin, gender, opinions, or beliefs. However, the U.S. Department of State reports that this anti-discriminatory law is not effectively enforced.³⁹ Additionally, there are many identifying factors that are not prohibited under the law, such as age, disability, gender identity, language, sexual orientation, social status, and HIV-positive status. Discrimination against women, minority ethnic groups, and migrant workers is reported to have occurred throughout the country.⁴⁰

Forced Labor

CAR law prohibits and criminalizes forced labor, but the U.S. Department of State reports that resources, inspections, remediation, and penalties are inadequate. The presence of armed groups throughout the country has increased the prevalence of forced labor in CAR.⁴¹ Additionally, fraudulent labor recruiters attract migrants from neighboring Chad and Libya to forcibly work in CAR’s mining sector.⁴²



Child Labor

The law prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14, but children as young as 12 can be employed in types of light work in agriculture. Children under 18 cannot, by law, perform hazardous work. Children are specifically prohibited from mining work by the mining code.⁴³ Despite this, child labor occurs in many sectors of the CAR's economy, particularly mining and agriculture. The United Nations estimates 14,000 children work in CAR's gold and diamond mines as of 2018.⁴⁴ Children commonly work in artisanal gold and diamond mining often in dangerous conditions.⁴⁵ In rural areas, children labored in agricultural work harvesting peanuts and cassava, and also engaged in fishing.⁴⁶

Several indicators exacerbate the risk of child labor in CAR according to the U.S. Department of State. Since the minimum age of 12 is lower than the compulsory age for education, some children may be encouraged to abandon education for work.⁴⁷ The State Department also reported that the CAR government lacked adequate enforcement of child labor laws, with little resources and insufficient penalties for violations.⁴⁸

Internal conflict and the subsequent recruitment of child soldiers by armed groups increases the vulnerabilities to children. In 2020, the government worked with partners to organize the demobilization and reintegration of hundreds of children recruited by armed groups, and increased efforts towards public awareness and training for officials. It also enacted the country's Child Protection Code (CPC). However, victim assistance remains weak. A trafficker has not been convicted since 2017, and the government itself violated the CPC through detention of child soldiers as well as security forces use of children at checkpoints.⁴⁹

Civil Society Organizations

The U.S. Department of State reports the government denied multiple requests for protests by civil society groups in 2020. Members of organizations have been arrested by police during demonstrations.⁵⁰ According to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), civil society organizations are highly politicized and often associated with and manipulated by political actors.⁵¹

Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants



Convention	Status
ILO 29 Forced Labour	In force
ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise	In force
ILO 98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labour	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force
ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies	Not ratified
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labour	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified

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Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

CAR ranked sixth in the world in the 2021 Fragile States Index with a score of 107.0 placing it in the “High Alert” Category.⁵³ Armed groups act as the de facto government in many regions of the country and are reported to carry out human rights violations.⁵⁴ Parties to the conflict have carried out numerous human rights violations including arbitrary killings of civilians, torture, abductions, sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, and the use of child soldiers.⁵⁵ Despite the government and 14 armed groups signing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR-CAR) in 2019, political, economic, religious, and ethnic violence continues throughout the country.⁵⁶ In 2020, armed groups joined forces to create the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) specifically to disrupt the 2020-2021 presidential elections resulting in violence to government officials and UN peacekeepers.⁵⁷

Level of Crime and Violence

The U.S. State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security reports that the high level of criminal activity in CAR can be attributed to political instability and extreme poverty, as well as a lack of licit economic opportunities for citizens. Civil unrest and violence along ethnic and familial lines is common.⁵⁸ The country had a homicide rate of 20.1 per 100,000 people as of 2016.⁵⁹



State Persecution

CAR citizenship is derived by birth or from one or both parents. The U.S. Department of State reports that birth registration is difficult in regions with little government presence, which results in low levels of birth registration and citizenship for children born in those areas. Unregistered children face restricted access to education and social services.⁶⁰

The U.S. Department of State has reported that violence by armed groups against Mbororo nomadic pastoralists is a problem, especially as other citizens view them as foreign because of their migratory patterns. Mbororo have been reported to occasionally face discrimination with regard to government services and protections. Additionally, the Ba’aka (pygmy) indigenous people are effectively “second-class citizens” and often face social and economic discrimination.⁶¹ The U.S. Department of State has reported that the Ba’aka are coerced into agricultural, domestic, and other types of labor, and often receive less remuneration for their work than prescribed by the labor code.⁶²

