Zimbabwe

Country Overview

Politics

Zimbabwe is a semi-presidential republic in Southern Africa. President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) have been in power since independence in 1980. The 2008 general election process was condemned internationally due to irregularities and widespread violence against members of the opposition, which led to the withdrawal of the opposition candidate during an election run-off. Elections in 2013 were characterized by continuing fictionalization of two major economic parties, the ZANU-PF and Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T).

Economy

Zimbabwe is classified by the World Bank as a low-income economy. Political and economic crises between 2000 and 2008 seriously impacted the economy, decreasing the GDP by 50 percent. As of April 2009, the Zimbabwean dollar is no longer in circulation, and various other currencies such as the United States dollar or the Botswana pula are accepted as legal tender. This has helped to end hyperinflation, but Zimbabwe is still struggling to reengage with international financial institutions. Zimbabwe’s economy is highly dependent on the extractives sector.

Social/Human Development

In 2015, Zimbabwe improved in Human Development Index ranking, rising to 155 in part due to a reduction in HIV prevalence, although maternal health outcomes have stagnated. Zimbabwe was historically a destination country for migrants, but Zimbabweans are increasingly migrating out for economic opportunities.

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2 Watch List

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report, trafficking risk may be found among Zimbabwean men and women in export supply chains including agriculture. Children are vulnerable to trafficking in the agriculture and mining sectors and are at risk of being forced into drug smuggling.

Read the full TIP Report at: https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271316.htm

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Zimbabwe has negative net migration, with outward migration reaching a population of nearly 900,000. In 2015, 15 percent of all citizens of Zimbabwe lived outside their country of origin, with most migrants destined for South Africa—about 475,000 people. Although inward migration to Zimbabwe is less significant, the immigrant population comprised 2.56 percent of the total resident population. The largest source countries for migrants are Malawi and Mozambique.

According to 2016 data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are approximately 310,624 persons of concern, including 300,000 stateless persons and 6,950 refugees in Zimbabwe. Recently, Zimbabwe has received refugees fleeing political instability in Mozambique.
Exports and Trade

Zimbabwe’s top exports include gold, diamonds, platinum, tobacco, nickel, and iron.\textsuperscript{16}

According to mirror data, China is the largest importer of goods from Zimbabwe, followed by South Africa.\textsuperscript{17} The bulk of Zimbabwe’s exports to China are diamonds and gold.\textsuperscript{18}
Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights

Freedom of Association

The law provides for the right of private-sector workers to form and join unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively, but public sector workers are excluded. According to the U.S. Department of
State, the government has a history of not respecting workers’ right to form or join unions, strike and bargain collectively in practice, with violence, arrests, threats and intimidation against participating workers.  

The majority of workers in a workplace must agree to strike. There are no laws that prohibit employers from hiring replacement workers in the event of a strike and the law allows employers to sue workers for liability if they choose to participate in an unlawful strike.

According to the International Trade Union Confederation, employers have frequently abused institutional weaknesses in their favor in order to hinder the bargaining process. Agricultural workers have reportedly experienced verbal and physical attacks by employers during negotiations.

Working Conditions

In Zimbabwe, the National Employment Councils (NECs) set the minimum wage for all industrial sectors through a bipartite agreement between employers and labor unions. The Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare is responsible for enforcing the minimum wage and work hour laws in each sector but the standards have not been effectively enforced due to a lack of adequate resources.

Per the US Department of State, the government of Zimbabwe does not provide for a standard workweek but it prescribes one 24-hour rest period per week. The legal workweek is subject to negotiation between unions and employers in each sector.

Workers in the informal sector are excluded from most labor law protections.

Per the National Social Security Authority (NSSA), there were 5,380 workplace injuries and 54 fatalities in 2015, most of which occurred in the mining sector.

Discrimination

The law does not explicitly prohibit employment discrimination regarding age, language, citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or non-HIV related communicable diseases. In the new Constitution, it is stipulated that women and men receive equal remuneration for equal work. However, women’s salaries continue to be lower than those of men in most sectors.

Forced Labor

In Zimbabwe, the law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children, but does not include forced labor in prisons. Although the government has not effectively enforced the law, the Labor Amendment Act has provided the first legal definition of forced labor in the country.
Child Labor

The law in Zimbabwe provides that no person under the age of 18 shall perform any work that could be potentially harmful to their health, safety or morals. However, children can perform general labor at the age of 16 through the Labor Amendment Act that increased the minimum age from 13. Primary school is compulsory from age six and progresses for a duration of seven grades. At the age of 15, 34 percent of girls and 30 percent of boys are out of school.

Civil Society Organizations

NGOs are active in the country but have some legal restrictions under Public Order and Security Act (POSA) – a law which limits freedom of expression by journalists by requiring registration with the state, and other laws. NGOs, human rights lawyers and civil society workers often face extralegal harassment and arbitrary arrest, which further limits their ability to act freely, despite their right to do so specified in the Constitution. The US Department of State has reported that the Zimbabwean government harassed NGOs it believed would expose abuse perpetrated by government personnel or those that opposed government policies. Government-controlled media has been used to ridicule human rights groups.

Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movements of Migrants

According to UNHCR, Zimbabwe hosted nearly 9,000 refugees and asylum seekers. Zimbabwe’s laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status but the government maintains a formal encampment policy which requires refugees to live at Tongogara refugee camp. Refugee’s employment opportunities are therefore limited because of the encampment policy.
Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

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<tr>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 29 Forced Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<td>ILO 100 Equal Remuneration</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<td>ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor</td>
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<td>ILO 111 Discrimination</td>
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<td>ILO 138 Minimum Age</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 97 Migration for Employment</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
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Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

Zimbabwe is scored 100.5 in the 2016 Fragile States Index, placing it in the “High Alert” category and ranking it 16 out of 178 countries. One of the major human rights issues in Zimbabwe is the discrimination and targeting of people not belonging to the ZANU-PF political party, who are subject to abduction, arrest, torture, abuse and harassment. Violence has been reportedly perpetrated with impunity.

