

In 2017, Zimbabwe made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established anti-human trafficking task forces in 7 out of 10 provinces, and the Stop Child Labor Program developed a bridge school that provided education and social services to former child laborers. The government also continued funding its cash transfer program, arrested perpetrators engaged in commercial sexual exploitation of children, and withdrew children from the worst forms of child labor. However, children engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and mining. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. Zimbabwe continues to lack specific social programs targeting sectors in which child labor is most prevalent. In addition, gaps remain in the country's legal framework against child labor, such as lack of free basic education, which increases children's vulnerability.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Zimbabwe engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and mining. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5) 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	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2013, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (6)
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2018. (7)

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 (8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 4; 15)
	Fishing, including casting nets, hauling fish loads, and sorting fish (8; 9; 10; 12; 15)
	Forestry, such as dragging logs from felling sites and loading logs for transport (8; 11; 12)
	Cattle herding (8; 12)
Industry	Mining gold and chrome, using dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, and extracting material from underground passages and quarries† (8; 9; 16; 17)
Services	Street work, including vending and begging (8; 10; 11; 18; 19; 20; 15)
	Domestic work (8; 11; 12; 21; 22; 5; 15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking and gambling (9)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8; 9; 11; 12; 23; 24; 1; 25; 2; 3)
	Working in agriculture, mining for the production of gold and chrome, and domestic work, each as a result of human trafficking (9; 23; 5)

† 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.

Zimbabwean children are trafficked to South Africa, Mozambique, and Zambia, where they become victims of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in domestic work. Zimbabwean children, especially orphans, are sometimes lured by relatives with

Zimbabwe

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT




the promise of education or adoption, but instead are recruited to work within the country as domestic workers or forced to work in mining, drug smuggling, or other illegal activities. (5) The deterioration of Zimbabwe's economy also contributes to an increase in child labor. (26; 27; 28) An NGO conducted research that revealed that girls under age 18 engaged in commercial sex due to push factors such as the breakdown of the family unit, poverty, and gender-based violence. (2; 29) In 2017, UNICEF reported that Zimbabwe experienced flooding that damaged schools in Tsholotsho, Hwange, Bubi, Masvingo, and Gokwe North, resulting in the displacement of hundreds of people, including children, from their homes. (30; 31) These push factors increase children's vulnerability to child labor, including its worst forms. (9)

Citizenship is derived from birth, but many children, especially orphans and children living in rural areas, are not registered due to poverty and lack of awareness of the requirements. (9; 24) Beginning in grade seven, children are unable to sit for exams without a birth registration, leading some to enter the workforce at a young age. (9; 15) School fees are often prohibitively expensive and limit access to education. (10; 32) According to the UN, children with disabilities, especially in rural areas, experience greater abuse, violence, stigma, and exclusion, and, therefore, have limited access to education. (24)

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 child labor, including access to free public education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 3 of the Labor Amendment Act (33)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 11(4) of the Labor Act (33)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 11(4) of the Labor Act; Section 10A of the Children's Act (33; 34)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 54–55 of the Constitution; Section 4A of the Labor Act (33; 35)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 87 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 3 of the Sexual Offenses Act; Section 8(2) of the Children's Protection and Adoption Act; Section 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (36; 37; 38; 39)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 156 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 10 of the Children's Protection and Adoption Act (9; 38; 39)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes	18	Section 9 of the National Service Act (40)
State Voluntary	Yes	16	Sections 5 and 10 of the National Service Act (40)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Non-state	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	12‡	Section 5 of the Education Act (41)
Free Public Education	No		

‡ Age calculated based on available information (42)

Zimbabwean law does not mandate free basic education for children. (43) Lack of access to basic education may increase the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (9) In addition, children in Zimbabwe are required to attend school only up to age 12. This standard makes children ages 12–15 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school and not legally permitted to work. (42)

