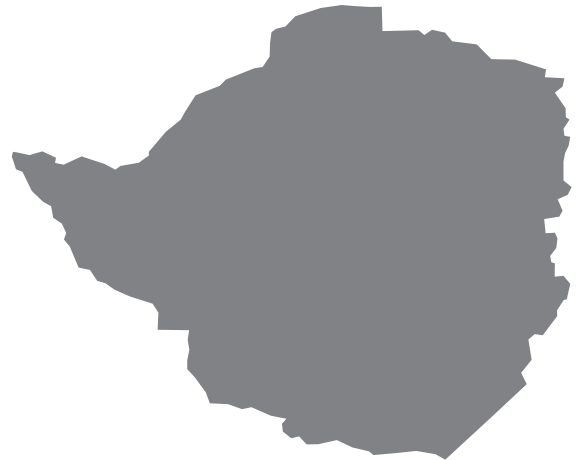


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In 2021, Zimbabwe made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Assembly began consideration of amendments to the Labor Act, which would increase penalties for child labor violations. The government, with the United Nations, also launched an updated Sustainable Development Cooperation Assistance Framework, prioritizing increased educational access and social protections for girls and other groups vulnerable to child labor. However, Zimbabwe is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it implemented a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Evidenced by a pattern of threats and intimidation of worker organizations and trade unionists, high-level officials within the Government of Zimbabwe and the ruling political party interfered with a delegation representing worker and civil society organizations to investigate concerns of child labor occurring at a commercial farm, sending party activists to the farm to threaten and intimidate the delegation. Children in Zimbabwe are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in mines and on farms. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture, including in the harvesting of sugarcane and tobacco. The government did not publicly release information on its labor and criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report, and law enforcement agencies lack resources to enforce child labor laws. In addition, gaps remain in the country's legal framework against child labor, including the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Zimbabwe are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also experience forced labor in mines and on farms. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture, including in the harvesting of sugarcane and tobacco. (1,2)

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	40.4 (Unavailable)
Working children by sector	5 to 14	
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	90.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	42.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		90.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6). (4)

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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of tea, cotton, tobacco, corn, and sugarcane (5-14)
	Fishing, including casting nets, hauling fish loads, and sorting fish (2,8,10,15)
	Work in forestry, such as dragging logs from felling sites and loading logs for transport (2,10)
	Cattle herding (2,9)
Industry	Mining and panning of gold and chrome, using dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, and extracting material from underground passages and quarries† (10,16-20)
	Molding bricks (18,21,22)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including vending and begging (8,14,23-26)
	Domestic work, including child care, house cleaning, and gardening (8,10,14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,14,27-30)
	Forced labor in agriculture, including herding cattle, mining, and domestic work (30)

† 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.

Deteriorating economic conditions likely make children more vulnerable to child labor. (2,32,33) Zimbabwean children living in border towns are trafficked to South Africa, Mozambique, and Zambia, where they become victims of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in domestic work. (30) Some families recruit rural children, especially orphans, to work in cities, often with promises of education or adoption. Such children are subject to domestic service or are forced to work in mining. (34) Girls, as young as 11, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly along major transit corridors and in mining areas. (1,2,18,30,35)

Children ages 8 to 17 work on tobacco farms, performing activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, packing, and grading tobacco, tasks that often expose them to toxic chemicals and the effects of nicotine from handling tobacco leaves. (7,20,36) Children also work on sugar plantations in the southeastern part of the country, where they wield dangerous tools and endure high temperatures. (9,37) Moreover, children work at artisanal and small-scale gold-mining sites, where they face risks including collapsed mines and exposure to mercury, and in commercial sexual exploitation around mining areas. In some cases, armed criminal groups have lured children to mining sites with the promise of self-employment and then forced them to mine gold under the threat of physical harm or death. (30) During the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple civil society stakeholders also have observed greater numbers of children engaged in vending, brickmaking, working on tobacco and sugarcane farms, and in the worst forms of child labor, including the use of children in commercial sexual exploitation. (18,26,30,38,39)

