

Zimbabwe

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Zimbabwe are unavailable.⁵⁰⁸⁰ Over 90 percent of economically active children age 5 to 17 reside in rural areas.⁵⁰⁸¹ These children often work in traditional and commercial farming, forestry, and fishing.⁵⁰⁸² Many of these children work for long hours in the fields, in some cases in order to pay for schooling.⁵⁰⁸³ The incidence of child labor on commercial farms has decreased, however, as a result of the government's land redistribution program.⁵⁰⁸⁴ Children also work in domestic service, small-scale mining, gold panning, quarrying, construction, microindustries, manufacturing, trade, restaurants, and as beggars.⁵⁰⁸⁵ The high unemployment rate has contributed to an increased incidence of children working in the informal sector as more children have been forced to fill the income gap left by ill and unemployed relatives.⁵⁰⁸⁶ Child labor is one of many problems associated with poverty. In 1995, the most recent year for which data are available, 56.1 percent of the population in Zimbabwe were living on less than USD 1 a day.⁵⁰⁸⁷

In July 2002, the government announced that as of January 2003, national youth training camps, also known as youth militia training, would be compulsory for all children completing school.⁵⁰⁸⁸ While the purpose of the camps is to build self-esteem, equip children with job skills, and reinforce their understanding of Zimbabwe's struggle for independence, reports indicate that no real vocational instruction takes place and that trainees are subjected to poor conditions and political indoctrination.⁵⁰⁸⁹ In addition, girls as young as 11 or 12 were said to have been repeatedly raped at the camps, including by officials.⁵⁰⁹⁰

⁵⁰⁸⁰ This statistic is not available for the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report for information about sources used. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section.

⁵⁰⁸¹ Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, *National Child Labour Survey: Country Report- Zimbabwe*, online, Government of Zimbabwe, Central Statistical Office, Harare, 1999, para. 15; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/zimbabwe/report/index.htm>.

⁵⁰⁸² Ibid., para. 45, 60. See also Line Eldring, Sabata Nakanyane, and Malehoko Tshoaedi, "Child Labor in the Tobacco Growing Sector in Africa" (paper presented at the IUF/ITGA/BAT Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor, Nairobi, October 8-9, 2000), 87. Children from rural areas are also often recruited to work as domestics in the houses of distant kin or unrelated employers for long hours with little free time.

⁵⁰⁸³ Children work after school during the planting and harvesting seasons and full time during holidays. See Eldring, Nakanyane, and Tshoaedi, "Child Labor in the Tobacco Growing Sector," 84.

⁵⁰⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27760.htm>.

⁵⁰⁸⁵ Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, *National Child Labour Survey*, 60. See also Eldring, Nakanyane, and Tshoaedi, "Child Labor in the Tobacco Growing Sector," 87.

⁵⁰⁸⁶ In 2004, the unemployment rate was estimated to be as high as 80 percent. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 6d.

⁵⁰⁸⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005* [CD-ROM], Washington, DC, 2005.

⁵⁰⁸⁸ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, November 17, 2004; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=803.

⁵⁰⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵⁰⁹⁰ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "'Green Bombers' deserting poor conditions in camps", [online], January 23, 2004; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=39106>.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also increased children's vulnerability to exploitative work.⁵⁰⁹¹ The epidemic has left close to 1 million children orphaned and has forced children or adolescents who head their families to work in order to survive.⁵⁰⁹² Government-funded and private orphanages are filled to capacity, and the number of street children continued to rise dramatically, severely straining formal and traditional social safety systems.⁵⁰⁹³ The situation facing many children has led them to rely increasingly on dangerous survival strategies such as poaching, theft, and prostitution.⁵⁰⁹⁴

Zimbabwe is a source and transit country for the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children, according to the U.S. Department of State.⁵⁰⁹⁵ There were reports that women and children were internally trafficked to southern border towns as well as to South Africa for commercial sexual exploitation.⁵⁰⁹⁶ There were also reports of police or immigration officials sexually abusing children at the borders of Botswana and South Africa.⁵⁰⁹⁷

Education is neither free nor compulsory in Zimbabwe.⁵⁰⁹⁸ The HIV/AIDS crisis and increasing school fees have combined to increase dropout rates and reduce school enrollment and attendance.⁵⁰⁹⁹ In 2003, the gross primary enrollment rate was 93 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 79 percent.⁵¹⁰⁰ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Primary school attendance rates are not available for Zimbabwe.⁵¹⁰¹ As of 2002, 70 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.⁵¹⁰²

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment is 13 years.⁵¹⁰³ Children between the ages of 13 and 15 may be employed if they are apprentices or if their work is an integral part of a vocational training program.⁵¹⁰⁴ At age 15, children may engage in light work beyond training programs, and young persons under the age of 18 years are prohibited from performing work that might jeopardize their health, safety, or morals.⁵¹⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁹¹ Zimbabwe suffers from one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world, with 24.6 percent of adults HIV infected, and 120,000 children infected. See UNAIDS/WHO, *UNAIDS/WHO Epidemiological Fact Sheet - Zimbabwe*, 2004 Update, 2.

⁵⁰⁹² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵⁰⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.* See also UNICEF, *At a Glance: Zimbabwe*, UNICEF, [online] [cited May 13, 2005]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/zimbabwe.html>.

⁵⁰⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Zimbabwe*, online, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., June 14, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33189.htm>.

⁵⁰⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵⁰⁹⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed October 2005).

⁵¹⁰¹ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for information about sources used.

⁵¹⁰² UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=55> (School life expectancy, % of repeaters, survival rates; accessed December 2005).

⁵¹⁰³ U.S. Embassy- Harare, *reporting*, August 25, 2003.

⁵¹⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 6d.

⁵¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The Children's Protection and Adoption Amendment Act prohibits the involvement of children in hazardous labor. The act defines hazardous labor as any work likely to interfere with the education of children; expose children to hazardous substances; involve underground mining; require the use of electronically powered hand tools, cutting, or grinding blades; expose children to extreme conditions; or occur during a night shift.⁵¹⁰⁶

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Zimbabwe. The Criminal Code prohibits children from visiting or residing in a brothel and prohibits anyone from causing the seduction, abduction, or prostitution of children.⁵¹⁰⁷ No laws specifically address trafficking in persons.⁵¹⁰⁸ The Sexual Offenses Act criminalizes the transportation of persons across borders for sex.⁵¹⁰⁹ Both the Constitution and Labor Relations Amendment Act prohibit forced labor. However, the Labor Relations Amendment Act makes an exception for labor required from a member of a disciplined force, presumably allowing for compulsory service in the National Youth Service.⁵¹¹⁰

Under the Sexual Offenses Act of 2001, a person convicted of prostituting a child under the age of 12 years is subject to a fine of up to ZWD 35,000 (USD 5.60) or imprisonment of up to 7 years.⁵¹¹¹ The Sexual Offenses Act also establishes a maximum fine of ZWD 50,000 (USD 8.06) and a maximum prison sentence of 10 years for procuring another person for prostitution or sex inside and outside of the country.⁵¹¹² Since 1999, the Government of Zimbabwe has submitted to the ILO a list or an equivalent document identifying the types of work that it has determined are harmful to the health, safety or morals of children under Convention 182 or Convention 138.⁵¹¹³

According to an ILO report, labor regulations, including child labor laws, are poorly enforced because of weak interpretations of the laws, a lack of labor inspectors, and a poor understanding among those affected of their basic legal rights.⁵¹¹⁴ While reports indicate that labor relations officers from the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare are responsible for general enforcement of labor regulations, it is unclear if they also handle child labor cases.⁵¹¹⁵ The Zimbabwe Republic Police serve as the primary authority to combat trafficking and the Department of Immigration monitors borders.⁵¹¹⁶ Although the government has established Victim Friendly Courts in Harare (where abuses perpetrated against children can be tried), no trafficking cases had been prosecuted as of 2004, the latest year for which such information is available.⁵¹¹⁷

⁵¹⁰⁶ *Children's Protection and Adoption Amendment Act*, (2001); available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_country=ZWE&p_classification=04&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTRY.

⁵¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Zimbabwe*.

⁵¹⁰⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Zimbabwe*.

⁵¹¹⁰ Labor required by way of parental discipline is also excluded from the definition of forced labor. See U.S. Embassy- Harare, *reporting*, August 2003. See also *Constitution*; available from <http://confinder.richmond.edu/Zimbabwe.htm#14>.

⁵¹¹¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵¹¹² *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹³ ILO-IPEC official, e-mail communication to USDOL official, November 14, 2005.

⁵¹¹⁴ Eldring, Nakanyane, and Tshoaeidi, "Child Labor in the Tobacco Growing Sector", 85-86.

⁵¹¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 6e. See also Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, *National Child Labour Survey*, Action and Policy Recommendations, paragraph 8.

⁵¹¹⁶ UNICEF, *2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*, Analysis of the Situation of Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region, UNICEF, Yokohama, December 17-20 2001; available from <http://www.unicef.org/events/yokohama/csec-east-southern-africa-draft.html>.

⁵¹¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report - 2005: Zimbabwe*, Washington, D.C., June 1, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls.tiprpt/2005/46616.htm>. See also UNICEF, *2nd World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children - Analysis*.

