



ZIMBABWE

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement

In 2023, Zimbabwe made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government enacted amendments to the Labor Act to increase penalties for forced labor and child labor from 2 years imprisonment to 10 years. The government also relaunched its National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor. In addition, the Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee facilitated several public awareness-raising activities related to prevention of human trafficking, including a television campaign, and also provided training for criminal law enforcement personnel and prosecutors. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Zimbabwe is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because state-aligned actors engaged in a pattern of threats and intimidation of worker organizations and trade unions, which are key stakeholders in the identification and prevention of child labor. The scope of existing social programs is inadequate to address child labor in all relevant sectors, including in agriculture, mining, and commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, law enforcement agencies lack adequate personnel and operational resources to enforce child labor laws.

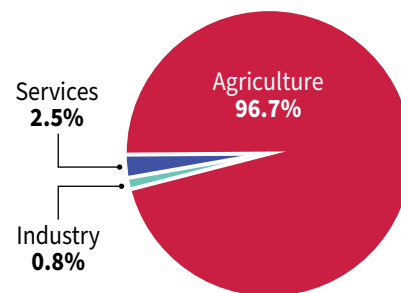


PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	14.8% (617,582)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	94.0%
Combining Work and School	5 to 14	16.0%

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



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.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming, including in the production of tobacco and sugarcane; fishing; and forestry.



Industry

Mining of lithium and the mining and panning of gold, using dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, and extracting material from underground passages and quarries.†



Services

Street work, including vending and begging; domestic work.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; use in illicit activities, including selling of drugs; and forced labor in mining, domestic work, and agriculture, including herding.

† 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.

Government security forces engaged in a pattern of threats and intimidation of worker organizations and trade unions, which are key stakeholders in the identification and prevention of child labor. In 2022 and during the run up to the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections, the government and state-aligned Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) political party engaged in a variety of tactics intended to obstruct, hinder, and in some cases violate the rights of workers and worker-aligned organizations advocating for better working conditions, including the identification and prevention of child labor. As civil society organizations and labor unions have been integral to reporting and advocacy on identification and prevention of child labor, including in the mining and agricultural sector, these actions significantly inhibit Zimbabwe’s progress in eliminating child labor.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

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

Legal Framework

Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

Ensure the law criminalizes the use of a child for prostitution and the use, offering, and procurement of a child for the production of pornography and pornographic performances.

Ensure the laws do not require physical movement of a child in order to criminalize and prosecute for child trafficking.

Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery.

Establish, by law, free basic education by removing the ability of the Education Minister to impose discretionary school fees.

Enforcement

Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.

Increase operational resources, including vehicles and equipment, and the number of labor inspectors to 355 to address labor violations and enforce minimum age protections in all sectors, including agriculture.

Publish information on the government’s labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations found, penalties imposed for child labor violations, and penalties imposed that were collected.

Publish information on the government’s criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and whether the government-imposed penalties.

Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.

Social Programs

Cease interfering with and harassing labor unions and worker-aligned organizations advocating for conditions of work and social protection, including the elimination of child labor.

Improve access to education by ensuring that all children are registered at birth and providing children with identity documents so they may take secondary school examinations.

Remove barriers to education access for children living in rural areas by improving access to water and hygiene facilities within schools, reducing travel distances to schools, addressing language barriers in instruction, and increasing the number of teachers.

Improve systems for the distribution of social support benefits from the Basic Education Assistance Module program to ensure that allocations reach vulnerable households that are most in need of the benefits.

