

In 2022, Zambia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government updated its Trafficking in Persons Act, removing the requirement that force, fraud, and other forms of coercion be demonstrated to establish a child trafficking crime, and launched the National Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants and the National Migrant Policy, which include strategies to protect Zambian and migrant children from human trafficking and labor exploitation. In addition, the government recruited 30,000 new teachers, deploying them to rural areas where vulnerabilities to child labor are the highest. 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. 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

In 2022, the government published updated child labor data indicating over 400,000 children were engaged in child labor, with most child labor occurring in the agricultural sector. (1)

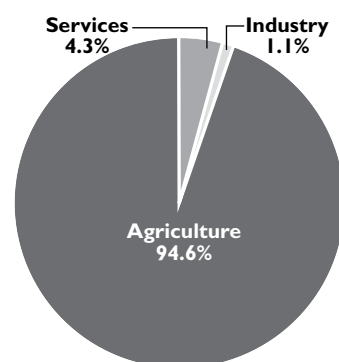
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.8 (400,423)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	74.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	7.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2013, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (2)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s Analysis of Statistics from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2021. (3)

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 (4-6)
	Raising and herding† cattle (4,6)
	Fishing† (6-8)
	Production of charcoal† (9)
	Forestry, including loading of timber (10,11)
Industry	Mining of tin, copper, chrome, gold, ore, and gems, including manganese (6-8,12,13)
	Work in quarries, including carrying heavy loads† and crushing stones† (6,7)
Services	Domestic work (6,7)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including begging and vending (6-8)
	Garbage disposal (6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in agriculture, herding, construction, domestic work, mining, small businesses, and textile production (14-16)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,17)
	Forced begging (16)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the selling of drugs (6)

† 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. (10,16,18) Traffickers exploit children from rural areas in Zambia and Malawi to cities for domestic work and to rural areas for agriculture. (16) 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. (10) Orphans, street children, children with disabilities, and children from poor households are particularly vulnerable to child trafficking. (8,16,19) In addition, traffickers exploit children from neighboring countries for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (20)







A NGO report found that children engage in various forms of work at artisanal mining sites, including digging, transporting and crushing rock, and providing various forms of domestic services in mining areas, such as cooking, childcare, and selling of foodstuffs. Children working in mining areas reported various health problems, including bodily injuries, illnesses, sight and vision problems, and exposure to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. (13) Illegal mining syndicates, called *jerabo* gangs, employ children in the Copperbelt province for mining activities, including forcing children to load trucks with stolen copper ore. (17,21) Commercial sexual exploitation of children also occurs, particularly along Zambia's borders and transit corridors. (15,17)

Long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas, an insufficient number of teachers and classrooms, lack of sanitation facilities within schools, and costs of learning materials are barriers to education. (10,22,23) The high prevalence of early marriage of girls increases 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. (10,19) During the reporting period, the government continued implementation of its free universal education policy, recruiting 30,000 new teachers for deployment in rural areas of Zambia where educational resources have been most lacking and where there are increased vulnerabilities to child labor because of rural poverty and close proximity to farms. (6,24)

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; Sections 16 and 81 of the Employment Code Act; Section 13 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (25-27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	19	Section 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 13 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27)
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 (26,28,29)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 14 and 24 of the Constitution; Sections 143, 261, and 263 of the Penal Code; Section 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Section 8 of the Employment Code Act (25,26,30,31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 17 of Amendment to the Constitution; Section 143 of the Penal Code; Sections 2 and 3 (1-4) of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, as amended by the Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act of 2022; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 17 of the Children's Code Act (25-27,30-32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 143 and 144 of the Penal Code; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 19 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27,31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 20 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 14 of the Defense Act (33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 14 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27,30)
Compulsory Education Age	No		Sections 16 and 17 of the Education Act (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 15 of the Education Act (34)

* Country has no conscription (35)

The government amended the law on trafficking in persons, eliminating previous requirements for demonstration of threats, force, intimidation, or other forms of coercion to constitute a child trafficking offense. (32) In addition, the government enacted the Children's Code Act of 2022, affirming and harmonizing legal protections of children from child labor, including its worst forms, while outlining mandates and responsibilities of government agencies to protect children. (6,27)

The law establishes a light work framework for employment of children ages 13 to 15 but has not identified permitted light work activities. (26,36) 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. (34,37)

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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 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 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. The Child Labor Unit, which falls under the labor inspectorate, carries out inspections related to child labor. (10,38) The MLSS generally conducts planned labor inspections only in registered private institutions; 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. (39-41) The MLSS continues 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. (41,42)
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. (10) The 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act created a new Anti-Human Trafficking Department, responsible for enforcement of trafficking in persons laws, and housed within the Ministry of Home Affairs. (6,32)
Zambia Police Service	Collaborates with the Ministry of Justice to investigate and prosecute child labor cases. (10) 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. (10,43) 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. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, 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	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$26,000 (10)	\$130,000 (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	240 (10)	179 (42)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (10)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,800 (10)	2,324 (42)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (44)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (44)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (44)	Unknown (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (6)