During the reporting period, the government implemented a practice that was detrimental to the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Zimbabwe by interfering with worker and civil society organizations' efforts to address child labor. Youth activists for the ruling Zimbabwe African Nation Union-Patriotic Front party, under the direction of Kazembe Kazembe, Zimbabwe's Minister of Home Affairs and other high-level government officials, sought to block a delegation of workers and civil society organizations seeking to investigate concerns of child labor occurring at a commercial farm, using threats and other forms of intimidation. (40,41)




The Education Amendment Act stipulates children's right to education regardless of race, nationality, or place of birth. (42,43) However, refugees and undocumented children who come to Zimbabwe from neighboring countries, and children who otherwise lack birth certificates, face barriers to education because, beginning in grade seven, children must present identity documents to sit for national exams. (14,44-46) Children, especially those in rural areas, often are not registered at birth because many Zimbabweans are unaware of birth registration requirements. In addition, impoverished parents sometimes leave their children under the care of other relatives, an arrangement that often complicates the process of obtaining a birth certificate because Zimbabwe requires the presence of at least one parent for birth registration. (47) As a result of these barriers, children may drop out of school, increasing their vulnerability to child labor. (2,8,48) In addition, poor school infrastructure, including lack of water and hygiene facilities, an insufficient number of teachers, and long travel distances to reach schools may contribute to higher dropout rates and vulnerability to child labor, particularly in rural areas. (2)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

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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 Zimbabwe's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including inadequate protections for children from use in the production of pornography.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 11.1 of the Labor Act; Section 10A(1) of the Children's Act (49,50)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 11.4 of the Labor Act; Section 10A(4) of the Children's Act (49,50)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 3.1 of the Labor Relations (Employment of Children and Young Persons) Regulations; Section 2 and 10A(4) of the Children's Act (49,51)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Sections 54 and 55 of the Constitution; Sections 2 and 4A of the Labor Act; Sections 2 and 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (50,52)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (53)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 61, 83, 86, and 87 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 8(2)a of the Children's Act; Sections 2 and 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (49,53,54)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 156 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 10 of the Children's Act (49,54)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Sections 5, 9, and 10 of the National Service Act (55)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Section 9 of the National Service Act (55)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Sections 2 and 5 of the Education Act (42,43)
Free Public Education	No		Sections 5, 6, and 13 of the Education Act (42,43)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (56)

During the reporting period, Parliament began consideration of amendments to the Labor Act that increase both maximum fines and prison sentences from 2 to 10 years for violations related to child labor. (57)

Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize slavery. (53) Although the Education Act establishes the right of children to state-funded education up to age 16, the law maintains the ability of the Minister of Education to institute instructional fees. (42,43)

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 authority and operations of enforcement agencies 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, Labor and Social Welfare (MPSLSW)	Enforces labor and anti-human trafficking laws and investigates labor-related complaints, including those involving child labor. (16) Also conducts industry- and sectoral-based labor inspections through appointed agents of national employment councils, comprising representation from both employers' associations and trade unions. (58,59)
Zimbabwe Republic Police	Enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor in conjunction with MPSLSW and the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. (16)
Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs	Oversees all courts, including labor courts. Addresses human trafficking and child victim cases through victim-centered courts. (16)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare (MPSLSW) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of authority to assess penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$25,000 (2)	Unknown (14)
Number of Labor Inspectors	120 (2)	Unknown (2)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (2,60)	No (60)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (2)	Unknown (14)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (2)	Unknown (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes	Unknown (14)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	1,860 (2)	Unknown (14)
Number Conducted at Worksite	1,860 (2)	Unknown (14)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (2)	Unknown (14)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (2)	Unknown (14)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (2)	Unknown (14)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Unknown (14)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (2)	Unknown (14)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (50)	Yes (50)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Yes (14)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (14)

The government did not make available information about its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (14) According to reporting from a major international organization, the government conducted 2,603 inspections in 2021; however, separate reporting from a trade union indicates that labor inspections have been significantly curtailed as a result of pandemic restrictions. (14,61,62)