In 2017, the Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill was under legislative review and awaited final approval. The newly proposed amendments would allow for the revocation of a mining license if miners engaged in the use 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 the Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Social Welfare (MPSLSW) 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)	Enforce labor laws and investigate labor-related complaints, including complaints involving child labor. Established a Department for Child Welfare and Probation Services responsible for child protection services, including investigating, intervening in, and reporting on child abuse cases. (9; 11)
Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)	Enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor in conjunction with the MPSLSW and the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs. (9) Address issues related to child labor through victim-friendly units in every district. Conduct transnational trafficking investigations through an anti-trafficking desk at Zimbabwe's INTERPOL office. (9)
Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs	Oversee all courts, including labor courts. Address trafficking and child victim cases through victim-friendly courts. (9)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MPSLSW that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including penalty assessment authorization.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown* (12)	Unknown* (32)
Number of Labor Inspectors	120 (12)	120 (32)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (12)	No (32)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	N/A (12)	N/A (32)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (12)	N/A (32)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown* (12)	Unknown* (32)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted		
Number Conducted at Worksites	866 (12)	Unknown* (32)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	436 (12)	Unknown* (32)

Zimbabwe

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (cont)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown* (12)	Unknown* (32)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown* (12)	Unknown* (32)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (32)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (12)	Yes (32)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (12)	Yes (32)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (32)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (32)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (32)

* The government does not publish this information.

The MPSLSW's inspectorate has assigned designated agents who conduct inspections in specific regions and labor inspectors who conduct inspections in all regions. (44) It is unclear whether designated agents conduct child labor investigations in the informal sector. Labor inspectors also oversee arbitration and conciliation, which strains their capacity to conduct onsite investigations to combat child labor. (44)

In 2017, the MPSLSW conducted investigations and removed 73 children from commercial sexual exploitation. (25) The MPSLSW transported 53 girls subjected to commercial sexual exploitation to a safe location to receive assistance. (32) The number of labor 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. (45; 46) Research indicates that the government continues to lack sufficient resources, mainly financial, to investigate child labor law violations. (8; 47)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, 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 law enforcement, including the publication of enforcement data.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown* (12)	Unknown (32)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown* (12)	Unknown (32)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown* (12)	Unknown (32)
Number of Investigations	Unknown* (12)	Unknown (32)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown* (12)	4 (48)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown* (12)	Unknown (32)
Number of Convictions	Unknown* (12)	Unknown (32)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (32)

* The government does not publish this information.

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 the efficacy of coordination activities.

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Address 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 Empowerment. (49) Also includes international organizations and civil society groups, such as workers' and employers' organizations. (49; 50) It is unclear whether the committee met to address child labor. (32)
Ministry-Level Committee on Children's Issues	Coordinate 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 Empowerment. (9; 11; 49) Research could not find information about the activities and achievements of this coordinating body.
Child Protection Committees	Operate at the village, ward, district, provincial, and national levels to discuss issues affecting children, including child labor. Representatives include ministries, civil society, local volunteers, and teachers. Report to the ministry-level Committee on Children's Issues. (32) Research could not find information about the activities and achievements of this coordinating body.
National Task Force on Street Children	Outline 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. (9; 49) Also includes the Ministry of Home Affairs, represented by the ZRP. (32) Research could not find information about the activities and achievements of this coordinating body.
Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee	Create a national action plan to combat human trafficking and promote the reintegration and rehabilitation of trafficking victims, including children. (8; 51) The committee met twice during the year. In addition, 7 of 10 provinces established anti-trafficking in persons provincial taskforces led by local community leaders. (32)

The National Steering Committee on Victim Friendly Courts met during the year to discuss child protection issues in court proceedings. In addition, the government collaborated with the Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC) to develop a child labor handbook that explains the child labor laws to labor inspectors, child protection services staff, and representatives from labor unions. (32) The ZNCWC also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with state broadcaster Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation to allow ZNCWC to publish content on child labor issues. (32)

