

ZIMBABWE: TIER 2 WATCH LIST

The Government of Zimbabwe does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases and conducting training for law enforcement, immigration officials, and other key anti-trafficking officials. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, even considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, on its anti-trafficking capacity. The government did not amend its anti-trafficking law to criminalize all forms of trafficking. The government did not identify any trafficking victims or provide care for victims in its designated shelter. The government did not convict any traffickers. Therefore Zimbabwe remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the second consecutive year.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Amend the anti-trafficking law to criminalize all forms of trafficking in line with the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

- Renew, implement, and allocate sufficient resources to the anti-trafficking national action plan (NAP).
- Expedite trafficking cases in courts to address the significant backlog of cases.
- Increase collaboration with, and provide financial or in-kind support to, NGOs that assist trafficking victims.
- Increase efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes, including complicit government officials and individuals who purchase commercial sex from children, through adequately funding law enforcement and developing capacity to conduct thorough investigations using enhanced evidence collection.
- Provide specialized training to law enforcement, labor inspectors, prosecutors, and judiciary officials on human trafficking investigations and prosecutions, particularly as distinct from labor law and immigration violations, and on a victim-centered approach to investigations and prosecutions.
- Train frontline workers to proactively identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, including orphaned children, migrant workers, and Cuban medical workers, and refer them to appropriate services using the national referral mechanism (NRM).
- Implement and consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, including by eliminating recruitment fees charged to migrant workers and holding

fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable. • Establish shelters for trafficking victims in each province and actively refer identified victims to care.

- Develop mutual legal assistance treaties and other agreements to facilitate information gathering and sharing with foreign governments.
- Collect data on human trafficking trends within Zimbabwe to better inform government anti-trafficking efforts.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained mixed anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. Zimbabwean law criminalized some forms of sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Inconsistent with international law, the 2014 Trafficking in Persons Act defined trafficking in persons as a movement based crime and did not adequately define “exploitation.” The 2014 act criminalized the involuntary transport of a person and the voluntary transport for an unlawful purpose, into, outside, or within Zimbabwe. The focus on transport and the inadequate definition of “exploitation” left Zimbabwe without comprehensive prohibitions of trafficking crimes. The law prescribed penalties of 10 years to life imprisonment, which were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking crimes, commensurate with penalties for other serious crimes, such as rape.

Zimbabwe’s Labor Relations Amendment Act criminalized forced labor and prescribed penalties of up to two years’ imprisonment, which were not sufficiently stringent. The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act criminalized procuring a person for unlawful sexual conduct, inside or outside of Zimbabwe, and prescribed penalties of up to two years’ imprisonment; these penalties were not sufficiently stringent when applied to cases of sex trafficking. The act also criminalized coercing or inducing anyone to engage in unlawful sexual conduct with another person by threat or intimidation, prescribing sufficiently stringent penalties of one to five years’ imprisonment. For the third consecutive year, the government made no progress passing its 2019 draft Trafficking in Persons Act Amendment Bill. The government did not consult civil society during drafting, which several organizations viewed as an intentional move to avoid addressing deficiencies in farming and mining laws that facilitate forced labor.

The government reported investigating seven trafficking cases, including three cases of forced labor and four cases of sex trafficking, compared with initiating none in the previous reporting period. The government-initiated prosecutions of four suspects, compared with none initiated in the previous reported period. The government did not report convicting any traffickers for forced labor or sex trafficking, compared with one conviction in the previous reporting period. The government did not report the status of five ongoing prosecutions initiated in 2020. The pandemic severely curtailed investigations and operation of courts during the reporting period, resulting in a backlog of trafficking

cases. Despite continued urging from victims to take action in the 17 alleged trafficking cases of Zimbabwean women exploited in Kuwait in 2016 and the victims' stated willingness to participate in the trials, the government did not do so for the fifth consecutive year. The government arrested a Zimbabwean labor recruiter for recruiting Zimbabwean women to work in Oman, where they were allegedly exploited in domestic servitude;

the case remained pending at the end of the reporting period. The government reported collaborating with the Governments of South Africa, Botswana, and Oman on investigations involving trafficking of Zimbabwean victims.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking crimes; however, corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action during the year. Observers reported the government did not have a system to investigate and prosecute complicit officials. Reportedly, senior government officials obstructed investigations into allegations of child labor violations on farms in Mazowe district. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not investigate serious, credible claims that complicit magistrates, judges, and senior government officials undermined judicial independence, including by bribing judges with farms and homes. Military officers patrolling the Beitbridge border post received bribes to facilitate unauthorized crossings, including in past years from organized criminal groups likely transporting victims

of human trafficking. During the previous reporting period, an NGO assisted four potential labor trafficking victims allegedly exploited on a member of Parliament's farm; the government did not report any action to investigate the allegations by the end of the reporting period. Officials accepted bribes to not inspect farms and businesses that used exploitative labor practices. Observers reported that children

taken to one of the government-operated vulnerable children's homes were allegedly forced to work on citrus farms in Mazowe.

