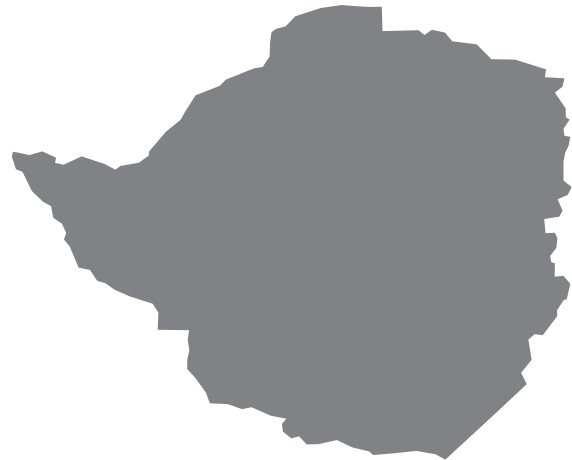


In 2020, Zimbabwe made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government enacted the Education Amendment Act, which raised the legal compulsory education age to 16. It also significantly expanded the Basic Education Assistance Module to provide assistance with school expenses to over 950,000 orphans and vulnerable children, while providing humanitarian assistance allowances for vulnerable families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, children are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, mining, and tobacco production, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture, including in the harvesting of sugarcane. The government did not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts, 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, mining, and tobacco production, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture, including in the harvesting of sugarcane. (1,2) In 2020, the government published results from the Labor Force and Child Labor Survey conducted in 2019. The survey estimated that 71 percent of child labor occurred in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors. (3) However, raw data from the government's Labor Force and Child Labor Survey have not been made publicly available for analysis. Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Zimbabwe. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

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

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	40.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	90.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	42.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		98.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2013, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (5)

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 (2,6-12)
	Fishing, including casting nets, hauling fish loads, and sorting fish (2,9,12-14)
	Work in forestry, such as dragging logs from felling sites and loading logs for transport (12,14,15)
	Cattle herding (2,10)
Industry	Mining and panning of gold and chrome, using dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, and extracting material from underground passages and quarries† (11,12,16-19)
Services	Street work, including vending and begging (2,9,20-23)
	Domestic work (2,9,12)

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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†	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (24)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,25-28)
	Forced labor in agriculture, including herding cattle, mining, and domestic work, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (24,29)

† 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, cholera outbreaks, drought, and food shortages likely make children more vulnerable to child labor. (11,30-33) 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. (34) 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 forced to work in mining, drug smuggling, or other illegal activities. (34,35) Girls under the age of 18 are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly along major transit corridors and in mining areas. (1,2,17,24,28,36)







Children ages 12 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. (8,19,37) Children also work on sugar plantations in the southeastern part of the country, where they wield dangerous tools and endure high temperatures. (10,38) Moreover, there has been an increase in children working 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. Worsening economic conditions, as well as school closures and lockdown restrictions related to the pandemic, likely exacerbated these trends in 2020. (16-18,39,40) In some cases, armed criminal groups have taken children into underground mines and forced them to mine gold under threat of physical harm. (29) During the pandemic, multiple civil society stakeholders have also observed greater numbers of children engaged in vending, brickmaking, work on tobacco and sugarcane farms, and in the worst forms of child labor, including the use of children in the sale of drugs and commercial sexual exploitation. (17,23,41,42)

The Education Amendment Act stipulates children's right to education irrespective of race, nationality, or place of birth. (43,44) However, 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. (2,45) Many children, especially those in rural areas, 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. (46) As a result of these barriers, children may drop out of school, increasing their vulnerability to child labor. (2,9,47,48) 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).

**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 the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

**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 and Section 10A(1) of the Children's Act (49,50)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 11.4 of the Labor Act and Section 10A(4) of the Children's Act (49,50)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 3.1 of Labour Relations (Employment of Children and Young Persons) Regulations and Section 2 and 10A(4) of the Children's Act (49,51)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 54 and 55 of the Constitution, Section 4A of the Labor Act (50,52)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (53)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Section 61, 83, 86, and 87 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 8(2)a of the Children's Act; Section 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 and 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 (43,44)
Free Public Education	No		Section 5, 6, and 13 of the Education Act (43,44)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (56)

In 2020, the government enacted the Education Amendment Act, establishing compulsory education up to Form 4 (age 16). (44,57) The new law also mandates the provision of sanitary and menstrual health supplies and facilities for girls, and strengthens provisions protecting children from discrimination in education to include children with disabilities, girls who are pregnant, and other vulnerable groups. (44,58,59) Although the updated 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. (43,44)

Laws do not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation, as they do not criminally prohibit the use of children in the production of pornography or for pornographic performances. (54,60,61)

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### 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
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. (11) Also conducts industry- and sectoral-based labor inspections through appointed agents of national employment councils, comprising representation from both employers' associations and trade unions. (62,63) Provides child protection services, including investigating, intervening in, and reporting on child abuse cases through its Department for Child Welfare. (35)
Zimbabwe Republic Police	Enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor in conjunction with the MPSLSW and the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. (11)
Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs	Oversees all courts, including labor courts. Addresses human trafficking and child victim cases through victim-centered courts. (11)

#### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to combat 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 authority to assess penalties.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (11)	\$25,000 (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (11)	120 (2)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (11,64)	No (2,64)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (11)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (11)	N/A (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (11)	Yes
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (11)	1,860 (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (11)	1,860 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (11)	0 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (11)	N/A (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (11)	N/A (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (11)	Yes (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (11)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (50)	Yes (50)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (11)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (11)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (2)

The labor inspectorate staffs 120 inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Zimbabwe's workforce, which includes approximately 7.9 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 employ about 527 labor inspectors. (11,65) The limited number of inspectors and a lack of resources, such as available vehicles, likely hinder the inspectorate's ability to conduct child labor investigations and adequately monitor rural farms at which child labor occurs. (2,62) Furthermore, labor inspectors also oversee arbitration and conciliation, a responsibility that compromises their ability to conduct onsite investigations to combat child labor. (62)

During the reporting period, the government held three training workshops for both new and current inspectors, which included content on laws and enforcement of laws related to child labor. (2)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MPSLSW that may hinder adequate criminal and labor law enforcement, including the publication of enforcement data.

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (11)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (11)	N/A (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (11)	Unknown (2)
Number of Investigations	1 (24)	Unknown (2)
Number of Violations Found	1 (24)	Unknown (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	4 (24)	Unknown (2)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (11)	Unknown (2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (11)	Unknown (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (2)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor. (2)

## 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 information on the activities of key coordinating bodies.

**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	Addresses the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the MPSLSW and includes the Ministries of Health and Child Care; Primary and Secondary Education; and Youth Development, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment. (2) Also includes international organizations and civil society groups, such as workers' and employers' organizations. (2)
Ministry-Level Committee on Children's Issues	Coordinates government ministries' efforts related to children's issues, including child labor. Includes the MPSLSW and the Ministries of Education; Women's Affairs; and Youth Development, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment. (11) Includes Child Protection Committees, which operate at the village, ward, district, provincial, and national levels, to discuss issues affecting children, including child labor. (66)
Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee	Coordinates actions to combat human trafficking, including the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action (NAPLAC). (24,67)
National Task Force on Street Children	Outlines strategies to combat child labor, including feeding street children at drop-in centers, reuniting children with their families, and offering counseling sessions. Chaired by the MPSLSW and includes NGOs that work on street children's issues. (68) Also includes the Ministry of Home Affairs, represented by the Zimbabwe Republic Police. (66)
Child Protection Committees	Operates at the village, ward, district, and provincial levels to discuss issues affecting children, including child labor. (11) Representatives include ministries, civil society, local volunteers, and teachers. Reports to the ministry-level Committee on Children's Issues. (66)

Research was unable to determine whether coordinating bodies were active during the reporting period. (2) In addition, a lack of funding hinders coordinating bodies from carrying out their mandates. (2,69)

## 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 implementation of key policies.

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**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 combat human trafficking, with an emphasis on prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. (24,70) The government began operationalization of NAPLAC during the reporting period. (29)
Zimbabwe UN Development Assistance Framework (2016–2020)	Integrated child labor prevention strategies in the Education for All campaign headed by the UN. Promoted gender equality and reduction of AIDS/HIV prevalence, and allocated social resources to address child labor. (71)

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (32)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, 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 full scope of the problem.

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

Program	Description
Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT)†	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. (2,72) In 2020, the government budgeted \$23 million to the HSCT program, an increase from previous years. (73)
Basic Education Assistance Module†	Government program, with support by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), 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. (11) Covered tuition, examination fees, and levies for 950,000 orphans and other vulnerable children in 2020. Plans to expand coverage to 1.2–1.5 million children in 2021, including a budgetary increase of over \$1.2 million, and to broaden the scope of the program to include uniforms and books. (12,74,75)
Mobile Birth Registration Program†	Government mobile birth registration program, implemented by the Registrar General's office and some local governments, to ensure that citizens receive identity documents, including birth certificates. (46,76) Fields mobile teams in every district in the country. (35) Active in 2020. (46)
Child Protection Fund for the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (2016–2022)	UNICEF Child Protection Fund program, supported by FCDO, that 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. (32,77,78) As of May 2020, UNICEF had provided psychosocial support activities, reaching 87,836 children, including children with disabilities and support for parents and caregivers. In coordination with the MPSLSW, UNICEF also provided family tracing and reunification to 167 street children. (79,80)
Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS)	\$106 million, U.S. President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)/USAID-funded country program that aims to reduce rates of HIV among adolescent girls and young women, including girls vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. Targeted more than 163,000 participants in 2020. (81,82)

† Program is funded by the Government of Zimbabwe.

During the pandemic in 2020, the government provided monthly humanitarian allowances, ranging from \$1 to \$2, to vulnerable households affected by the pandemic, including 500,000 informal sector workers and 700 street children. (74,75)

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 that there are 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)



## 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 – 2020
	Establish by law free basic education.	2009 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of a child for the production of pornography and pornographic performances.	2019 – 2020
Enforcement	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for labor law violations.	2017 – 2020
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2016 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Publish information on the government's criminal law enforcement efforts.	2015 – 2020
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2016 – 2020
Government Policies	Publish activities undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor.	2010 – 2020
Social Programs	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 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Expand existing social programs to address child labor, especially child labor in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, and mining.	2010 – 2020
	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

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