Level of Crime and Violence

The World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report scored Zimbabwe a 5.5 and 4.8 out of seven for business costs of organized crime and business costs of crime and violence, respectively. A score of seven indicates that business costs are not impacted at all.

The potential for civil unrest is reportedly growing due to “economic hardships, drought and political instability.”
State Persecution

In 2014, approximately 15,000 persons were displaced from the vicinity of the Tokwe-Mukosi Dam in Masvingo Province. Authorities first moved the IDPs to the Chingwizi transit camp and then to resettlement plots. IDPs continued to lack adequate shelter, food and water. There were also inadequate health, education and sanitation facilities in the camp.\(^{46}\)

Level of Corruption

According to Transparency International’s 2016 Corruption Perception Index, Zimbabwe scored a 22 and ranked 154 out of 176.\(^{47}\) According to another Transparency International report released in 2015, 77 percent of Zimbabweans thought that the country had become more corrupt in the past two years.\(^{48}\) The U.S. Department of State reports that accusations of corruption are used as “a political tool but seldom result in formal charges and convictions.”\(^{49}\)

Government corruption is particularly noted in association with the diamond sector.\(^{50}\)

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

Zimbabwe scored in the low human development category with a score of .516.\(^{51}\) When adjusted for inequality, however, Zimbabwe’s HDI falls to 0.369, a loss of 28.5 percent.\(^{52}\) Zimbabwe’s HDI is relatively higher than that of major migrant sending countries such as Malawi and Mozambique, whose HDI scores are 0.476 and 0.418 respectively.\(^{53}\)

Level and Extent of Poverty

The most recent survey data available for Zimbabwe’s multidimensional poverty index (MPI), which measures levels of education, health and living standards, refer to 2014. In Zimbabwe, 28.9 percent of the population are multi-dimensionally poor while an additional 29.3 percent living near multidimensional poverty.\(^{54}\)

Degree of Gender Inequality

The UNDP Gender Inequality Index scores Zimbabwe at 0.540, ranking 154 out of 188 countries.\(^{55}\) The constitution of Zimbabwe provides women the same legal status and rights for women but women remain disadvantaged in society.\(^{56}\) Labor law prohibits the sexual harassment within the workplace but it reportedly remains frequent in some worksites.\(^{57}\)
There are significant barriers on women’s ability to own land in Zimbabwe, such as customary practices of patriarchal inheritance. According to the UK’s 2011 Gender and Social Exclusion Analysis Report, more than six out of 10 women did not own a home or land. This discrimination due to customary law persists despite the fact that the government set aside a 20 percent quota for women under the Fast Track Land Reform Program. It is reported that women in rural areas own, individually or jointly, more land and property than those in urban areas. Women’s lack of access to property means that they often lack enough collateral to obtain loans.

Landlessness and Dispossession

There are weak protections for property rights, most notably in regard to agricultural land. The government reportedly expropriates land without offering adequate compensation. Of the 113,000 households displaced in a recent reporting year, 45.7 percent of displacements were from rural evictions. According to the Global Competitiveness Report, Zimbabwe ranks 139 out of 140 countries in respect of property rights. Women and children are impacted by the government’s forced evictions, demolition of homes and businesses, and takeover of commercial farms as there are legal restrictions in place that limit their ability to independently own land.

Environmental Factors

The U.S. Department of State reports that 27.7 percent of approximately 113,000 recently displaced households, the cause of displacement were natural disasters. In 2014, a dam in Masvingo province broke due to a “man-made” error, forcibly displacing 20,000 people who were then resettled onto one-hectare plots of farmland. Significant drought presents livelihood and food security challenges for rural populations.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Gold

Gold Overview

Gold is Zimbabwe’s top commodity export and accounted for about 40 percent of all mineral earnings. Gold is mined via both large-scale commercial miners and small-scale artisanal miners. After legalizing small-scale mining activities, the government set up gold buying centers across the country.
Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Gold

Although gold is not specified, the U.S. Department of State notes the use of forced child labor in the mining sector in Zimbabwe.\(^{71}\) Artisanal gold mining was a criminal offense until 2014, which led to extremely high rates of smuggling.\(^{72}\) There are currently an estimated 700,000 artisanal miners and most reportedly continue to operate without licenses.\(^{73}\)

Tobacco

Tobacco Overview

The majority of tobacco exported from Zimbabwe is produced by large scale commercial farms,\(^ {74} \) but 80 percent of the farmer base is small-scale farms under two hectares.\(^ {75} \) Most tobacco grown in Zimbabwe is sold under a contract system, with about 30 percent being sold at auction.\(^ {76} \)

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Tobacco

While tobacco is not specified, the U.S. Department of State notes that Zimbabwian men, women, and children are subjected to forced labor in agriculture.\(^ {77} \)

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Endnotes

17 International Trade Centre. Trade Map. www.trademap.org
18 International Trade Centre. Trade Map. www.trademap.org
29 OECD. *Social Institutions and Gender Index*. *Zimbabwe*. http://www.genderindex.org/country/zimbabwe
30 OECD. *Social Institutions and Gender Index*. *Zimbabwe*. http://www.genderindex.org/country/zimbabwe