As of 2020, the labor inspectorate employed 120 inspectors, which is likely insufficient for the size of Zimbabwe's workforce of approximately 7.4 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Zimbabwe would need to employ about 494 labor inspectors. (14,63,64) The limited number of inspectors and a lack of resources, such as available vehicles, likely hinder the labor inspectorate's ability to conduct child labor investigations and adequately monitor rural farms at which child labor occurs. (2,58) Furthermore, labor inspectors also oversee arbitration and conciliation, a responsibility that compromises their ability to conduct onsite investigations to address child labor. (58)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MPSLSW that may hinder adequate criminal and labor law enforcement, including lack of information on law enforcement efforts.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (2)	Unknown (14)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (2)	Unknown (14)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (2)	Yes (65)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (2)	Unknown (14)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (2)	Unknown (14)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (2)	Unknown (14)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (2)	Unknown (14)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (2)	Unknown (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (14)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report. (14) During the reporting period the government undertook seven human trafficking investigations, related to commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, resulting in four new criminal prosecutions and one conviction. However, research was not able to verify the ages of the victims and whether these cases were related to the worst forms of child labor. (65) More than 500 police officers, 10 immigration officers, and 20 members of the Anti-Trafficking Interministerial Committee participated in training on various topics including the international and national legal framework, essential elements of trafficking in persons, techniques for interviewing victims, differences between human trafficking and smuggling, the national referral mechanism, and push and pull factors that contribute to human trafficking. (65)

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 a lack of resources.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Leads government coordination to address the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by MPSLSW and includes the Ministries of Health and Child Care; Primary and Secondary Education; and Youth Development, Indigenization, and Economic Empowerment. Also includes international organizations and civil society groups, such as workers' and employers' organizations. (2) Research could not determine whether the National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor was active during the reporting period. (14)
Ministry-Level Committee on Children's Issues	Coordinates government ministries' efforts related to children's issues, including child labor. Includes MPSLSW and the Ministries of Education; Women's Affairs; and Youth Development, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment. (16) Includes Child Protection Committees, which operate at the village, ward, district, provincial, and national levels, to discuss issues affecting children, including child labor. (66) Research could not determine whether the Ministry-Level Committee on Children's Issues was active during the reporting period; community-level committees likely remained in place, however, operated at varying levels of performance due to gaps in resources and capacity, especially in rural areas. (14)
Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee	Coordinates actions to prevent and eliminate human trafficking, including the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action (NAPLAC). (30) Comprises the Ministries of Labor and Social Services, Women's Affairs, Home Affairs, Health and Child Welfare, Information and Publicity, Education, Local Government, and Foreign Affairs; the National Prosecuting Authority; the Office of the Registrar General; the Department of Immigration; the Zimbabwe Republic Police; and the Financial Intelligence Unit. (65) The Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee met twice during the reporting period, participating in trainings and reviewing NAPLAC. (65)
National Task Force on Street Children	Outlines strategies to address child labor, including feeding street children at drop-in centers, reuniting children with their families, and offering counseling sessions. Chaired by MPSLSW and includes NGOs that work on street children's issues. (67) Also includes the Ministry of Home Affairs, represented by the Zimbabwe Republic Police. (66) Research could not determine whether the National Task Force on Street Children was active during the reporting period. (14)

A lack of funding hinders coordinating bodies from carrying out their mandates. (2)

