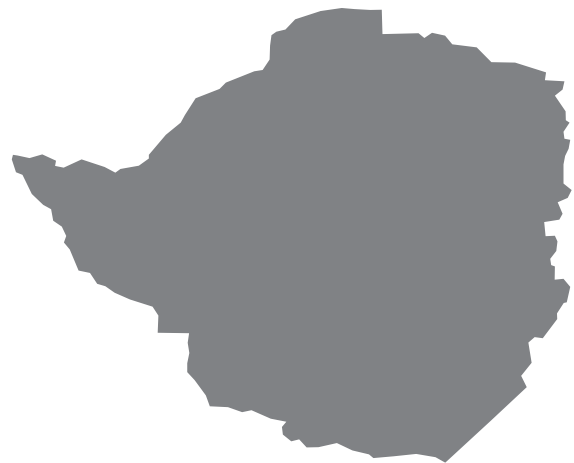


## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Zimbabwe made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government created a new Child Labor Unit within the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare to steer the Ministry's child labor activities, and worked with NGOs to carry out research, coordination, and compliance investigations targeting the tea, tobacco, and other sectors where there is high prevalence of child labor. In addition, the government substantially expanded the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program and the Basic Education Assistance Module, which provide livelihood and educational assistance to families that have high vulnerability to child labor. However, Zimbabwe is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. 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. 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. Law enforcement agencies lack resources to enforce child labor laws.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Zimbabwe.

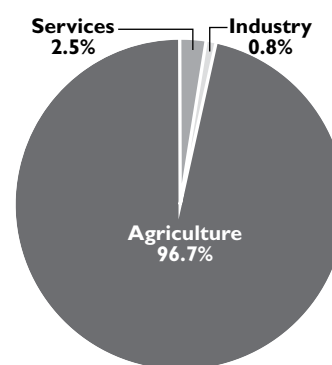
**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

| Children                      | Age     | Percent        |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| Working (% and population)    | 5 to 14 | 14.8 (617,582) |
| Attending School (%)          | 5 to 14 | 94.0           |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | 16.0           |
| Primary Completion Rate (%)   |         | 84.8           |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2019. (2)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



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 in the production of tea, tobacco, cotton, and sugarcane (3-9)  |
|                 | Fishing, including casting nets, hauling fish loads, and sorting fish (4,10,11)  |
|                 | Work in forestry, such as dragging logs from felling sites and loading logs for transport (4,10)   |
|                 | Cattle herding (3,10)  |
| Industry        | Mining and panning of gold, using dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, and extracting material from underground passages and quarries† (4,9,12-15) |
|                 | Molding bricks (13,16,17)  |
| Services        | Street work, including vending and begging (9,18-20)   |
|                 | Domestic work, including childcare, house cleaning, and gardening (4,9,21)   |

# Zimbabwe

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

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

| Sector/Industry                                     | Activity  |
|---|---|
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor <sup>†</sup> | Use in illicit activities, including selling of drugs (9,22)                          |
|   | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,22-24)  |
|   | Forced labor in agriculture, including herding cattle, mining, and domestic work (22) |

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

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

Deteriorating economic conditions and the ongoing effects of climate change (including droughts, flash floods, and crop failures) strain rural households and likely contribute to vulnerabilities to child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (9,25-27) Commercial sexual exploitation, often involving girls from poor and distressed rural households, occurs in urban centers, along major transit corridors, and in mining areas. (9,13,22,24,27) Human traffickers frequently lure orphans or children from rural households for work in cities with promises of educational opportunity or adoption. Such children are then subjected to domestic service or are forced to work in mining. (22) However, the reopening of schools, following COVID-19 closures, likely resulted in a reduction of children working in prostitution, street begging, domestic services, informal trading, agriculture, and artisanal mining. (9)

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. (9,15,28) Children also work on sugar plantations in the southeastern part of the country, where they use dangerous tools and endure high temperatures. (3,29) 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)

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. (31-33) At least one trade union alleged ZANU-PF activists obstructed a delegation of workers and civil society organizations seeking to access a commercial farm to investigate child labor claims. (31,32) Although the government has contested this allegation, research finds a pattern of state and ZANU-PF officials infiltrating trade union activities and interfering with or harassing attending workers. (33) 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.