Level of Corruption

The U.S. Department of State reports that corruption is widespread and pervasive. Although the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government does not implement the law effectively. In 2020, no corruption cases were brought to trial.⁶³ According to the U.S. Department of State, “[c]orruption and nepotism have long been pervasive in all branches of government, and addressing public-sector corruption was difficult in view of limited government capacity.”⁶⁴ Transparency International ranked CAR 154 out of 180 countries on the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index with a score of 24 out of 100 on the Index (the score ranges from 0, “Highly Corrupt”, to 100, “Very Clean”).⁶⁵

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

The Central African Republic ranked 188 out of 189 countries on the 2020 Human Development Index with a score of 0.397, falling in the low human development category.⁶⁶ CAR’s HDI score is below average for its development category as well as for the average of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Level and Extent of Poverty

The Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index value for CAR is 0.232, a loss of 41.6 percent.⁶⁷ According to the UNDP Human Development Reports, 80.4 percent of the population is living in multidimensional poverty.⁶⁸ Of the total labor force, 82.5 percent live on less than \$3.20 (in purchasing power parity terms) a day.⁶⁹



Degree of Gender Inequality

The Central African Republic scored 0.801 on the Gender Development Index in 2019 indicating high inequalities between men and women.⁷⁰

The U.S. Department of State reports that while the formal law does not discriminate against women in inheritance and property rights, customary laws discriminate against women. Women's statutory inheritance rights are not respected, particularly in rural settings. Women in CAR experience economic and social discrimination with limited access to educational opportunities and jobs.⁷¹

Approximately 13.4 percent of the female population 25 and older have some secondary education, compared to 31.3 percent of the male population. According to the UN, 64.4 percent of the female population participate in the labor force, while 79.8 percent of the male population participate in the labor force.⁷²

Landlessness or Dispossession

The UNHCR estimated there were 691,791 internally displaced persons within CAR as of December 2021.⁷³ The State Department reports that seizure and destruction of property have occurred without due process of law, and that many internally displaced persons lack protection and access to basic services.⁷⁴

Environmental Factors

The CIA reports that CAR's environmental issues include the following: unpotable tap water, water pollution, desertification, deforestation, soil erosion, and poaching.⁷⁵ The CAR is at risk to numerous natural disasters including droughts, floods, and wildfires.⁷⁶ In 2021, flooding in CAR affected over 36,000 people.⁷⁷

Documented Trafficking and Trafficking Risk in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Forestry/Wood

Forestry/Wood Overview

The forested area comprises 35.801 percent of land area in CAR as of 2020,⁷⁸ but is threatened by deforestation practices.⁷⁹ Forestry rents contribute 8.349 percent of GDP⁸⁰ and timber exports is one of CAR's top export earners.⁸¹ The primary driver of forest exploitation is foreign companies.⁸²

A 2015 report by Global Witness documented how Chinese, French, and Lebanese logging companies made financial deals with Seleka leaders for



“protection services,” thus financing the group to procure additional arms. After 2014, the same companies made similar payments to “anti-balaka” militias.⁸³ Alongside bribery and funding armed conflict, a prevalent illegal logging trade also exacerbates deforestation in CAR which worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁴

Documented TIP Risk in Forestry

As deforestation associated with the conflict and illegal logging has continued, the indigenous Ba’aka (pygmy) populations have been significantly displaced.⁸⁵ According to the U.S. Department of State, “...Ba’aka (pygmy) minorities are at risk of becoming victims of forced agricultural work, especially in the region around the Lobaye rainforest.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, armed groups that benefit from illegal logging have been documented to exploit child soldiers, with the U.S. Department of State reporting that nearly 17,000 child soldiers have been recruited since 2012.⁸⁷

Diamonds

Diamonds Overview

Diamonds are among CAR’s top export earners, but the value is largely underestimated due to widespread smuggling practices.⁸⁸⁸⁹ All diamonds in CAR are mined through artisanal means from alluvial deposits.⁹⁰ The main facilities operate in various parts of the country, most notably in the Prefectures of Basse-Kotto, Haute-Kotto, Lobaye, Mambere-Kadei, and Sangha-Mbaere.⁹¹ Prior to a Kimberly Process ban on diamond exports in 2014, diamonds represented about half of the country’s exports. The ban, however, did not stop trade of diamonds within the country, so small-scale miners have continued mining. Smuggling of diamonds is widespread in CAR with illegal as well as legal buyers involved in the illicit trade. Diamonds are commonly smuggled out of the country through Cameroon land borders and regular flights from Bangui international airport.⁹² A report from Amnesty International states that both Seleka and anti-balaka forces have profited from the diamond trade, even during the Kimberly Process ban.⁹³