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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 lack of implementation of key policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor	Promotes understanding of child labor issues and creates an entity to coordinate responses to the findings. Consists of three focus areas: education assistance, poverty assistance through a cash transfer scheme, and health assistance. (2) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor during the reporting period.
Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) (2019–2021)	Aims to implement the Palermo Protocol through the development of strategies to address human trafficking, with an emphasis on prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. (68) During the reporting period, the government drafted a TIP Amendment Bill; however it had to restart the process because of a procedural error. (14)
Zimbabwe UN Sustainable Development Assistance Cooperation Framework (2022–2026)†	UN and Zimbabwe cooperative agreement to advance economic and sustainable development goals. Prioritizes four core areas: equitable and quality social services for girls and other vulnerable groups; strengthening of health and food security; inclusive and sustainable economic growth, including decent work opportunities; and promoting accountable institutions and systems of rule of law, human rights, and access to justice. (69) Prioritizes school enrollment as an indicator. (69)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (70)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, 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 inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Harmonized Social Cash Transfer†	Government-funded unconditional cash transfer program, with support from UNICEF, to assist labor-constrained and food-insecure households to avert risk-coping strategies, such as child labor. (2,71) As of 2021, the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program covered 55,000 households across 20 districts. (14)
Basic Education Assistance Module†	Government program, with support by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, that provides basic financial assistance to families for education costs, such as tuition and examination fees. Aims to keep children in school and to enroll children who lack access to school because of economic hardship. (16) Allocated \$25 million and covered tuition, examination fees, and levies for 859,000 children in 2021, a slight decrease from 950,000 children in 2020. (14,72)
Mobile Birth Registration Program†	Government mobile birth registration program, with support from UNICEF and implemented by the Office of the Registrar General and some local governments, to ensure that citizens receive identity documents, including birth certificates. (47,73) Fields mobile teams are located in every district in the country. (74) During the reporting period, the government, with the support of UNICEF, provided registration assistance to at least 6,645 children under age 16 in areas effected by Cyclone Idai in 2019 and flooding in 2017. (62) UNICEF funding for the Mobile Birth Registration Program ended in 2021. (62)
Child Protection Fund for the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (2016–2022)	UNICEF Child Protection Fund program, supported by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which focuses on equity and access to quality education for children and provides child protection services. Provided cash assistance for families to keep children in school. (70,75) In 2021, UNICEF had provided psychosocial support activities, reaching 132,243 children, including children with disabilities and support for parents and caregivers. (62)
Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS)	\$106 million, U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief/USAID-funded country program that aims to reduce rates of HIV among adolescent girls and young women, including girls vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. (76,77) In 2021, the DREAMS program provided support to 244,046 adolescent girls and young women and expanded services from 6 to 16 districts. In addition, 20,678 adolescent girls and young women benefited from economic strengthening interventions to improve economic security and earning capacity. Finally, 438,669 orphans and vulnerable children and their families received services through USAID programming during the reporting period. (62)

† Program is funded by the Government of Zimbabwe.

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Although Zimbabwe has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially child labor in agriculture, mining, and commercial sexual exploitation. Research found problems with the distribution of social support benefits because structures within the ruling party control the allocation of food, allowances, seeds, and other forms of assistance, which may result in the exclusion of vulnerable families from assistance programs. (2, 14)

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 Zimbabwe (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2021
	Establish, by law, free basic education.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery.	2021
Enforcement	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.	2017 – 2021
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient financial and human resources to address labor violations and enforce minimum age protections in all sectors, including agriculture.	2017 – 2021
	Publish information on the government's labor law enforcement efforts.	2021
	Publish information on the government's criminal law enforcement efforts.	2015 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that all Child Protection Committees, including those in rural areas, have adequate resources to operate according to their intended mandates.	2021
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2010 – 2021
Social Programs	Cease the practice of interfering with civil society and work organizations seeking to investigate and respond to issues of child labor, and hold government and party officials engaging in such practices accountable.	2021
	Improve access to secondary school by ensuring that all children are registered at birth and by removing identity documentation requirements to take national exams.	2014 – 2021
	Enhance efforts to make education accessible to all children, including children living in rural areas, by improving access to water and hygiene facilities within schools, reducing travel distances to schools, and increasing the number of teachers.	2016 – 2021
	Expand existing social programs to address child labor, especially child labor in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, and mining.	2010 – 2021
	Improve systems for the distribution of social support benefits to ensure that allocations reach vulnerable households that are most in need of the benefits.	2020 – 2021

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