The Education Amendment Act stipulates children's right to education regardless of race, nationality, or place of birth. (34,35) 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. (8,36-38) As a result of these barriers, children may drop out of school, increasing their vulnerability to child labor. (10) To address gaps in birth registration the government has been operating a mobile birth registration program to assist citizens in receiving identity documents, including birth certificates. (39,40) 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. (9)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

**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 a lack of criminal prohibitions against slavery.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

| Standard  | Meets International Standards | Age | Legislation  |
|---|-------------------------------|-----|--|
| Minimum Age for Work  | Yes                           | 16  | Section 11 of the Labor Act; Section 10A of the Children's Act (41,42)   |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work  | Yes                           | 18  | Section 11.4 of the Labor Act; Section 10A(4) of the Children's Act (41,42)  |
| 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 of the Children's Act (41,43)                       |
| 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 (42,44,45)                |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking  | Yes                           |     | Section 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (45)   |
| 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 (41,45,46) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities                           | Yes                           |     | Section 156 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 10 of the Children's Act (41,46)  |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment                          | Yes                           | 16  | Sections 5, 9, and 10 of the National Service Act (47)   |
| Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military         | Yes                           |     | Section 9 of the National Service Act (47)   |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups                 | No                            |     |  |
| Compulsory Education Age  | Yes                           | 16‡ | Sections 2 and 5 of the Education Act (34,35)  |
| Free Public Education   | No                            |     | Sections 5, 6, and 13 of the Education Act (34,35)   |

‡ Age calculated based on available information (48)

Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize slavery. (45) 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. (34,35)

# Zimbabwe

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

### 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.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

| Organization/Agency   | Role & Activities  |
|---|--|
| 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. (49) In addition to its 120 designated labor inspectors, MPSLSW coordinates with 40 Occupational Health and Safety inspectors, 200 National Employment Council representatives, and 60 inspectors from the Ministry of Mines to identify and remove children from child labor. (9) Also conducts industry- and sectoral-based labor inspections through appointed agents of national employment councils, comprising representation from both employers' associations and trade unions. (50,51) During the reporting period, MPSLSW created a new Child Labor Unit to support the Ministry's research, awareness raising, and engagement with stakeholders to monitor its activities earmarked for child labor elimination. The Child Labor Unit holds quarterly working groups to discuss sectors vulnerable to child labor, including tobacco, sugar, tea, and artisanal and small-scale mining. (52) |
| 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. (9,49)   |

#### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2022, 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  | 2021         | 2022           |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding   | Unknown (8)  | \$210,000 (52) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors   | Unknown (10) | 120 (9)        |
| Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties  | No (42)      | No (42)        |
| Training for Labor Inspectors Provided   | Unknown (8)  | Yes (52)       |
| Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite                                  | Unknown (8)  | 8,028 (9)      |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found   | Unknown (8)  | Unknown (9)    |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed                  | Unknown (8)  | Unknown (9)    |
| Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected                        | Unknown (8)  | Unknown (9)    |
| Routine Inspections Conducted  | Unknown (8)  | Yes (52)       |
| Routine Inspections Targeted   | Unknown (8)  | Yes (52)       |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted  | Yes (42)     | Yes (52)       |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted  | Yes (8)      | Yes (52)       |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists   | Yes (8)      | Yes (52)       |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (8)      | Yes (52)       |

Research indicates that a limited number of inspectors and a lack of resources, such as available vehicles and office facilities, likely hinder the labor inspectorate's ability to conduct child labor investigations and adequately monitor rural farms at which child labor occurs. (9,10,50,53,54) Although the Labor Act outlines labor inspectors' authority to arbitrate labor disputes, it does not stipulate their authority to assess penalties for labor inspections. (42) Furthermore, labor inspectors also oversee arbitration and conciliation, a responsibility that compromises their ability to conduct onsite investigations to address child labor. (55)

#### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2022, 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 a lack of information on law enforcement efforts.

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement  | 2021        | 2022        |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Training for Criminal Investigators Provided  | Unknown (8) | Yes (56)    |
| Number of Investigations  | Unknown (8) | 10 (9)      |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated  | Unknown (8) | Unknown (9) |
| Number of Convictions   | Unknown (8) | Unknown (9) |
| Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor            | Unknown (8) | Unknown (9) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (8)     | Yes (9)     |

### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism 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 activity of coordinating bodies.

**Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

| Coordinating Body   | Role & Activities   |
|---|---|
| National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor | Leads government coordination to address the worst forms of child labor. (9) 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. (10) Research was unable to determine whether the National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor was active during the reporting period. (9) |

During the reporting period, the government, the Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, and Eradicating Child Labor in Tobacco Foundation created a working group to address child labor concerns in the tobacco sector and jointly carried out a survey on child labor to strengthen and prioritize coordination efforts. (9) In addition, the government participated in the Rainforest Alliance's tea certification program, which establishes standards to prevent child labor, including hazardous work, in the tea sector. (9)

### 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 a lack of implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

| Policy   | Description & Activities   |
|--|--|
| 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. (10) 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 | Aims to implement the Palermo Protocol through the development of strategies to address human trafficking, with an emphasis on prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. During the reporting period, the government drafted a Trafficking in Persons Amendment Bill; however, it had to restart the process because of a procedural error. (56) Also during the reporting period, the government approved an updated the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2023–2028), outlining key agencies, coordination and referral mechanisms, and policy instruments that assist in the prevention and response to human trafficking, with special consideration for the rights and needs of children. (9) |

‡ The government had other policies that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (57)

In 2022, the government directed each of its 46 National Employment Councils, which set sectoral-specific policies related to employment and labor relations, to establish policies to prevent child labor in their sector, including developing a list of hazardous work within each sector in which children are working. To date, 23 out of 46 National Employment Councils have created hazardous work lists. (9,52)

# Zimbabwe

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, 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 inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

| Program                                   | Description & Activities  |
|---|---|
| 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. (10) As of April 2022, the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program covered 78,000 households across 20 districts, an increase from 55,000 households in 2021. (9) In addition, the government coordinated with UNICEF to provide emergency cash transfers to families facing extreme poverty and other vulnerabilities to child labor. (58)  |
| Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)† | 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. (49) Program budget of approximately \$20 million (5.6 billion Zimbabwean dollars) reached 1.5 million children during the reporting period, a significant increase from 859,000 children receiving assistance in 2021. (9,59) The budgetary allocation for 2022 was likely an increase from previous years, though was offset by rapid inflation that occurred during the reporting period. (9,60) Research has found that 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. (8-10) |

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Zimbabwe.

The government continued to coordinate with UNICEF around various child protection initiatives that relate to root causes of child labor in Zimbabwe, including building capacity to respond to the needs of migrant and unaccompanied children, birth registration and collection of vital statistics, and development of an early warning systems to identify children at risk of dropping out of school. 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. (61-63)

### 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 – 2022       |
|                     | Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery.   | 2021 – 2022       |
|                     | Establish, by law, free basic education by removing ability of Education Minister to impose discretionary school fees.   | 2009 – 2022       |
| Enforcement         | Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.  | 2017 – 2022       |
|                     | Increase financial resources and the number of labor inspectors from 120 to 355 to address labor violations and enforce minimum age protections in all sectors, including agriculture.             | 2017 – 2022       |
|                     | Publish information on the government's labor, including identified child labor violations penalties assessed, and fines collected.  | 2021 – 2022       |
|                     | Publish information on the government's criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of prosecutions initiated, the number of convictions, and whether the government-imposed penalties. | 2015 – 2022       |
| Coordination        | Ensure the National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor is able to coordinate on awareness raising activities and responses to identified child labor cases.              | 2016 – 2022       |
| 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 – 2022       |



## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

| Area            | Suggested Action   | Year(s) Suggested |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|
| Social Programs | Cease activities related to interference and harassment of labor unions and worker-aligned organizations advocating for conditions of work and social protection, including elimination of child labor.  | 2021 – 2022       |
|                 | Improve access to secondary school by ensuring that all children are registered at birth and enabling children without access to identity documents, such as orphan children, migrants, and refugees, to take secondary school examinations.             | 2014 – 2022       |
|                 | 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 – 2022       |
|                 | 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.   | 2020 – 2022       |
|                 | Expand existing social programs to address child labor, especially child labor in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, and mining.   | 2010 – 2022       |

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