Violent gangs forced workers into labor in some artisanal and defunct gold mines, operating with impunity due to their connections to police and local politicians who allegedly accepted bribes and allowed individuals to enter the mines and work without oversight. Trafficking victims reported law enforcement threatened and intimidated them when they tried to report their cases. With support from an international organization, the government reported training 500 police officers, 10 immigration officers, and 20 members of the Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (ATIMC) on trafficking, including topics such as anti-trafficking laws, victim interviewing, and the NRM. However, observers reported the government lacked systematic procedures to effectively investigate cases and immigration officials lacked capacity to detect and investigate trafficking. Because law enforcement and prosecutors lacked specialized training, they routinely prosecuted trafficking cases as wage infractions or immigration violations.

PROTECTION

The government demonstrated negligible victim identification and protection efforts. For the second consecutive year, the government did not report identifying any trafficking victims. NGOs reported the Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Social Welfare (MPSLSW) referred six trafficking victims for services.

Media reported the government identified at least 18 Zimbabwean victims abroad through investigations; repatriation efforts remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

After reports of numerous Zimbabwean women exploited in Oman in domestic servitude, the government dispatched an investigative team to engage with the Omani government, identify additional victims, and facilitate repatriation. NGO-operated hotlines identified and referred an additional 51 trafficking victims to care.

NGOs and international organizations provided all care for trafficking survivors, including shelter, food, medical treatment, family reunification and reintegration, counseling, and income-generating assistance; government social workers facilitated access to government benefits. Shelters and services for trafficking, domestic violence, and gender-based violence (GBV) victims were available to males and females, nationals and foreigners, irrespective of the victim's participation in legal proceedings.

Additionally, NGOs reported pandemic lockdowns restricted their ability to identify victims and provide services during the reporting period. For at least the fifth consecutive year, the government relied on NGOs and foreign donors to fund trafficking victim services; organizations struggled to operate without adequate and consistent financial support, and some could only provide short-term care. While the government had one operational shelter that could accommodate 30 GBV and trafficking victims and 24 vulnerable children's homes, these shelters did not report providing care for any trafficking victims during the reporting period.

The 2014 anti-trafficking act required the government to establish service centers in each of Zimbabwe's 10 provinces and provide counseling and reintegration services to survivors; however, the government had not established these centers.

The government continued to use the NRM, which outlined standard operating procedures for the identification, referral, and assistance of victims. The government did not report if the technical steering committee for trafficking victim protection, led by the MPSLSW, met during the reporting period. The MPSLSW had a system whereby an NGO and a Department of Social Development caseworker jointly handled each reported potential trafficking case, but it did not use the system in practice.

The government had policies to encourage victim cooperation in investigations and prosecutions, but police unfamiliarity with trafficking crimes often caused re-victimization or re-traumatization of trafficking victims during the legal process.

Courts had a separate room for victims to testify separately from their alleged perpetrators, and victims could choose to testify via video; however, observers reported not every court had access to the necessary equipment, especially in rural areas, and the government did not report whether any victims utilized these services during the reporting period.

While the trafficking act required judges to order compensation from convicted traffickers to their victims, no judge did so. The government did not have legal alternatives to repatriation for foreign trafficking victims, even if they would face retribution or hardship in their countries of origin.

PREVENTION

The government decreased efforts to prevent trafficking. The ATIMC served as the national coordinating body for all anti-trafficking activities, and its secretariat led the government's trafficking efforts, including overseeing awareness-raising events. The ATIMC met twice during the reporting period. While the government launched its 2019-2021 NAP in the previous reporting period, the government did not operationalize it due to funding limitations. The government, in collaboration with an international organization, provided training to members of the ATIMC.

While the pandemic imposed restrictions on gatherings, international organizations reported the continued lack of political will, resources, and staff contributed to the ATIMC's inaction. The government raised public awareness of human trafficking through exhibitions at two trade and agricultural fairs.

The government continued to lack the political will to address child and forced labor, particularly in agriculture. During the previous reporting period, a tripartite committee of government, labor unions, and business representatives determined the MPSLSW would lead efforts to raise awareness of child and forced labor among the tobacco industry and conduct regular inspections; however, the ministry took no steps to do so. The government did not report the number of labor inspections conducted during the reporting period, compared with 1,860 labor inspections in the previous reporting period, none of which identified any cases of forced or child labor. Inspectors had the authority to monitor private farms and homes for underage or forced child domestic labor but did not report doing so. The government opened a criminal investigation into a fraudulent recruiter during the reporting period but did not report any efforts to regulate labor recruiters to address fraudulent recruitment.

The government did not report contributing information to a regional centralized anti-trafficking database, despite doing so in previous years. The government began conducting antitrafficking trainings for diplomats assigned to foreign missions through its Consular Assistance course. The government did not make efforts

to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Zimbabwe, and traffickers exploit victims from Zimbabwe abroad. Internal trafficking is prevalent and underreported. Traffickers exploit Zimbabwean adults and children in sex trafficking and forced labor,

including in cattle herding, domestic service, and mining in gold and diamond sectors. More than 71 percent of child labor occurs in the agriculture sector, including on tobacco, sugarcane, and cotton farms, as well as in forestry and fishing sectors, where children weed, spray, harvest, and pack goods. Some of these children are victims of forced labor, including some who work on small, unregulated farms.

