



**BROKEN  
CHALK**

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United  
Nations Human Rights Council 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle – 45<sup>th</sup> Session

## **Right to Education**

### **Country Review: Central African Republic**

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**Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK**

**July 2023**

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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## I. Introduction

1. This report drafted by Broken Chalk contributes to the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for the Central African Republic. This report focuses exclusively on human rights issues in Central Africa Republic's education field.
2. The Central African Republic, a landlocked country in the heart of Africa, stands among the world's most impoverished nations. It grapples with a turbulent past marked by conflicts, instability, and mass displacement, which present significant obstacles to its peaceful progress. One of the pressing issues confronting the nation is the profound educational crisis it faces. Regarded as one of the most challenging environments for children to grow up in globally, the country is plagued by a critical problem of insufficient access to education that is both of high quality and safe.
3. Approximately two-thirds of children in the Central African Republic either do not attend school regularly or are deprived of educational opportunities.
4. In the previous UPR cycle, the Central African Republic was reviewed by UPR WG 31 in November 2018. It received 207 recommendations and supported 179 recommendations at the adoption of its UPR outcome at Human Rights Council 40 in March 2019 (an increase of 1% with respect to the 2nd cycle).
5. Supported recommendations relate to Legal and general framework of implementation, universal and cross-cutting issues, civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights (including rights to education), women's rights, and rights of other vulnerable groups and persons.
6. This report first explores the main issues in the educational field in the Central African Republic, reflecting on the recommendations the country received in the 3rd cycle UN UPR review in 2018 and its progress since. Finally, Broken Chalk offers some suggestions to the Central African Republic on further improving its human rights in the educational field.
7. As per the letter by the High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs[], issues were raised explicitly for the right to education, which included making necessary measures to ensure universal and free access to education, particularly for the most marginalised and disadvantaged populations.
8. Making efforts to improve school infrastructure and seeking the assistance of international partners to that end; tackling the root causes of school dropout; and implementing a social transfer scheme for the poorest households to ensure equitable access to education.
9. Making education and the restoration of the education system a priority in the peace and reconciliation initiatives, taking practical and adequate measures to prevent the parties to the conflict from requisitioning schools, and ensuring that demobilised child soldiers have access to education.
10. Adopting an inclusive education policy, particularly for girls, children with disabilities and indigenous children, and sustainably restoring access to education, including internally displaced children, by implementing non-formal education programmes.

## II. Marginalised and disadvantaged society and Right to Education

11. The Central African Republic (CAR) has faced significant challenges in educating its marginalised and disadvantaged communities. These communities include impoverished individuals, ethnic minorities, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and children affected by armed conflict. As exalted in international human rights conventions, the right to education has been crucial in addressing these issues and promoting inclusive education in the country.
12. Marginalised and disadvantaged societies in the CAR often face multiple educational barriers. Poverty is a significant factor, as many families struggle to afford basic needs, let alone educational expenses such as school fees, uniforms, and learning materials. This economic hardship forces children to engage in labour or remain out of school altogether.
13. Ethnic minorities in the country also encounter obstacles in accessing quality education. Discrimination, cultural biases, and language barriers can impede their educational opportunities. These factors contribute to limited representation and school participation, perpetuating a cycle of marginalisation and disadvantage.
14. Additionally, the CAR has experienced prolonged armed conflict and political instability, displacing many individuals, including children. Displaced persons face significant educational challenges, whether within the country or as refugees in neighbouring countries.
15. Disrupted schooling, lack of infrastructure, and lack of qualified teachers compound these communities' educational disadvantages.
16. Significant challenges remain in fully realising the right to education in the country. Insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of trained teachers, and ongoing security concerns pose obstacles to the effective implementation of inclusive education policies.

## III. Internally Displaced Child and the Right to Education

17. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) remained high due to fighting. According to the UN, over 1.3 million Central Africans were either refugees in neighbouring countries (735,000) or internally displaced (654,000) as of September 2022. Conditions for IDPs and refugees, many of whom stay in camps, remained harsh.
18. In April 2022, the Yaounde Declaration [2] calling for more concerted action to help nearly 1.4 million displaced Central Africans was signed after a critical regional conference organised by the Government of Cameroon and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.
19. The Yaounde Declaration marked the first step towards establishing a regional coordination mechanism for addressing one of Africa's most significant displacement crises.