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

While the government has completed the development of a National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children to help ensure that such children are able to access education, food, and health services and are protected from abuse and exploitation, the plan had not been enacted by the end of 2004 due to a lack of budgetary resources.⁵¹¹⁸ The Government of Zimbabwe has a Child Labor Task Force Committee to define child labor, identify child exploitation, recognize problem areas, and propose legislation to resolve these problems.⁵¹¹⁹

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	6/6/2000	✓
Ratified Convention 182	12/11/2000	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member		✓
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

Monies from the universal AIDS payroll tax have been allocated through the National AIDS councils for a number of supportive services for orphans, including funds to cover school expenses.⁵¹²⁰ On May 19, 2005, however, the Government of Zimbabwe commenced Operation Murambatsvina, also referred to as Operation Restore Order, in an attempt to “drive out filth” from illegal dwellings and structures and to combat alleged unlawful activities.⁵¹²¹ It is estimated that 700,000 residents (over 200,000 children) have lost either their homes, jobs, or both, causing an estimated drop in school enrollment between 20 and 25 percent.⁵¹²²

The government engaged in anti-trafficking efforts and programs to combat sexual exploitation of children.⁵¹²³ In 2005, the Attorney General’s office began developing an anti-trafficking education and training program for prosecutors and judges to equip them to better utilize existing law to address trafficking-related issues in prosecutions.⁵¹²⁴

The Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Social Welfare’s Children in Difficult Circumstances Program and the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) provide school fees, uniforms and books for children who cannot afford to attend school.⁵¹²⁵ By the second term of the 2004 school year, education assistance given to orphans and disadvantaged children through BEAM had run out due to a hike in school fees, leaving at least 800,000 children receiving support unable to pay the higher fees.⁵¹²⁶ Corruption in the beneficiary selection process also undermined the provision of these social welfare grants, with selection

⁵¹¹⁸ More recent information on its status is not available. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵¹¹⁹ The committee is composed of the Ministries of Education, Sport and Culture; National Affairs; Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation; Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare; Health and Child Welfare; Lands, Agriculture, and Rural Resettlement; and Local Government, Public Works and National Housing. See Education to Combat Abusive Child Labor Activity, *Child Labor Country Brief: Zimbabwe*, [online] September 12, 2002 [cited September 20, 2002]; available from <http://www.beps.net/ChildLabor/Database.htm>. Hard copy on file, no longer available online.

⁵¹²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵¹²¹ Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, *Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe*, United Nations, July 17, 2005, 7. See also *The Impact of “Operation Murambatsvina” (Drive Out Filth) in Zimbabwe*, Combined Harare Residents Association, Zimbabwe Peace Project, ActionAid International, August, 2005, iii.

⁵¹²² Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, *UN Special Envoy Report on Impact of Operation Murambatsvina*, 7, 41. See also *The Impact of “Operation Murambatsvina” (Drive Out Filth) in Zimbabwe*, v.

⁵¹²³ “Analysis of the Situation of Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region” (paper presented at the 2nd World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Nairobi, Kenya, October 2001); available from http://www.unicef.org/events/yokohama/csec-east-southern-africa-draft.html#_Toc527979975.

⁵¹²⁴ U.S. Department of State, *TIP Report - 2005: Zimbabwe*.

⁵¹²⁵ Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Zimbabwe: Hundreds of thousands may be out of school*, [online] April 29, 2004 [cited October 7, 2005]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=40832>.

⁵¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

committees in some communities directing grants to relatives, friends, and political supporters.⁵¹²⁷ UNICEF and other international organizations are assisting with the government's education efforts and have been particularly involved in school feeding programs during the recent food crisis.⁵¹²⁸ UNICEF is also in the process of rehabilitating 100 satellite schools, and training 15,000 primary school teachers to teach life skills and provide education on HIV/AIDS to 500,000 pupils.⁵¹²⁹ The Ministry of Education operates 489 satellite schools on formerly white-owned commercial farms to accommodate the close to 70,000 children whose families have been resettled from communal lands.⁵¹³⁰ Satellite schools, often criticized for their poor quality education and resulting high absenteeism, function as unregistered learning centers affiliated with local official schools.⁵¹³¹

⁵¹²⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Zimbabwe*, Section 5.

⁵¹²⁸ UNICEF, *Southern Africa - Countries in crisis*, [online] 2005 [cited October 7, 2005]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/noteworthy/safricacrisis/zimbabwe.html>. See also Vongai Makamure, *Food Aid Programme to Start at Critical Time in Zimbabwe*, World Vision International, February 19, 2002; available from <http://www.wvi.org/wvi/archives/africa/zimbabwe.htm#19/02/2002>. See also Oxfam, "Zimbabwe Short of Food," *Oxfam News* (April 3, 2003); available from http://www.oxfam.ca/news/Zimbabwe/April3_update.htm. See also Christian Aid, *Christian Aid in Zimbabwe*, in Christian Aid, [online] September 2005 [cited October 7, 2005]; available from <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/world/where/safrica/zimbabp.htm>.

⁵¹²⁹ UNICEF, *At a Glance: Zimbabwe*.

⁵¹³⁰ Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Zimbabwe: Farm kids struggle to find decent education*, [online] February 13, 2004 [cited October 7, 2005]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=39468>.

⁵¹³¹ *Ibid.*