

In 2021, Zambia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government significantly increased the number of labor inspectors to 240, from 160 the previous year. The government also launched its second National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, allocated funding to hire 22,000 schoolteachers, and collected updated data on the number of children in child labor and in hazardous work. However, children in Zambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in agriculture. The Education Act does not specify a compulsory education age, and human trafficking laws do not meet international standards because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to establish the crime of child trafficking. In addition, labor inspectors do not routinely inspect non-registered businesses in which child labor is known to occur.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Zambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in agriculture. (1,2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Zambia.

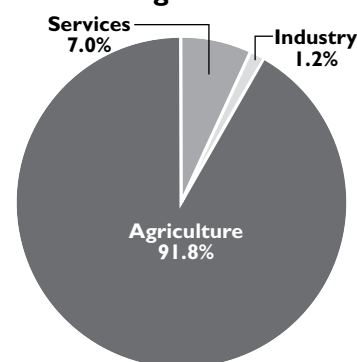
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	28.1 (992,722)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	65.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	27.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2013, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's Analysis of Statistics from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2008. (4)

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	Work in the production of cotton,† tobacco,† and other cash crops (2,5,6)
	Raising and herding† cattle (2,5)
	Fishing† (2,7,8)
	Production of charcoal† (9)
	Forestry, including loading of timber (2,10)
Industry	Mining of tin, chrome, gold, ore, and gems, including manganese (2,7,8,11,12)
	Work in quarries, including carrying heavy loads† and crushing stones† (2,7)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (2,7)
	Street work, including begging and vending (2,7,8)
	Garbage disposal (2)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,13)
	Forced labor in agriculture, herding, construction, domestic work, mining, small businesses, and textile production (1,11,13)
	Forced begging (1)

† 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.

Child labor in Zambia is most prevalent in the agricultural sector and sometimes involves forced labor. (1,2,14) Traffickers exploit children from rural areas in Zambia to cities for domestic work and to rural areas for agriculture. (1) Sources reported the exploitation of children for cattle herding, which sometimes involves parents repaying debts by sending children, particularly young boys, to work as cattle herders for the people to whom they are indebted. (2) Orphans, street children, children with disabilities, and children from poor households are particularly vulnerable to child trafficking. (1,8,15) In addition, traffickers exploit children from neighboring countries for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (16)




Illegal mining syndicates, called *jerabo* gangs, in the Copperbelt province employ children for mining activities, including forcing children to load trucks with stolen copper ore. (1,17) Commercial sexual exploitation of children is common, particularly along Zambia's borders and transit corridors. (1,13) Research indicates that school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the vulnerability of children to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (1,13) During the reporting period, the government collected data on child work as part of its 2021 Labor Force Survey, which included measurements of the number of children engaged in paid and unpaid work, the prevalence of child labor, the number of children engaged in hazardous work, and variances in child labor prevalence based on geographical location, school attendance, sex, age group, and other factors. (2)

Long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas, an insufficient number of teachers and classrooms, and costs of learning materials are barriers to education. (2,18,19) The inability to access birth certificates and the high prevalence of early marriage of girls increase the vulnerability of children to child labor; children without birth certificates are not able to enroll in school, and once girls marry, they sometimes leave school before reaching the minimum working age and engage in work outside the household. (2,15,20,21)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Zambia has ratified most 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 Zambia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including an undefined age range for compulsory education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 24 of the Constitution; Articles 16 and 81 of the Employment Code Act (22,23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	19	Article 83 of the Employment Code Act (23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Prohibition of Employment of Young Persons and Children (Hazardous Labor) Order; Section 137(2)(n) of the Employment Code Act (23-25)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 14 and 24 of the Constitution; Articles 143, 261, and 263 of the Penal Code; Article 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Section 8 of the Employment Code Act (22,23,26,27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 17 of Amendment to the Constitution; Article 143 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 (1-4) of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act (22,23,26,27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 143 and 144 of the Penal Code; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act (23,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 14 of the Defense Act (28)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Articles 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act (23,26)
Compulsory Education Age	No		Article 16 and 17 of the Education Act (29)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 15 of the Education Act (29)

* Country has no conscription (30)

The law establishes a light work framework for employment of children ages 13 to 15 but has not identified permitted light work activities. (23,31) Moreover, human trafficking provisions remain inconsistent with international standards because they require demonstration of threats, force, intimidation, or other forms of coercion to constitute a child trafficking offense. (26)

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 Act, however, does not set a specific age for which education is compulsory or define "school-going age," which may allow children to leave school before they are legally able to work and thereby increase their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (32)

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 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 Labor and Social Security (MLSS)	Implements, enforces, and regulates child labor laws. Advises other government agencies on child labor issues and coordinates government efforts to prevent child labor through its Child Labor Unit (CLU). The CLU, which falls under the labor inspectorate, carries out inspections related to child labor. (2,33)
Ministry of Home Affairs	Enforces criminal laws against human trafficking, child commercial exploitation, use of children as soldiers, and use of children in illegal activities through its Immigration Department and Drug Enforcement Commission. (2)
Zambia Police Service	Collaborates with the Ministry of Justice to investigate and prosecute child labor cases. (2) Handles the enforcement of laws against human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities through its Child Protection and Victim Support units. (2,34) Works with immigration officials and local officials to respond to child trafficking, enforce child labor laws, and remove vulnerable children from the streets, placing them into families, foster homes, or in safe homes. (2)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes criminal law enforcement cases related to the worst forms of child labor through its Office of the Prosecutor. (2)
Ministry of Community Development and Social Services	Provides social services to survivors of human trafficking or sexual abuse. Operates one government shelter in Luapula province. (1)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Zambia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS) that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws, including insufficient financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$281,520 (10)	\$26,000 (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	160 (10)	240 (2)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (10)	No (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (10)	N/A (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	No (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	630 (10)	1,800 (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	630 (10)	1,800 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (10)	0 (35)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (10)	0 (35)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	1 (10)	0 (35)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (2)

In 2021, the government increased the size of its labor inspectorate to 240 inspectors and nearly tripled the number of labor inspections from 630, in 2020, to 1,800. (2) The government reported a budgetary allocation of \$26,000 in 2021, a significant reduction from 2020; however, this figure is not inclusive of budget for personnel, including labor inspectors. (2) The financial resources allocated to the labor inspectorate were likely insufficient to enforce laws related to child labor. (10,36) The MLSS has stated that inadequate resources, including an insufficient budget, limited office space, inadequate training, and a lack of transportation and fuel have prevented it from adequately conducting inspections countrywide. (2,37-39)

The MLSS generally conducts planned labor inspections in registered private institutions only; inspections of unregistered institutions, including at artisanal mining sites, farms, and private homes in which child labor is most

common, primarily occur in response to complaints. (37,40,41) The MLSS is conducting community sensitization campaigns and coordinating with local police to build public understanding of the labor inspectorate's role and enforcement mandates to facilitate more inspections of private and unregistered institutions. (41)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Zambia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (10)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (10)	N/A (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (10)	Yes (42)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (2)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (10)	17 (42)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	4 (10,13)	3 (42)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (2)

The government did not provide complete information on its criminal law enforcement efforts, including training of new criminal law enforcement investigators, the number of investigations and convictions, and whether it imposed penalties, related to the worst forms of child labor. (2) During the reporting period, criminal law enforcement authorities rescued 17 children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were being trafficked to the Copperbelt region. In addition, at least three defendants were prosecuted for criminal offenses related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (42) However, research could not determine whether there were additional criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor in 2021. The government, with support from UNICEF, trained 75 immigration and police officers from the Eastern, Southern, and Western Provinces of Zambia, on concepts related to the trafficking of children and handling of vulnerable persons. (42)

Law enforcement agencies do not have sufficient financial and human resources to address human trafficking, and standard operating procedures to screen and identify victims remain limited. (1)

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 efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Advises and oversees child labor matters, including implementation of hazardous work regulations. Chaired by MLSS and comprises government representatives, employers, trade unions, and civil society members. The National Steering Committee on Child Labor was not active in 2021. (2)
District Child Labor Committees (DCLCs)	Respond to child labor complaints at the district level, file complaints to MLSS, and serve as the main referral mechanism for social welfare services in collaboration with CLU of MLSS. (2) Comprises the Zambia Police Service; MLSS; the Ministry of Community Development, Mother, and Child Health; and civil society stakeholders. (11) Coordinate with Community Child Labor Committees, which operate at the community level to raise awareness and promote mobilization against child labor. DCLCs were active during the reporting period and continued to monitor matters of child labor at the local level and hold sensitization meetings and trainings. (2)

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Coordinating Committee for Children	Coordinates implementation of the National Child Policy and government responses to child protection issues, including child trafficking, sexual exploitation of children, and child labor. Led by the Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Child Development (MYSCD) in coordination with DCLCs that operate in selected districts. (2) Research indicates that the National Coordinating Committee for Children met late in 2021 with a focus on implementation of the National Child Safeguard Framework. (35)
Interministerial Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking	Shares information and coordinates efforts in addressing human trafficking issues. Chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs and includes representation from MLSS, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, the Ministry of Local Government, MYSCD, the Zambia Police Service, the Department of Immigration, IOM, and a number of NGOs. (2) The Interministerial Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking met six times during the reporting period, working on an updated national action plan for trafficking in persons, coordinating trainings, and developing a new national referral mechanism for children on the move. The new referral mechanism, which was operationalized during the reporting period, aims to improve responses and care for survivors of child trafficking. (42)

Communication lapses among government agencies may hinder coordination and the ability of agencies to implement their mandates related to the worst forms of child labor (11)