20. Since 2013, the Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced successive crises affecting six neighbouring countries hosting around 700,000 refugees. Cameroon has received the most significant number of refugees (345,000), followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (212,000), the Republic of Chad (119,000), the Republic of Congo (29,000), Sudan (28,000) and South Sudan (2,500).
21. Regarding the challenges of hosting large numbers of refugees, Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute of Cameroon said that the economic context was challenging despite the states' efforts.
22. About the 2019 peace accord and the recommendations of the March 2022 Republican Dialogue, in which refugees and internally displaced people participated, the signatories of the Declaration further committed to "support the ongoing reconciliation process in the Central African Republic and urge for the effective participation of forcibly displaced persons and returnees."

#### **IV. Person with Disabilities and Right to Education**

23. Persons with disabilities in CAR have historically encountered significant obstacles in accessing education due to various factors, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of specialised educational services, limited awareness and understanding of disability rights, and societal stigma and discrimination. These barriers have resulted in disproportionately low enrolment and high dropout rates among children and youth with disabilities.
24. Recognising the importance of inclusive education, CAR has ensured that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to access quality education. The country signed several international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), emphasising the right to education for individuals with disabilities.

#### **V. Demobilised Child Soldiers and the Right to Education**

25. One of the most devastating aspects of this ongoing crisis is recruiting and utilising child soldiers by various armed groups. These demobilised child soldiers face numerous challenges in rebuilding their lives, including the right to education.
26. A combination of factors, such as poverty, lack of access to education, and the breakdown of social structures, has fueled child soldier recruitment in the CAR.
27. Armed groups exploit vulnerable children, forcing them into combat and subjecting them to unimaginable violence and trauma. The conflict disrupts the normal functioning of society, and schools often become targets, leading to the displacement of communities and the loss of educational opportunities for children.
28. The UN verified that at least 329 children, some as young as 7, were recruited by parties to the conflict in 2021, including by national armed forces. At least 104 children were killed or maimed, primarily from gunshots and crossfire.

29. The UN verified 211 cases of rape or other sexual violence against girls. At least 52 schools were attacked, including 26 by government or pro-government forces, and an additional 55 schools were used for military purposes, primarily by government forces.
30. Education is a fundamental right enshrined in various international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is crucial in helping demobilised child soldiers regain a sense of normalcy, rebuild their lives, and contribute positively to their communities. Education provides them with essential knowledge and skills, enhances social integration, and promotes physical and psychological well-being.

## VI. Indigenous Child and the Right to Education

31. Indigenous communities in the Central African Republic, such as the M'bororo Fulani, the Aka and the Litho, have historically faced social and economic exclusion. Poverty, geographic isolation, and discrimination have hindered their access to quality education. Indigenous children often confront barriers such as a lack of school infrastructure, limited availability of qualified teachers, and linguistic and cultural disparities within the education system.
32. One of the fundamental principles underpinning the right to education is inclusivity-education must be accessible to all without discrimination.
33. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognises the rights of Indigenous peoples, including their right to education. It emphasises the importance of culturally appropriate education that respects indigenous languages, knowledge systems, and values.

## VII. School Infrastructure and the Right to Education

34. The long history of political instability and violence has had a detrimental impact on its education system. Armed groups have destroyed or occupied schools, destroying infrastructure and disrupting learning environments.
35. Many schools have been forced to close, leaving children without access to education for extended periods.
36. the lack of trained teachers, educational resources, and funding further exacerbates the situation. These challenges disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including girls and children with disabilities.
37. Many schools in the country need to be in better condition, lacking basic facilities such as classrooms, furniture, sanitation facilities, and safe drinking water. The insufficient number of classrooms leads to overcrowding, making it difficult for students to learn

effectively. Schools sometimes operate under trees or in temporary structures, which are not conducive to learning and can be easily disrupted by weather conditions.

38. The need for adequate sanitation facilities, including separate toilets for boys and girls, poses a significant challenge to the retention and enrollment of girls in schools. Without proper sanitation facilities, girls may be reluctant to attend school, especially during menstruation, negatively affecting their educational opportunities and overall well-being.

## VIII. Covid-19 and the Right to Education

39. In 2021, UNICEF requested US\$75.7 million to meet the humanitarian needs of children in the Central African Republic. The significant increase in the funding request since 2020 is due to the integration of COVID-19 response requirements for 2021, which will remain an important focus.
40. UNICEF's targets and budget requirements for education and WASH have nearly doubled compared with the 2020 appeal. This reflects a strong focus on these sectors as part of the COVID-19 response, notably to support the safe return of more than 592,000 students to 1,500 schools, expand access to clean water in underserved areas and intensify community engagement. Likewise, the negative consequences of conflict and the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on food security will leave more children needing SAM treatment and families needing humanitarian cash transfers.
41. Without sufficient and timely funding, UNICEF, the CAR government, stakeholders and other international humanitarian organisations will be unable to support the national response to the continuing crisis and provide critical life-saving assistance to conflict-affected displaced people, returnees and host communities.

