



ZAMBIA

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Zambia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security conducted 3,318 inspections in 2023, a 42 percent increase compared to 2022, opened a call center to receive complaints of labor violations, and released an analysis of child labor. The government also increased its budget for education by 18 percent, which included the hiring of 7,222 teachers and improvements to school infrastructure throughout the country. In addition, the government continued its school feeding program, which currently serves nearly 2 million students. However, Zambia's law does not meet international standards on education because the Education Act does not specify a compulsory attendance age. Despite having a mandate to do so, labor inspectors do not inspect the informal sector, which comprises 73 percent of economic activity and is the area in which most incidents of child labor in Zambia are known to occur. Finally, responsible government offices had no case management or records management systems to track whether they had assessed penalties for child labor violations or held perpetrators accountable for child labor crimes.

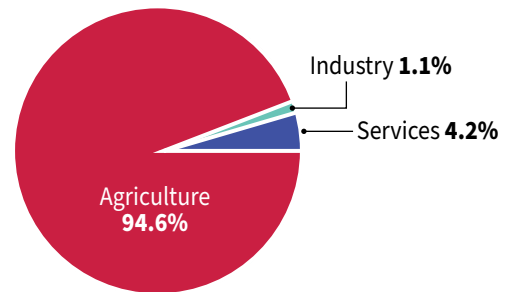


PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	7.8% (400,423)
Attending School	5 to 14	74.6%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	7.1%

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Children in Zambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and mining.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Production of cotton† and tobacco.† Raising and herding† of cattle.



Industry

Mining, including in copper, manganese, and gemstone production, and scavenging for ore. Working in stone quarries and construction, carrying heavy loads† and crushing stones.† Working in forestry and in manufacturing.



Services

Domestic work and street work, including begging, vending, washing cars and garbage disposal.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Forced labor in agriculture and herding, mining, construction, weaving; street vending of food, selling retail goods in markets and domestic work. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced begging. Use in illicit activities, including the selling of drugs.

† 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.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Zambia's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Accede to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.

Determine the list of light work activities permitted for children ages 13 to 15.

Define by law 9 years of compulsory education, extending to at least age 15, to align with the minimum age for work.

Clarify the legal framework and responsible agencies' mandates to conduct child labor focused planned and unplanned inspections.

Enforcement

Increase planned inspections in unregistered businesses, including artisanal mining sites, farms, and private homes, to ensure monitoring of all sectors in which children are working.

Use a case management system to record and track labor enforcement information and develop a proactive strategy for routine investigations.

Publish complete information on labor law enforcement efforts.

Increase fiscal and material resources for the labor inspectorate, including office space, training, vehicles, and fuel.

Publish criminal law enforcement information and provide training to police officers on the worst forms of child labor.

Increase resources to combat human trafficking and develop and implement consistent procedures to screen and identify human trafficking victims.

Coordination

Ensure the National Steering Committee on Child Labor is active, and District Child Labor Committees are provided funding commensurate with their responsibilities to conduct child labor prevention activities.

Improve lines of communication and clarify responsibilities among agencies to improve effectiveness and referrals to social services.

Government Policies

Report efforts to implement policies, including the National Human Trafficking Policy and the National Migration Policy.

Include child labor strategies in government policies, including the National Employment and Labor Market Policy and the Education Policy.

Social Programs

Address barriers to education access by increasing the number of schools and teachers, providing transportation in rural areas, improving school infrastructure, including toilets that offer privacy and adequate sanitation, empowering married girls to continue their education, expanding the school meals program, and defraying other education-related costs, such as school supplies and suitable clothing for families in poverty.

Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem in all relevant sectors, including agriculture, mining, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children near artisanal mining sites are also more vulnerable to engaging in mining activities and vending foodstuffs. Illegal mining syndicates, called *jérabo* gangs, have been known to kidnap street boys in the mining provinces to scavenge slag heaps and load trucks with stolen copper ore, under threat of bodily harm. Young girls near mining sites and along Zambia's borders and transit corridors are particularly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, refugee children have increased vulnerability to child labor exploitation due to their families' limited access to employment or community support networks.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Girls face multiple barriers to education due to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and gender norms, especially in rural areas. Studies show that only 27 percent of girls in Zambia complete upper secondary school, and among the poorest children this figure falls to 3 percent. Due to Zambia's high poverty rate, the cost of basic school supplies and suitable school clothing can create a barrier for many students. In rural areas, many students must travel significant distances by foot to and from school. The number of teachers and classrooms is also insufficient to accommodate the large number of students, with the teacher-student ratio at 1:58. According to Zambia's Education Management Information System, in 2020, 24 percent of school toilets were either temporary or not working. Lack of toilets, sanitation, and a lack of bathroom privacy can be a barrier to attendance, especially for girls. In addition, increasing food insecurity and limited access to school lunches are barriers to attendance.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Zambia has not acceded to key international conventions concerning child labor, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict or the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. In addition, Zambia's laws do not meet international standards on education because there is no defined age range for compulsory education.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years		Article 24 of the Constitution; Sections 16 and 81 of the Employment Code Act; Section 13 of the Children's Code Act of 2022.
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Section 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 13 of the Children's Code Act of 2022.
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Prohibition of Employment of Young Persons and Children (Hazardous Labor) Order; Section 137(2)(n) of the Employment Code Act.
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 14 and 24 of the Constitution; Sections 143, 261, and 263 of the Penal Code; Sections 2 and 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Section 8 of the Employment Code Act.
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Article 24(3) of Amendment to the Constitution; Section 143 of the Penal Code; Sections 2, 3, and 3A of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, as amended by the Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act of 2022; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 17 of the Children's Code Act.
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Sections 143 and 144 of the Penal Code; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Articles 19 and 27 of the Children's Code Act of 2022.

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	✓	Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 20 of the Children's Code Act of 2022.
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years	✓	Section 14 of the Defense Act.
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	✓	Section 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 14 of the Children's Code Act of 2022.
Compulsory Education Age	✗	Sections 16 and 17 of the Education Act.
Free Public Education	✓	Section 15 of the Education Act.

*Country has no conscription

The law establishes a light work framework for employment of children ages 13 to 15, but has not specified what work activities are included. The Education Act requires that the government provide free education up to the ninth grade and stipulates that education is compulsory for children of "school-going age." The Education Act, however, does not set a specific age for compulsory education or define "school-going age." This could allow children to leave school before they are legally able to work, thereby increasing their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, due to the lack of a case management or records system, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies were hindered in their ability to address child labor issues.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS): Though MLSS is the primary agency responsible for labor law enforcement, it does not prioritize child labor or conduct child labor-focused inspections. The MLSS primarily conducts labor inspections in registered private institutions in response to complaints such as unpaid wages, abuse of workers, and safety violations. The MLSS coordinates the government's interagency National Steering Committee on Child Labor (NSCCL). In 2023, the MLSS released its 2022 Labor Force Survey report and the 2020 Child Labor report, which analyzed child labor in Zambia and laid the foundation for more effective policies and programs. The Ministry also released a brochure clarifying its responsibilities and processes to collaborate with other agencies.

Criminal Enforcement Agencies: The Zambia Police Service (ZPS) collaborates with the Ministry of Justice to investigate and prosecute child labor cases. However, neither agency was able to cite any efforts in 2023 to collaborate on or prosecute such cases. The ZPS is responsible for enforcing laws against child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities through its Child Protection Units (ZP-CPU). These units work with immigration and local officials to respond to child trafficking and remove vulnerable children from the streets, placing them into families, foster homes, or in safe homes. In 2023, the ZPS held a 5-day training on human trafficking for selected officers. However, the ZP-CPU reported its officers did not participate in any trainings focused on child labor during the reporting period.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