Due to pandemic-induced school closures and worsening economic conditions, observers reported child sex trafficking and child labor likely increased, particularly in agriculture, domestic service, informal trading, begging, and artisanal mining. Children ages 9 to 14 work as nannies, housemaids, and gardeners in urban areas and mining communities; some employers force children to work by withholding wages, denying them access to school, and subjecting them to GBV.

Several traditional practices rendered young girls vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking, including the practice of trading daughters for food or money, using them as “replacement” brides for a deceased family member, and for ngozi, a reconciliation process where a family gives a family member to another family to make amends for a murdered relative. Traffickers exploit women and girls from Zimbabwean towns bordering South Africa, Mozambique, and Zambia in forced labor, including domestic servitude, and sex trafficking in brothels catering to long-distance truck drivers on both sides of the border.

Traffickers exploit child laborers working as gold-panners and ore couriers by providing inadequate compensation, stealing their income, exacerbating food insecurity, and forcing them to take drugs to perform strenuous tasks. Near gold and diamond mines, traffickers force children to sell illicit drugs, which increased during the pandemic. Illegal mining syndicates exploit Zimbabweans in trafficking. Experts estimate thousands of children have joined illegal diamond mining syndicates in the Marange fields in Chiadzwa since March 2020; some syndicates target vulnerable populations, including illiterate individuals, and transport them to the mines at night to disorient potential victims and prevent their escape.

Armed gangs known as “Mashurugwi” lure young men to abandoned gold mines through promises of self-employment but force them to work the artisanal gold mines with threats of violence and death. Child vendors, some of whom walk more than 25 kilometers per day to sell goods or offer cooking and cleaning services to miners, are exploited by sex traffickers in illegal mining areas or by long distance truckers who transport coal and minerals.

Girls as young as 12 are exploited in sex trafficking along the Harare-Chinhoyi highway, in the informal settlement of Caledonia, and in gold mining communities in Mashonaland East, Mazowe, Bindura, and Shurugwi. During the pandemic, organizations and media identified hundreds of children in sex trafficking near the Mazowe mines. Miners force girls to enter into coercive “relationships” where they

are sexually exploited in exchange for money and food and sometimes forced to assist with mining operations.

In Chiredzi, sex traffickers recruit girls as young as 11 from surrounding areas. Children were forced to engage in sexual acts in exchange for water in Chitungwiza.

Traffickers use false promises of legitimate employment opportunities, particularly in nursing, including through social media and messaging applications, to lure Zimbabweans into sex trafficking and forced labor in neighboring countries, particularly South Africa, and the Middle East. In South Africa, traffickers exploit Zimbabweans for labor without pay in agriculture, construction, factories, mines, information technology, and hospitality businesses. Syndicates operating in South Africa recruit undocumented Zimbabwean migrants with promises of legitimate employment in mining and force them into labor in the illegal mining industry.

Due to economic conditions caused by the pandemic, undocumented Zimbabwean women and children increasingly travel to South Africa for employment, where their lack of legal status increases their vulnerability to traffickers. Facilitators recruit and transport Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa, where international criminal syndicates subject them to sex trafficking in Musina, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Durban.

Traffickers have exploited Zimbabwean women in domestic servitude, forced labor, and sex trafficking in Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Uganda, often under the guise of legitimate employment. Zimbabwean labor recruiters recruit Zimbabwean women for exploitation in domestic servitude in Oman, where their passports are confiscated, and they are forced to work without pay.

Traffickers use fraudulent scholarship schemes to lure Zimbabwean students to Cyprus ostensibly for educational purposes and exploit them in forced labor and sex trafficking. Media reported Zimbabweans living abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom and Ireland, trick Zimbabweans to travel abroad under the pretenses of tourism or legitimate employment and force them into domestic servitude. Traffickers recruit Zimbabwean girls into neighboring countries with promises of marriage and, during marriage, force them into domestic work.

Zimbabwe is a transit country for Somalis, Ethiopians, Malawians, and Zambians en route to exploitation in South Africa. Zimbabwe is also a destination country for forced labor and sex trafficking. Traffickers subject Mozambican children to forced labor in street vending, including in Mbare, the largest informal market in Harare. Mozambican children who work on relatives' farms in Zimbabwe are often undocumented and cannot enroll in school, which increases their vulnerability of trafficking.

In prior years, there were reports of refugees from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo traveling from Zimbabwe's Tongogara Refugee Camp to Harare, where traffickers exploited them. Refugees and asylum-seekers are not permitted bank accounts and experience difficulties in obtaining identification documents, which limits employment opportunities and increases vulnerability to trafficking.

Traffickers force some PRC nationals to work in restaurants in Zimbabwe.

Construction and mining companies owned by both PRC nationals and PRC parastatal entities in Zimbabwe reportedly employ practices indicative of forced labor, including verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as coercion to induce work in unsafe or otherwise undesirable conditions. Cuban nationals working as doctors in Zimbabwe may have been forced to work by the Cuban government.