## IX. Recommendations

42. The political situation in the Central African Republic remains fragile amid announcing a constitutional reform — with a referendum scheduled for 30 July 2023.
43. Broken Chalk would like to offer recommendations to encourage the Central African Republic to improve its educational system and school infrastructure. The right to education is a fundamental human right, and every child, regardless of their cultural background or ethnicity, deserves equal access to quality education.
44. A collaborative approach involving the CAR government, international organisations, and local communities is required. By investing in education and addressing the underlying causes of recruitment, the CAR can provide these children with a pathway to a brighter future, fostering stability and sustainable development in the country.
45. Efforts should be made to improve access to education for marginalised and disadvantaged communities. These efforts include the abolition of primary school fees,

the establishment of temporary learning spaces in IDP camps, and the provision of educational support for refugees.

- 46.** Cultural and social norms and deep-rooted prejudices must be addressed to ensure equal educational opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their social or ethnic background.
- 47.** Sustained investment in education is crucial. Increased funding should be allocated to education, focusing on expanding infrastructure, recruiting and training qualified teachers, and providing targeted support to marginalised and disadvantaged communities.
- 48.** Steps need to be taken to remove the inequalities faced by the person with disabilities keeping in mind the right to education through the implementation of complete and adequate classroom catering to the needs of the person with disabilities and ensuring an inclusive education, particularly in the case of special needs children.
- 49.** Supporting services in schools provided to persons with disabilities in educational settings must be offered free.
- 50.** Mobilising the student community to create a more inclusive space for the person with disabilities can also be incorporated by the Central African Republic.
- 51.** Efforts should be made to remove financial barriers to education: including providing accessible or affordable education, scholarships, and financial assistance to vulnerable children.
- 52.** Particular attention should be given to gender-sensitive approaches that encourage the enrolment and retention of girls in schools.
- 53.** Community-based initiatives can also significantly raise awareness and foster support for the education of demobilised child soldiers.
- 54.** The demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers are critical steps towards their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Organisations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with the CAR government and other stakeholders, must keep working towards providing comprehensive support to these children.
- 55.** Psychosocial support services should be integrated into the education system. Trauma healing and counselling programs can help address the psychological scars caused by the experiences of conflict and violence. Creating a safe and inclusive learning environment, free from discrimination and stigma, is essential for successfully reintegrating these children into society.
- 56.** The Central African Republic must develop inclusive policies and strategies to eliminate discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for indigenous children to obtain a quality education.



- 57.** Build schools and provide educational resources in indigenous communities. Adequate provision of teaching and learning materials and access to technology and information resources can significantly improve the educational experience for indigenous children.
- 58.** The CAR Governments must raise awareness among the general population about the rights and needs of indigenous children is vital to combat discrimination and promote inclusivity. Sensitisation campaigns can help challenge stereotypes and promote a more accepting and supportive environment for indigenous children in schools and communities.
- 59.** The government should adopt policies that explicitly recognise the rights of indigenous children to education and promote their inclusion in the education system. These policies should be developed in consultation with indigenous communities to ensure their perspectives and needs are adequately represented.
- 60.** Efforts should be made to recognise and preserve indigenous languages and cultures within the education system. Bilingual education programs that integrate indigenous languages into the curriculum can help maintain cultural identity and improve educational outcomes.
- 61.** Training programs should be implemented to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with persons with disabilities, demobilise child soldiers and indigenous children- including cultural sensitivity training and teaching methodologies that promote inclusive and participatory learning environments.
- 62.** Collaboration with indigenous communities is essential for implementing inclusive education policies. Engaging community leaders, parents, and elders in decision-making and ensuring their active participation can help create a sense of ownership and promote sustainability.
- 63.** Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- 64.** Develop and apply strategies to end the impunity of those responsible for committing grave violations against children in conflict.
- 65.** Ratify the main international human rights instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and ensure that their provisions are incorporated into the national legal system.
- 66.** Enforce existing laws to bring to justice perpetrators of extensive extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, attacks on civilians (including children) and instances of sexual and gender-based violence.

## References

[1] Letter by the High Commissioner to the Foreign Minister, 2018. [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session31/CF/LetterCAF\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session31/CF/LetterCAF_EN.pdf)

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