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 mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Child Labor Policy	Outlines objectives for prevention and elimination of child labor and designates responsible agencies to address child labor issues. (43) During the reporting period the government launched and published its second National Action Plan (NAP) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which is the implementation strategy for the National Child Labor Policy. The updated NAP outlines strategies for the effective elimination by 2025 of the worst forms of child labor in Zambia through coordination of various stakeholders. (7)
7th National Development Plan (2017–2021)	Outlined Zambia's strategy to promote inclusive economic growth and national development to support Zambia's long-term goal of becoming a "middle income" country, including through the elimination of child labor, by 2030. Sought to improve access to quality education and reduce poverty by 20 percent by 2021. (44) In 2021, the government launched the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor to encourage actions to eradicate child labor. In addition, in June, the government held public and radio awareness events during the commemoration of the World Day Against Child Labor. (2)
UN's Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (2016–2021)	An \$806 million framework, funded by the UN, that aimed to protect children, including through the prevention of child labor. (46) In 2021, the government and the UN supported awareness-raising on the risks of child labor during the national commemoration of the World Day Against Child Labor and facilitated the development of the National Skills Demand Survey Report for Zambia, which provides labor market information to inform career paths of youths. (2) The UN Sustainable Development Partnership Framework expired during the reporting period; however, the government is working with the UN to establish an updated partnership that will run from 2023–2027. (35)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (11,47-49)

The government has a National Employment and Labor Market Policy, which outlines objectives for promoting decent work in Zambia, but the policy does not incorporate strategies for prevention and elimination of child labor. (50) Also, the government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Policy. (51)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Social Cash Transfer Program†	Government program to provide funds to families and increase school enrollment. (52) As of September 2020, about 700,000 were receiving benefits under the Social Cash Transfer Program. (53) The government allocated \$137 million (ZMW 2.3 billion) to the Social Cash Transfer Program in 2021. (2)
Achieving Reduction of Child Labor in Support of Education (ARISE) (2019-2021)	Japan Tobacco International and Winrock International joint initiative that sought to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in tobacco-growing communities in Brazil, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. (18,54)
Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS)	A \$30 million initiative, funded jointly by USAID and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, aimed at increasing protections for vulnerable adolescent girls and young women through access to health services, including support for HIV prevention and treatment, family planning, care for survivors of gender-based violence, and economic empowerment activities to promote access to a basic income; a total of 177,015 adolescent girls and young women were enrolled in the program as of 2020. (10,25,55-57)

† Program is funded by the Government of Zambia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (11,61)

In 2021, the government launched a new policy aimed at universal free public education in Zambia and financed the recruitment of 22,000 additional teachers and the purchase of desks and school supplies. (2) In addition, the Ministry of Labor, in collaboration with other line ministries, international cooperating partners, NGOs, and CSOs implemented a school re-integration and family reunion program for children withdrawn from child labor. (2)

Research indicates that problems with tracking of payments and cash flows within the Social Cash Transfer System resulted in irregular payment disbursements, including delayed and reduced payments, for vulnerable families receiving funds. (10,25) Moreover, an evaluation of the Social Cash Transfer Program found that it resulted in a net increase in child labor, particularly in farm work and cattle herding, because families used funds from the program to expand their agricultural and livestock holdings, which resulted in an increase of children's work activities within the home. Children were also more likely to work excessively long hours and there was no reduction in children's work outside of the home. (62) Although Zambia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem in all relevant sectors, particularly regarding child labor in agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.

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 Zambia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2018 – 2021
	Determine the list of light work activities for children ages 13 to 15.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion for an act to be considered child trafficking.	2017 – 2021
	Establish through statutory instrument the "school-going age" for compulsory education, in line with the minimum age for work.	2012 – 2021
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, and the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2021
	Institutionalize training for labor inspectors, including by training new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment and providing refresher courses.	2021
	Ensure that inspections cover all areas in which children work, including registered and unregistered businesses.	2010 – 2021
	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient funding and have resources, including vehicles and fuel, office space, and training, to enforce labor laws throughout the country.	2010 – 2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including training of new investigators, the number of investigations and convictions, and whether penalties were imposed.	2014 – 2021
	Develop and implement consistent procedures to screen and identify human trafficking victims while ensuring government agencies have sufficient human and financial resources to address human trafficking.	2018 – 2021
Coordination	Improve lines of communication and clarify responsibilities among agencies to improve effectiveness and referrals to social services.	2011 – 2021
	Ensure all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their mandates.	2021
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Policy and the National Employment and Labor Market Policy.	2013 – 2021
Social Programs	Ensure that all children have access to education and are not restricted by long travel distances, auxiliary school costs, lack of classrooms and teachers, lack of birth certificates, or early marriage.	2012 – 2021
	Harmonize child labor prevention and elimination measures and improve financial tracking in the Social Cash Transfer Program.	2020 – 2021
	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.	2011 – 2021

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