For 2023, the government reported that **153** labor inspectors conducted **3,318** worksite inspections. The government conducted **5** investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor. The responsible agencies were unable to provide additional information regarding the number of violations found, prosecutions initiated, or perpetrators convicted due to a lack of case management or records management systems.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor Zambia established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, a lack of funding resulted in insufficient coordination at the local level.</p>	<p>National Steering Committee on Child Labor (NSCCL): The NSCCL is Zambia’s primary coordination mechanism for combating child labor. However, it primarily focuses on international labor migration issues, as opposed to domestic child labor. Local-level coordination is maintained through District Child Labor Committees (DCLCs). The Office of the Auditor General criticized the NSCCL as being ineffective and noted that only those DCLCs which were supported by NGOs had resources to combat child labor. As a result, many DCLCs do not carry out inspections or awareness-raising activities, nor do they have transportation funds to convene committee members. No significant efforts to combat child labor were carried out by the committee in 2023.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor Zambia has established policies related to child labor. However, responsible agencies were unable to cite any efforts in 2023 to implement Zambia’s National Human Trafficking Policy or the National Migration Policy.</p> <p><i>‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</i></p>	<p>National Child Labor Policy: Outlines objectives for prevention and elimination of child labor and designates responsible agencies to address child labor issues. Implemented through the government’s National Action Plan (NAP) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2020–2025), which outlines child labor activities through 2025. Under this policy, the Government of Zambia, in cooperation with international actors, implemented a pilot program to assist children on the move, including child survivors of trafficking. Over the 3-year effort, which concluded in 2023, a total of 14,245 migrant and refugee children received support, including gender sensitive services, family reunification or foster placement, and community reintegration. Learnings from the pilot program were used to inform new initiatives.</p> <p>National Human Trafficking Policy and the National Migration Policy: Launched in December 2022, includes strategies to protect Zambian and migrant children from human trafficking and labor exploitation. Each policy is accompanied by an implementation plan that includes sections on prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnerships. Responsible agencies were unable to cite any efforts in 2023 to implement these policies.</p> <p>Education For All Policy: Approved in December 2022, this policy increased access to education by eliminating public school fees for children from kindergarten through high school and removing school uniform requirements. The government also hired 7,222 teachers and education staff in 2023, which is in addition to the 30,496 teachers it deployed in 2022 to address the projected influx of new students.</p>

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor Zambia funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, the scope and impact of these programs were limited.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Zambia.</i> <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p>Social Cash Transfer Program (SCT):[†] Government program to provide funds to families for food security, poverty reduction, child welfare, and increasing school enrollment. Funded by the government and the World Bank. In 2023, the government contributed approximately \$138 million. An evaluation of the program found that, in some families, improved family conditions enabled higher rates of school attendance. Conversely, other families used the funds for invest in new income generating activities which, at times, required labor from the household's children to implement. However, a study found that SCT-related increase in child labor within the homestead tended to correlate with a reduction in children's exposure to more hazardous conditions involved in laboring outside the home. Moreover, the evaluation noted that caregivers intend to reduce child work when it is economically viable for them to do so.</p>
	<p>Edufinance Project (2020–2025): A \$7 million-dollar project implemented by the Zambian Ministry of Education and funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The project builds the capacity of local financial institutions to provide tailored loan products to enable families to affordably finance school-related costs. Through this program, finance institutions have provided 174 loans to schools and parents, valued at \$2.6 million, and have mobilized an additional \$1.8 million in capital from private sector donors.</p>
	<p>Home-Grown School Meals Program (2020-2024):[†] Program that provides a locally sourced meal to over 2 million children, with the goal of reducing poverty and malnutrition for learners in preschools and primary schools. Administered by the Ministry of Education and implemented in approximately 2,800 schools, in 39 districts covering all 10 provinces. In 2023, the program announced plans to expand to feed 4 million children by 2026, to address the influx of new students under the government's Education for All Policy.</p>

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects
For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports