

In 2018, the Central African Republic made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Justice began drafting a law that will reinforce existing laws on the recruitment of children under the age of 18 by armed groups, and criminally prohibit recruitment by non-state groups. In addition, the government participated in the identification, removal, and referral to social services of more than 1,800 children associated with armed groups, hired additional labor inspectors, and provided some inspectors with child labor-specific training. However, children in the Central African Republic engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in diamond mining and armed conflict by non-state armed groups. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work. An estimated 1.3 million children lacked access to education as a result of ongoing instability, and limited resources hampered the government's implementation of policies and programs to address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Central African Republic (CAR) engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in diamond mining and armed conflict by non-state armed groups. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work. (1-4,5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in CAR.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	31.0 (373,742)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	63.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	28.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		42.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010. (7)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working in agriculture, activities unknown (5)
	Working in forestry, including carrying tools (8)
	Fishing, activities unknown (9)
Industry	Diamond and gold mining† (5,9-14)
	Working in sawmills, forges, and foundries, including sharpening sawblades and maintaining fires (8,9)
	Construction, activities unknown (9)
Services	Domestic work (5,14)
	Street work, including carrying heavy loads, garbage scavenging, and market vending (8,9)

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Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as combatants, cooks, porters, informants, concubines, domestic workers, and guards (5,14,15,35)
	Domestic work and working in agriculture, markets, and mining, including in diamond mines, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,5,14,16-18)
	Forced labor of indigenous <i>Ba'aka</i> children in farming (2)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,5,14,16-21)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Although the government worked with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), UNICEF, and other partner agencies to demobilize and reintegrate children into community life, there were allegations of abuse and commercial sexual exploitation lodged against UN peacekeepers. (2-4,15,22-24) As of September 2018, approximately 643,000 people were displaced within CAR. (25)







The Ministry of Education has attempted to improve access to education by providing free school admission to children from camps for IDPs, waiving school exam fees for children affected by conflict, and expanding programs to provide birth registration, which may be required for school enrollment. (16,26-28) However, children continued to experience difficulties accessing education due to school fees, an absence of teachers, security concerns, destruction or looting of school materials and buildings by armed groups, and the unavailability of schools, especially in rural areas or IDP camps. (16,18,23,29-34) Fewer than three in five children in CAR complete primary education. (25) In 2018, at least 34 schools were direct targets of attacks, and in February 2018, 6 education workers were killed. (25,35) Forty schools were non-functional due to conflict, of which at least 28 were occupied by armed groups, peacekeeping troops, or IDPs. (3,4,13,30-32,36-40) Because the government exercises limited authority outside of Bangui, government-funded educational opportunities were not provided in rural areas. (5) The UN estimates that, in 2018, 1.3 million children lacked access to education, of which 280,000 school-aged children were displaced due to conflict. (40) During the reporting period, some civil society organizations reported that ethnic minority Muslims in the eastern region of the country were denied access to education. (5)

In 2018, the government, in conjunction with UNICEF and civil society organizations, identified and removed 1,816 children from armed conflict. However, during the reporting period, at least 299 children were recruited by non-state armed groups, some as young as 6 years old. (5,23,35,41)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

CAR has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in CAR's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 259 of the Labor Code (42)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 263 of the Labor Code (42)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 261 and 262 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code (42,43)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 7 of the Labor Code; Article 151 of the Penal Code (42,44)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 151 of the Penal Code (44)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code; Articles 90–92 and 110–111 of the Penal Code (42,44)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 262 of the Labor Code (42)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Decree N° 85.432; Declaration to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict (45)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 22 of the Constitution; Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code (42,46)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code; (42)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Ordinance N° 84/031 Orienting the Teaching System; Article 7 of the Constitution; Article 13 of Law N° 97/014 Orienting the Education System (46,47)
Free Public Education	Yes		Ordinance N° 84/031; Article 9 of the Constitution (46,47)

* No conscription (46,48)

In 2018, the Ministry of Justice began working on a draft law of the Child Protection Code, which will reinforce existing laws on the recruitment of children under age 18 by armed groups and forces, and criminally prohibit the recruitment of children by non-state actors. (49-51) This draft of the Child Protection Code is still pending adoption by the National Assembly. (28,52) Despite a 2016 study on hazardous work, CAR has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (42,53,54) Although the Labor Code prohibits work by children under age 14, the law does not apply to children outside of formal employment relationships, which does not conform to international standards that require all children be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (42,55) As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Public Service, Modernization of Administration, Labor, Employment and Social Protection (MOL) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Public Service, Modernization of Administration, Labor, Employment and Social Protection (MOL)	Monitors and enforces laws related to child labor. (9)
Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children	Responsible for the enforcement of criminal laws against forced child labor. (5,28)
Internal Security Forces Police and Gendarmes	Enforces all laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (55)
Ministry of Justice	Protects the rights of the child through its Rapid Response for Child Protection team and combats the worst forms of child labor through its courts and tribunals. (28,56)
Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Gender, and Humanitarian Action (MSA)	Oversees child soldier issues and leads the government's anti-trafficking policy efforts through the National Council on Child Protection. Refers victims of child trafficking to NGOs and maintains an orphanage for children at risk of child trafficking. (56)
Special Criminal Court	Investigates serious human rights abuses committed since 2003, including the use of children in armed conflict. Hybrid court comprising international and national judges and prosecutors. (57,58)

Victims of child labor may be referred to the Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children. (28) However, judicial authorities lacked the staff and resources to conduct investigations, and government authority was largely absent outside Bangui. (11,16,34,59,60) The Special Criminal Court held its inaugural session on October 22, 2018 and the Special Prosecutor has announced a prosecutorial strategy. (51) Cases were widely resolved outside of formal legal proceedings due to a lack of public trust, access, or knowledge about the justice system. (34,61-63)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in CAR took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MOL that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including adequate financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (28)	53 (5)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (64)	Yes (5)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (28)	No (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (28)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (28)	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (28)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (28)	No (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (28)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (28)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (65)	Yes (5)

Research indicates that violations were common in all sectors of the economy; however, government efforts to combat child labor were hindered by a lack of labor inspectorate capacity and inadequate financial and material resources, including transportation, office facilities and supplies, and computers. (28,54,64,66,67) Although child labor violations may be reported in person to the labor inspectorate in Bangui, due to Decree No. 12.177 of 4 August 2012, regional inspection offices are no longer under the authority of the central labor inspectorate. Consequently, regional offices do not submit periodic reports on inspection activities as required under ILO C. 81. (64,68) In addition, due to civil unrest, many labor inspectors were unable to conduct inspections outside of Bangui, where many mining operations take place. Furthermore, labor inspections were only conducted in businesses within the formal sector, and did not target the informal sector, in which child labor is most prevalent. (5)

In 2018, the government hired 7 additional labor inspectors, bringing the total number of labor inspectors employed to 53. While five labor inspectors received child labor-specific training, newly hired labor inspectors did not receive any initial training. (5,23) While a complaint mechanism exists, in practice, during the reporting period, there was no evidence that the complaint mechanism for filing and responding to reports of child labor functioned. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in CAR took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient human resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (28)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (55)	Unknown (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Number of Violations Found	3,105 (55)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (28)	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (69)	Yes (5)

There is approximately only 1 police officer for every 1,300 Central Africans, and government authority is largely absent outside the capital. However, in 2018, with the support of MINUSCA, 500 police and gendarmes have been recruited and trained, thus increasing the number of the Internal Security Forces. (51,55,70) Government officials outside of the capital may lack the resources and knowledge to enforce the law, including lack of access to copies of relevant laws. (60) Research found evidence that law enforcement officers may subject children to violence during criminal investigations, which amounts to inhumane treatment. (18) In addition, there is evidence that children released from non-state armed groups are detained, interrogated by state law enforcement agencies, and denied access to humanitarian assistance and social services providers. (59) Furthermore, juvenile criminal offenders are regularly imprisoned with adults despite a 2016 decree that prohibits this practice, as no separate juvenile cells or juvenile prisons exist. (2,18,26) During the reporting period, eight children were detained for their alleged association with non-state armed groups. Seven of the children were eventually released, though one was still in police custody at the end of the reporting period. (35)

The MOL is supposed to work with other ministries and UNICEF to provide assistance to victims of child labor; however, due to a lack of resources, the government relies primarily on MINUSCA, NGOs, and UNICEF to provide social services to victims. (5,18,41,65) In 2018, UNICEF trained government officials on identification

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and prevention of child trafficking. The trainings also included modules on how to handle victims of trafficking. (14) Although the government has referral mechanisms that enable enforcement authorities and social services to refer children found in child labor situations, due to limited resources the majority of cases were handled by NGOs. In 2018, civil society organizations and NGOs removed children from forced labor situations and provided social services for their rehabilitation, including enrollment in school or vocational training, and placement in stable homes. (5)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Children Associated with Armed Forces or Groups (EAFGA)	Secures the release of children used in armed conflict and provides appropriate care with the support of UNICEF. (2,28) Research indicates that EAFGA was not active during the reporting period. (71)
Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence (UMIRR)	Combats sexual violence against women and children. Comprising representatives from MSA, the Ministry of Justice, and law enforcement. (28) During the reporting period, UMIRR operated a 24-hour hotline to report cases, but did not provide statistics on the number of calls received. (72)

The government lacks a body designated to coordinate efforts related to all forms of child labor. Although the Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking still exists, it is no longer functional due to a lack of resources. (18,56)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy (DDR)	Based on the Bangui Forum Agreement, this MSA policy aims to facilitate initiatives to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate child soldiers, in cooperation with UN agencies, other ministries, and armed groups. (9,26,48,63,75) Through its National Strategy for Community-Based Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups, provides temporary care to children separated from armed groups and establishes Community Child Protection Networks (RECOPE) throughout the country. (27,75,76) In February 2018, the government, UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), and UNICEF launched a 1-month campaign in Bangui against the recruitment of child soldiers. (77) In addition, on December 12, 2018, the government launched a DDR program in the northwest of the country, targeting ex-combatants, including former child soldiers. (51)
National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA) (2017–2021)	Aims to re-establish peace and security, and support reconciliation by disarming and reintegrating children associated with armed groups, promoting legal reform, seeking justice for victims, and improving access to education. Aims to construct 218 schools and 1,200 school canteens, train 1,000 teachers, and distribute 150,000 school kits. (16,48) In November 2018, the RCPCA Permanent Secretariat organized several workshops to prepare the annual review of all the RCPCA Pillars. (51)
National Strategy for the Community-Based Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups in CAR	Aims to coordinate the reintegration of ex-combatant children into communities as civilians and prevent re-recruitment by armed groups. (78) Between April and June 2018, 162 children, including 24 girls, were released by armed groups, including Anti-Balaka and Ex-Seleka militias. All children were received by a UNICEF partner agency before their reintegration. (79)

In May 2018, an Action Plan to end and prevent grave violations against children was signed between the United Nations and the *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique* (MPC), which is a party to the conflict. (80) The Action