Although the MLSS reported that the budget for the labor inspectorate in 2022 was five times the amount reported in 2021, the MLSS also 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. (10,39,45,46)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, 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	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (10)	No (6)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	1 (47)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	3 (48)	1 (47)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (47)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (6,47)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (6)

In 2022, law enforcement officials investigated and initiated one prosecution related to the human trafficking of 13 girls for sexual exploitation; research, however, was unable to determine whether the government secured a conviction and imposed penalties for this particular case. Because law enforcement authorities did not provide age-specific information of human trafficking victims, the government may have undertaken criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor that are not reflected in this report. (47) Law enforcement agencies do not have sufficient financial and human resources to address human trafficking, and standard operating procedures to screen and identify victims are not fully executed as a result. (17,42)

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 efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Advises and oversees child labor matters, including implementation of hazardous work regulations. Chaired by the MLSS and comprises government representatives, employers, trade unions, and civil society members. Local-level coordination of child labor matters is maintained through District Child Labor Committees, consisting of local representatives of Zambia Police Service; the MLSS; the Ministry of Community Development, Mother, and Child Health; and civil society stakeholders. (14) During the reporting period, the National Steering Committee on Child Labor participated in television and radio sensitization campaigns and an event commemorating World Day Against Child Labor. (6) District-Level Child Labor Committees, however, were largely inactive during the reporting period, likely limiting the efficacy of the National Steering Committee and leading to gaps in coordination on child labor issues at the local level. (6)

Communication lapses among government agencies regarding mandates and responsibilities may hinder coordination and the ability of agencies to implement their mandates related to the worst forms of child labor. (14)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a policy 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.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Labor Policy	Outlines objectives for prevention and elimination of child labor and designates responsible agencies to address child labor issues. (49) Implemented through the government's National Action Plan (NAP) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2020–2025), which outlines child labor activities through 2025. (7) Government conducted sensitization activities in support of the NAP, including World Day Against Child Labor. (6)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (14,50-52)

On December 2, 2022, the government launched the National Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants and the National Migrant Policy, which include strategies to protect Zambian and migrant children from human trafficking and labor exploitation. (47,53) 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. (54) Also, the government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Policy. (55)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, 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 & Activities
Social Cash Transfer Program†	Government program to provide funds to families for food security, poverty reduction, child welfare, and increasing school enrollment. In 2022, the government significantly increased the number of individuals receiving benefits under the Social Cash Transfer Program, from 700,000 in 2021, to between 974,000 and 1,027,000 individuals in 2022, as well as increased the size of household allocations from previous reporting periods. (56,57) However, research found problems with tracking of payments and cash flows within the Social Cash Transfer System that resulted in irregular payment disbursements, including delayed and reduced payments, for vulnerable families receiving funds. (11,29) Moreover, an evaluation of the Social Cash Transfer Program suggests that the transfers may actually have led to a net increase in child labor, particularly in farm work and cattle herding, because many 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. (58)

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 Zambia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (14,59)

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, mining, 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 – 2022
	Determine the list of light work activities permitted for children ages 13 to 15.	2018 – 2022
	Establish through statutory instrument the age of 15 as the "school-going age" for compulsory education, to align with the minimum age for work.	2012 – 2022

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase planned inspections in unregistered businesses, including artisanal mining sites, farms, and private homes, to ensure monitoring of all sectors in which children are working.	2010 – 2022
	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 – 2022
	Increase fiscal and material resources, including vehicles and fuel, office space, and training, for the labor inspectorate to enforce labor laws throughout the country.	2010 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including training of new investigators, the number of convictions, and whether penalties were imposed.	2014 – 2022
	Develop and implement consistent procedures to screen and identify human trafficking victims while increasing fiscal and human resources for criminal law enforcement agencies working to address human trafficking of children.	2018 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure all coordinating bodies, including District-Level Child Labor Committees, are active and able to coordinate child labor prevention activities at the local level.	2021 – 2022
	Improve lines of communication and clarify responsibilities among agencies to improve effectiveness and referrals to social services.	2011 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Policy and the National Employment and Labor Market Policy.	2013 – 2022
Social Programs	Address barriers to education by increasing schools in rural areas, increasing number of teachers and classrooms, defraying auxiliary education costs, and providing targeted support for girls who enter into early marriage to continue education.	2012 – 2022
	Harmonize child labor prevention and elimination measures and improve financial tracking in the Social Cash Transfer Program.	2020 – 2022
	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 – 2022

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