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 Action Plan to Combat Child Labor	Strengthens understanding of child labor issues and creates an entity to coordinate responses to the findings of this analysis. Consists of three focus areas: education assistance, poverty assistance through a cash transfer scheme, and health assistance. (9) Research could not determine whether actions were taken during the year.
Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action (2016–2018)	Aims to implement the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons through the development of strategies to combat human trafficking, with emphasis on prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. The plan was developed with technical support from IOM, UNODC, and the Southern African Development Community, and officially launched in July 2016. (52) During the implementation of the plan, victims received medical assistance, and there were awareness-raising campaigns. (53)
Zimbabwe UN Assistance Development Framework (2016–2020)	Integrates child labor prevention strategies in the Education for All campaign headed by the UN. Promotes gender equality, reduction of HIV/AIDs prevalence, and allocates social resources to address child labor. (54) Research could not determine whether actions were taken during the year.

Although the MPSLSW, in collaboration with the ILO, previously conducted a child labor rapid assessment that prompted the development of the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor, the government took no actions to operationalize the plan and did not use the results of the assessment to inform policies or programs. (8) In 2017, all ministries approved the National Social Protection Policy Framework that includes social protection strategies to address poverty, social insurance, and labor market interventions. Despite this, the policy does not explicitly include child labor prevention and elimination measures. (32)

Zimbabwe

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to the prevention or elimination of 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
Phase III of the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (2016–2020)	UNICEF Child Protection Fund program that includes a focus on equity and access to quality education for children and provides child protection services. Provides a cash transfer program that encourages families to keep children in school. (55) During the year, cash transfers reached at least 63,095 poor households in 23 districts, and provided child protection and welfare services to 57,596 children. (53)
Stop Child Labor Program	Hivos-funded program that establishes child labor-free zones throughout the country. The program includes the Ministry of Labor, Coalition Against Child Labor in Zimbabwe, African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect, Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Teachers' Association, and the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union. (12) Teachers, labor inspectors, police officers, and other stakeholders support this initiative by sending child laborers back to school. (56) In 2017, the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe and the Coalition Against Child Labor in Zimbabwe developed a bridging school for dropout students. To date, the school has served 92 ex-child laborers. (57) The program funding expired in April 2017. (32)
Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)†	Government program, supported by the UK Department for International Development, 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 as a result of economic hardship. (58) The Government continued support throughout the year, but it is unclear how many students benefitted. (32) BEAM's primary school beneficiaries totaled 298,186 children, and secondary school beneficiaries totaled 90,284 children. (53)

† Program is funded by the Government of Zimbabwe.

In 2017, the Registrar General's office implemented a mobile birth registration program across the country to ensure that citizens receive identity documents, including birth certificates. (53) Although Zimbabwe has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2017
	Ensure that the age up to which education is compulsory is the same as the minimum age for work.	2016 – 2017
	Ensure that the law establishes free basic education for children through age 15.	2009 – 2017
Enforcement	Ensure that inspectors have sufficient time and resources to conduct core inspection duties such as child labor inspections.	2017
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for labor law violations.	2017
	Increase the number of labor law inspectors to provide sufficient coverage of the workforce to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2016 – 2017
	Ensure adequate funding, human resources, and training for the labor inspectorate to conduct child labor inspections.	2009 – 2017
	Publish information about the Labor Inspectorate's funding and training, and the penalties collected.	2016 – 2017
	Publish information about the training system for criminal investigators, the number of criminal investigations, the number of prosecutions initiated, and the number of convictions achieved.	2015 – 2017
Coordination	Ensure that child labor committees meet regularly to address the worst forms of child labor.	2016 – 2017

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Implement the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor.	2010 – 2017
	Integrate child labor prevention and elimination measures in relevant policies, such as the National Social Protection Policy Framework.	2017
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017
	Ensure that children are registered at birth to facilitate their entrance into secondary school.	2014 – 2017
	Ensure that children with disabilities have equal access to education.	2016 – 2017
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially to address commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2010 – 2017

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Zimbabwe

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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