Plan covers four areas for which MPC is listed, including, recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals. The MPC has appointed four commanders to serve as child protection focal points in areas under its control. (41,80) Although the Government of CAR has adopted the Bangui Forum Agreement, which seeks to address child soldiering, the Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy has yet to be fully implemented due to a lack of funding and ongoing instability. (3,81) During the reporting period, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children, in partnership with United Nations Population Fund, the UNHCR, UNICEF, and UN Women, drafted a National Strategy to Fight Gender-Based Violence in CAR. Research was unable to determine whether the policy was finalized and adopted during the reporting period. (51) In addition, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, and a draft of a national policy addressing the elimination of child labor has yet to be adopted. (53,56) Furthermore, the government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the National Strategy for the Education Sector (2008–2020). (82)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Awareness-Raising Programs†	MOL program that aims to raise awareness of child labor and international conventions. (9,26,27) In 2018, MINUSCA trained 1,337 people on topics related to child protection. (5)
Shelters for Unaccompanied Children†	MSA and UNICEF-supported centers that provide immediate care, food, and psycho-social support to vulnerable children and former child soldiers. (2) Between January and November 2018, 73,846 children affected by conflict were able to continue schooling through the establishment of 296 temporary learning spaces. (83)
Education Programs	Programs to restore educational infrastructure. Includes: a \$23.4 million EU-funded Education Program to rehabilitate and equip more than 300 schools in 4 prefectures and the capital; a Bangui Ministry of Mines and Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research program to construct schools in mining zones; and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Education Clusters, led by UNICEF and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, to provide access to education in conflict-affected areas. (26-28,33,84-87) In 2018, UNICEF provided education assistance to 69,719 children in crisis-affected areas who were at risk for child labor exploitation. (5) In addition, during the reporting period, UNICEF, in conjunction with MINUSCA, supported the organization of the national baccalaureate exams. (15)
Birth Registration Campaign†	In support of the 2014 decree mandating free birth registration to children born during the 2012–2014 conflict, re-opens civil registration centers in areas affected by conflict and provides registration to children. (26) In 2018, although more than 7,000 birth certificates were issued by the courts, court clerks refused to print the certificates without additional payment. (23)

† Program is funded by the Government of CAR.

Although the government participates in a program that assists former child soldiers, coordination with non-government actors is weak and the scope of this program is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. (5,12,28,63,76) In May 2018, government officials participated in a workshop organized by the NGO Child Soldiers International to identify actionable steps to ensure that the government meets the requirements of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (50) The absence of resources and government authority throughout much of the country significantly hindered the government's ability to combat child labor, and research found no evidence that the government has programs to assist children engaged in other worst forms of child labor. (28)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in CAR (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2017 – 2018
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, and ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive.	2013 – 2018
	Publish the legal source that establishes a minimum age for voluntary military service.	2015 – 2018
Enforcement	Ensure that courts are allocated sufficient resources to be fully operational and that citizens can report violations and access formal judicial processes throughout the country.	2016 – 2018
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate's funding level; type of training provided to inspectors and investigators; and data related to enforcement efforts, including the number and type of investigations conducted, violations found, penalties imposed and collected, prosecutions initiated, and convictions obtained.	2014 – 2018
	Ensure that enforcement agencies have sufficient staff, resources, and funding to enforce laws related to child labor and provide services to victims throughout the country.	2009 – 2018
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2018
	Ensure that newly hired labor inspectors receive initial training.	2018
	Ensure that the complaint mechanism for filing and responding to reports of child labor functions in accordance with its mandate.	2018
	Ensure that children are not subject to violence during criminal investigations, are not kept in detention centers with adults, and are granted access to social services providers and humanitarian assistance when released from armed groups.	2016 – 2018
Coordination	Ensure that coordinating mechanisms are functional and establish coordinating mechanisms to combat all forms of child labor, including its worst forms.	2011 – 2018
Government Policies	Implement the established Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy and the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2018
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2018
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Strategy for the Education Sector.	2009 – 2018
Social Programs	Ensure that children affected by conflict are not subject to the worst forms of child labor by peacekeeping forces.	2016 – 2018
	Ensure that social programs to address child labor are implemented in accordance with their mandates.	2018
	Ensure that birth certificates issued by courts are delivered without additional payments required by court clerks.	2018
	Improve access to education for all children, including in rural areas, regardless of IDP status or religious affiliation, by eliminating school-related fees, making additional efforts to provide all children with birth registration, establishing an adequate number of teachers and classrooms throughout the country, and ensuring that schools are safe spaces and free from armed groups.	2009 – 2018
	Expand programs to assist former child combatants and children associated with armed groups, and improve coordination among relevant actors.	2013 – 2018
	Allocate sufficient resources and implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor throughout the country.	2009 – 2018

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