The U.N. noted in May 2017 that violence was significantly on the rise, particularly in diamond rich areas.⁹⁴ Reuters reported that the uptick in violence was at least partially due to armed groups struggling for control of diamond mines.⁹⁵ In May 2017, 115 bodies were found in a diamond-mining town.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the U.S. Department of State noted some of the country’s worst mortality rates were in its diamond-mining regions.⁹⁷

Documented TIP Risk in Diamonds

The U.S. Department of Labor’s *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor in 2020* reports that diamonds are produced by child labor in the CAR.⁹⁸ The U.S. Department of State notes that child laborers on diamond fields are



often subjected to transporting and washing gravel, digging holes, and lifting heavy loads.⁹⁹

In 2015, Amnesty International reported that both parties involved in the conflict directly controlled diamond mines and extorted “taxes” from artisanal miners.¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International and other NGOs have anecdotally documented hazardous child labor in diamond mining.¹⁰¹

Both primary parties to the conflict, who have benefitted from the diamond trade, reportedly use forced child soldiers.¹⁰²

Gold

Gold Overview

Over the past five years, Gold exports have increased to be the top export earner for CAR.¹⁰³ All gold is mined from alluvial deposits by artisanal miners, and the majority of the artisanal and small-scale gold sector is informal.^{104, 105} The major gold facilities in CAR operate in the Prefectures of Basse-Kotto, Mambere-Kadei Nana-Mambere, and Ouaka.¹⁰⁶ Gold smuggling is widespread; the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) estimates that legal gold exports represent less than five percent of actual production.¹⁰⁷ The United Arab Emirates is the top destination for gold exports, both legal and illegal.¹⁰⁸

Documented TIP Risk in Gold

According to the U.S. Department of State’s *2021 Trafficking in Persons Report*, children work in artisanal gold mines in CAR.¹⁰⁹ The U.S. Department of State also notes that children as young as nine years old are exposed to silver nitrate while working in gold mines and consequently sustain serious injuries.¹¹⁰ Compared to CAR’s diamond sector, child labor is more commonplace in CAR’s gold sector according to the USAID.¹¹¹ The USAID estimates that approximately 6,000 children work in CAR’s gold mines.¹¹²

Armed groups can be funded through the control of artisanal mining operations, including gold mines.¹¹³ In some cases, rebel groups have overtaken mines previously operated by international companies and demanded “protection payments” from artisanal miners who work there.¹¹⁴

¹ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). *World Factbook*. 2022. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/central-african-republic/>.

² Freedom House. *Freedom in the World 2021—Central African Republic*. 2021. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/central-african-republic/freedom-world/2021>

³ Human Rights Watch. “Central African Republic: Rampant Abuses After Coup.” May 10, 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/10/central-african-republic-rampant-abuses-after-coup>

⁴ World Bank. *Country Data, Central African Republic*. 2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/CF>.

⁵ World Bank. *Data—Central African Republic*. 2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/central-african-republic>



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- ⁶ World Bank. *Central African Republic Overview*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/overview>.
- ⁷ World Bank. "Labor force, total - Central African Republic." Data. 2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?locations=CF>
- ⁸ United Nations Development Programme. "Employment in agriculture (% of total employment)." *Human Development Reports*. 2019. <https://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/150606>
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- ¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). *World Factbook*. 2021. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/central-african-republic/>.
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- ²¹ Migration Data Portal. *Central African Republic*. 2021. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stock_abs_&t=2020&cm49=140
- ²² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Central African Republic*. 2022. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/centralafricanrepublic>.
- ²³ United Nations. *International Migrant Stock 2020*. 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>
- ²⁴ United Nations. *International Migrant Stock 2020*. 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>
- ²⁵ United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *International Migrant Stock 2019*. 2019. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>.
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- ³³ International Trade Commission. *The ITUC Global Rights Index*. 2021. https://files.mutualcdn.com/ituc/files/ITUC_GlobalRightsIndex_2021_EN_Final.pdf
- ³⁴ International Labor Organization. *Global Wage Report: 2020-2021*. 2020. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_762534.pdf.
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