Expand existing social programs to address child labor, especially child labor in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, and mining.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Sharp divisions in income, resources, and quality of life between rural and urban areas likely contribute to increased vulnerabilities of rural children to labor exploitation. Rural households are likewise vulnerable to climate-related emergencies, such as flash floods, crop failures, drought, and cholera, all of which further strain their economic security. In addition, research indicates human traffickers target migrant and refugee children for labor exploitation in urban centers and marketplaces.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Research indicates some children in Zimbabwe face continued challenges related to birth registration and acquisition of national identification documents. 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. In addition, school fee requirements; poor school infrastructure, including lack of water and hygiene facilities; an insufficient number of teachers; language barriers within schools; and long travel distances to reach schools may contribute to higher dropout rates and vulnerability to child labor, particularly in rural areas.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Zimbabwe has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Zimbabwe's laws do not meet international standards on prohibition of slavery, debt bondage, and forced labor. In addition, the Zimbabwe law providing for free public education is insufficient.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 16 Years	✓	Section 11 of the Labor Act; Section 10A of the Children's Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years	✓	Section 11.4 of the Labor Act; Section 10A(4) of the Children's Act
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	✓	Section 3.1 of the Labor Relations (Employment of Children and Young Persons) Regulations; Section 2 of the Children's Act
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor	✗	Sections 54 and 55 of the Constitution; Sections 2 and 4A of the Labor Act; First Schedule (Section 3), and Sections 2 and 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	✗	First Schedule (Section 3) and Sections 2 and 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	✗	Sections 61, 83, and 87 of the Criminal Law Act; Sections 2, 8, and 10 of the Children's Act; First Schedule (Section 3) and Sections 2 and 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	✓	Section 156 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 10 of the Children's Act
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 16 Years	✓	Sections 5, 9, and 10 of the National Service Act
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	✓	Section 9 of the National Service Act
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	✗	
Compulsory Education Age, 16 Years ‡	✓	Sections 2 and 5 of the Education Act
Free Public Education	✗	Sections 5, 6, and 13 of the Education Act

‡ Age calculated based on available information

In 2023, the government enacted an amended labor law, which reaffirms preexisting articles on child labor but also raises penalties for forced labor and child labor from a maximum of 2 years to a maximum of 10 years in prison. However, Zimbabwe does not adequately criminalize the use of a child for prostitution or the use, offering, and procurement of a child for the production of pornography and

pornographic performances. Further, Zimbabwe does not adequately criminalize child trafficking because the law requires physical movement of a child in order to prosecute for child trafficking. Lastly, laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize slavery. In addition, 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.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to address child labor. However, the lack of authority of labor inspectors to assess penalties for labor violations hinders adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

The 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. In addition to its designated labor inspectors, MPSLSW coordinates with Occupational Health and Safety inspectors, National Employment Council representatives, and inspectors from the Ministry of Mines to identify and remove children from child labor. Also conducts industry- and sectoral-based labor inspections through appointed agents of national employment councils, comprising representation from both employers' associations and trade unions.

Zimbabwe Republic Police: Enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor in conjunction with MPSLSW, the judiciary, and the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	No	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Unknown	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

It is **unknown** how many labor inspectors conducted worksite inspections, or whether child labor violations were found. It is also **unknown** whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions were initiated, or perpetrators were convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Zimbabwe established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.</p>	<p>National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Coordinates government efforts 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. The Steering Committee reconvened in 2023 after several years of inactivity and began work to integrate a child labor pillar into a larger National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, which the government is expected to introduce in 2024.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Zimbabwe established a policy related to child labor. However, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.</p>	<p>National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor: Promotes understanding of child labor issues and coordination related to child labor cases. Consists of three focus areas: education assistance, poverty assistance through a cash transfer scheme, and health assistance.</p>

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Zimbabwe funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors in which child labor has been identified, including in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, and mining.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Zimbabwe.</i></p>	<p>Harmonized Social Cash Transfer:[†] Government-funded unconditional cash transfer program, with support from UNICEF, to assist labor-constrained and food-insecure households to avert coping strategies, such as child labor. In 2023, the government and UNICEF launched the next phase of its Emergency Cash Transfer program, to provide economic resiliency, child services, and nutritional support to 19,000 highly vulnerable households.</p> <p>Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM):[†] Government program 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. In 2023, BEAM provided educational assistance to 1,515,047 learners, and care and protection services for 59,701 children. Research, however, has found misalignment between the government’s budgetary allocation for BEAM and actual disbursement, and benefits under the BEAM programs do not consistently reach targeted families in need of educational assistance, limiting the capacity of the program to fully address child labor that results from poverty and auxiliary educational expenses.</p>
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For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects
 For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports