



**Human Rights Watch Submission
to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
List of Issues of Zimbabwe
73rd Pre-Sessional Working Group
August 2023**

We write in advance of the 73rd pre-session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (“the Committee”). We hope this submission will inform the Committee’s preparation of its list of issues to seek further clarity on Zimbabwe’s compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This submission focuses on teenage pregnancy and child marriage as barriers to the rights to health and education, rights abuses in tobacco farming and diamond mining, the right to free and compulsory education, and the protection of education from attack.

Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage (articles 3, 12, and 13)

1. The adolescent birth rate in Zimbabwe is 108 per 1,000 adolescent girls and women ages 15 to 19.¹ This is higher than the subregional rate in East and Southern Africa of 94, and almost three times the world rate of 41.² Data from 2019 indicates that among women ages 20 to 49, one-third married before the age of 18.³ A study of the gendered impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, including Zimbabwe, led by MIET Africa, a regional organization, found that Zimbabwe was among the countries that suffered gendered harmful impacts on girls during the pandemic, heightening their risk of child, early and forced marriages, early pregnancies, and school dropouts.⁴
2. Pregnancy is both a barrier to girls continuing their education and often a consequence of girls’ lack of access to education. Numerous studies have shown that the longer a girl stays in school, the less likely she is to be married as a child or become pregnant during her teenage years.⁵

¹ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), “World Population Dashboard” (webpage), 2023, <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard> (accessed June 22, 2023).

² Ibid.

³ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019*, Survey Findings Report (Harare: ZIMSTAT and UNICEF, 2019), https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/media/2536/file/Zimbabwe%202019%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report-31012020_English.pdf (accessed June 22, 2023).

⁴ MIET Africa, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents and Young People in the Southern African Development Community Region*, June 2021, https://mietfira.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/REPORT-Impact_COVID_19_AYP_SADCRegional.pdf (accessed June 22, 2023).

⁵ UNFPA, *Worlds Apart: Reproductive health and rights in an age of inequality*, The State of World Population 2017, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/sowp/downloads/UNFPA_PUB_2017_EN_SWOP.pdf (accessed December 8, 2022).

3. Human Rights Watch documented the death of a 14-year-old girl during childbirth in 2021, at an Apostolic church in Marange, in Zimbabwe's Manicaland province.⁶ According to reports, the girl, who had been forced out of school and into marriage at age 13, died on July 15, 2021, and was secretly buried two hours later by the church.⁷ The police opened an investigation, but as of July 2023 there has been no justice in the case.
4. In November 2015, Human Rights Watch interviewed women and girls affected by child marriage in six provinces of Zimbabwe.⁸ Some had experienced violence such as beatings or verbal abuse from their in-laws or other relatives. Nearly all the women and girls we interviewed said their husbands had abandoned them, leaving them to care for children without financial support. Several described mental distress and suicidal feelings as a result of their situation.
5. Many of the girls interviewed by Human Rights Watch said they dropped out of school because their families could not afford school costs.⁹ Nearly all girls whom Human Rights Watch interviewed were not able to continue their education after marriage, either because of their financial situation, their husband would not permit it, or they had to care for a baby. In addition, many Indigenous apostolic churches forbid girls to continue education after marriage. As of January 2020, evangelical groupings that mix Christian beliefs with traditional cultures had approximately 1.2 million followers across the country.¹⁰
6. In most of the cases that Human Rights Watch documented, girls had not received comprehensive sexuality education before they became pregnant or married. Many Zimbabweans have feared that providing young people with contraception contributes to promiscuity, and many Indigenous apostolic churches have actively discouraged use of contraception.¹¹
7. A landmark 2016 Constitutional Court decision declared child marriages unconstitutional and set 18 as the minimum marriage age for girls and boys, without exception.¹²
8. In December 2018, the National Action Plan (NAP) and Communication Strategy Against Child Marriages was launched, which seeks to accelerate efforts towards ending child marriages in the country.¹³

⁶ Dewa Mavhinga, "Ensure Justice for Zimbabwe's Child Brides," Human Rights Watch dispatch, August 6, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/06/ensure-justice-zimbabwes-child-brides>.

⁷ Cletus Mushanawani, "Married at 14...Child rapist still walking free," *The Manica Post*, August 10, 2021, <https://www.manicapost.co.zw/married-at-14-child-rapist-still-walking-free/> (accessed June 23, 2023).

⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Zimbabwe," January 17, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/17/submission-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-zimbabwe>; and Human Rights Watch, *Leave No Girl Behind in Africa: Discrimination in Education against Pregnant Girls and Adolescent Mothers* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2018), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/06/14/leave-no-girl-behind-africa/discrimination-education-against-pregnant-girls-and#4273>.

⁹ These can include school fees and indirect costs for books and uniforms. See Human Rights Watch, "Open Letter regarding the Zimbabwe Education Amendment Bill of 2019," May 10, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/10/open-letter-regarding-zimbabwe-education-amendment-bill-2019>.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Zimbabwe."

¹¹ "Zimbabwe: Scourge of Child Marriage: Set 18 as Minimum Age; Adopt National Action Plan," Human Rights Watch new release, November 25, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/11/25/zimbabwe-scurge-child-marriage>.

¹² Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe, *Loveness Mudzuru and Ruvimbo Tsopodzi vs The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Dept and Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development Dept. and the Attorney General of Zimbabwe* [2015] Case: 127 /2014.

¹³ Paidamoyo Chipunza, "First Lady in drive to end child marriages," *The Herald*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.herald.co.zw/first-lady-in-drive-to-end-child-marriages/>.

9. Further, in 2019, Zimbabwe reformed its Education Act to include a provision that prohibits excluding pregnant students from school. The act also protects students from discrimination on the grounds of marital status, among nearly 20 protected grounds.¹⁴ But our research has found that it is crucial for governments to protect pregnant and parent learners' rights by also clarifying schools' positive obligations to adopt measures to support learners who become parents, including parenting support, childcare, and financial assistance.
10. The government has strengthened its provision of comprehensive sexuality education through revised curricula and teacher trainings.¹⁵ The 2021-2025 Education Sector Strategic Plan includes, as one of its core programs, enhancing the protection, safeguarding, safety, and health of learners and staff through "Comprehensive Sexuality Education work."¹⁶
11. *Human Rights Watch recommends that the Committee ask the government of Zimbabwe:*
 - What steps is the government taking to ensure that married, pregnant, and parenting girls who are at risk of dropping out are socially and financially supported to stay in school, and that school fees and indirect costs are eliminated in public education?
 - What special accommodations are provided for young mothers at school, such as time for breast-feeding, flexibility when babies are ill, childcare, or flexibility in class schedules?
 - What programs are in place to ensure access to nurseries or early childhood centers close to schools?
 - How is the government monitoring the provision of comprehensive sexuality education to ensure full and prompt implementation of the relevant provisions of the 2021-2025 Education Sector Strategic Plan and ensure that students across Zimbabwe receive scientifically accurate and rights-based information beginning at an early age?
12. *Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to call on the government of Zimbabwe to:*
 - Address social, financial, and systemic barriers that inhibit adolescent mothers from continuing their education, including by ensuring that facilities, materials, and services necessary for their enjoyment of the right to education are available and accessible.
 - Introduce formal flexible school programs, including evening classes and part-time classes, for learners who struggle to attend full-time classes, and ensure students receive full accreditation and certificates of education upon completion.
 - Continue to facilitate access to sexual and reproductive health services, including comprehensive sexuality education at school and in the community, and monitor the provision and quality of comprehensive sexuality education in school curricula across the country.
 - Continue to combat the practice of child marriage through full implementation of the national action plan, in collaboration with women's and children's rights groups, health professionals, and other service providers, and coordinate efforts among all relevant ministries.

¹⁴ Education Amendment Act, 2019, available at <https://features.hrw.org/features/african-union/files/Zimbabwe%20-%202019%20Education%20Amendment%20Act.pdf>. See also "Africa: Rights Progress for Pregnant Students," Human Rights Watch news release, September 29, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/29/africa-rights-progress-pregnant-students>.

¹⁵ "Strengthening Sexuality education and GBV prevention in schools: Teachers meaningfully engaged in Guidance and Counselling trainings," UNFPA news release, June 30, 2021, <https://zimbabwe.unfpa.org/en/news/strengthening-sexuality-education-and-gbv-prevention-schools-teachers-meaningfully-engaged> (accessed June 26, 2023).

¹⁶ Republic of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2021-2025*, December 31, 2021, <http://mopse.co.zw/sites/default/files/public/downloads/ESSP%202021-2025.pdf> (accessed June 26, 2023).

- Provide regular training for police and prosecutors on their legal responsibilities to investigate and prosecute violence against women, including child and forced marriage.
- Adopt a positive continuation policy that outlines schools' obligations to safeguard the right to education for married, pregnant, and parenting children, and monitor implementation.

Human Rights Abuses in Tobacco Farming (articles 7, 10, 12, and 13)

13. In 2018, Human Rights Watch documented the serious human rights abuses and risks faced by children and adults working on Zimbabwe's tobacco farms.¹⁷
14. Children worked in hazardous conditions, performing tasks that threatened their health and safety or interfered with their education. One of the most serious health risks in tobacco farming is acute nicotine poisoning, or Green Tobacco Sickness, caused by absorbing nicotine through the skin from tobacco plants. Many child and adult workers reported that they had experienced at least one symptom consistent with acute nicotine poisoning—nausea, vomiting, headaches, or dizziness—while handling tobacco. Yet almost no one interviewed had ever heard of acute nicotine poisoning or received information about how to protect themselves.¹⁸
15. Children and adults interviewed by Human Rights Watch also handled toxic pesticides, often without proper protective equipment. Others were exposed to pesticides while someone else applied them nearby. Pesticide exposure has been associated with long-term and chronic health effects, including reproductive health problems. Human Rights Watch found that the government and companies had generally not provided workers with enough information, training, and equipment to protect themselves from nicotine poisoning and pesticide exposure.
16. Despite a constitutional requirement to promote “free and compulsory basic education for children,”¹⁹ Human Rights Watch found that the Zimbabwean government did not provide a truly free public education to all children. Many families had to pay fees or levies for their children to go to public schools, even at the primary level. The difficulties accessing education because of school fees likely affect many low-income families outside of the tobacco sector, though our research suggests children in small-scale tobacco farming families may face particular risks continuing their education, due to the nature of their financial cycles.
17. Many small-scale tobacco farmers told Human Rights Watch that they received earnings only during one part of the year after selling tobacco, and therefore often struggled to pay school fees at the start of the academic term beginning in January. Teachers in tobacco-growing regions told Human Rights Watch that their students were often absent during the tobacco growing season, particularly during the labor-intensive periods of planting and harvesting. Some children and young adults we interviewed had never attended school or had dropped out before completing their desired level of education to work in tobacco farming. In most of these cases, interviewees said families were unable to cover the cost of their school fees.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, *A Bitter Harvest: Child Labor and Human Rights Abuses on Tobacco Farms in Zimbabwe* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2018), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/04/05/bitter-harvest/child-labor-and-human-rights-abuses-tobacco-farms-zimbabwe>.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch conducted research in the four provinces responsible for nearly all of Zimbabwe's tobacco production and conducted interviews with 125 small-scale tobacco farmers and hired workers, including children or former child workers, in late 2016 and early 2017.

¹⁹ Constitution of Zimbabwe, art. 27(1).

18. Adults working on tobacco farms in Zimbabwe also faced serious labor abuses. Some workers on large-scale farms worked excessive hours without overtime compensation, or their wages were withheld for weeks or months, in violation of Zimbabwean labor law and regulations. Some workers said they were paid less than they were owed or promised, without explanation.
19. In response to Human Rights Watch's request for information regarding labor inspection in the agricultural sector, the Zimbabwean government stated in 2018 that it had 120 labor inspectors and had carried out 2,500 labor inspections in all sectors between 2015 and early 2018. Farmworker union organizers told Human Rights Watch that they were concerned that the government lacked the resources and personnel for effective labor inspections.
20. The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare carried out a survey in 2019 in four provinces in Zimbabwe and documented child labor in tobacco farming.²⁰ The government also noted a spike in child labor across many sectors due to the Covid-19 pandemic.²¹ Several government agencies, industry groups, and unions have formed a working group on child labor that aims to strengthen child labor standards and enforcement.²²
21. Zimbabwean law sets 16 as the minimum age for employment and prohibits children under 18 from performing hazardous work but does not specifically ban children from handling tobacco.²³ A 2001 amendment to the Children's Act specifies several types of work that are considered hazardous work for children, including any work "which is likely to jeopardise or interfere with the education of that child or young person" and any work "involving contact with any hazardous substance, article or process."²⁴
22. A 2021 amendment to the labor law increased the penalty for child labor violations from 2 to 10 years of imprisonment.²⁵
23. In December 2021, the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare launched the Occupational Safety and Health Policy, which addresses agriculture-specific safety and health issues, including the use of pesticides and other agrochemicals, "biological hazards due to multiple contact with animals and plants," and child labor.²⁶
24. *Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to ask the government of Zimbabwe:*
 - What steps has the government taken to address the issue of hazardous child labor in tobacco farming?

²⁰ Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, *Working Together to End Child Labour in Tobacco Growing in Zimbabwe: 2021 Progress Report from the Tobacco Working Group on Child Labour* (Harare: Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, 2022), https://timb.co.zw/download/Zimbabwe_TWG_on_Child_Labour_Progress_Report.pdf (accessed July 7, 2023).

²¹ Miriam Mangwaya, "Spike in child labour cases jolts govt," *Newsday*, August 27, 2021, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/08/spike-in-child-labour-cases-jolts-govt> (accessed July 7, 2023).

²² Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, *Working Together to End Child Labour in Tobacco Growing in Zimbabwe: 2021 Progress Report from the Tobacco Working Group on Child Labour*.

²³ Government of Zimbabwe, Labour Act, ch. 28:01, sec. 11.

²⁴ Government of Zimbabwe, Children's Act, ch. 5:06, sec. 10A.

²⁵ Government of Zimbabwe, Labour Amendment Bill H.B. 14, 2021. See also Zvamaida Murwira, "Zimbabwe: Relief for Workers, Labour Bill Sails Through," *allAfrica*, June 12, 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202306120550.html> (accessed June 28, 2023).

²⁶ Government of Zimbabwe, The Zimbabwe National Occupational Safety and Health Policy (OSH), 2021.

- What steps has the government taken to protect the labor rights of workers on tobacco farms and to raise awareness of the health risks of exposure to nicotine and pesticides?
- How many labor inspectors are employed by the labor inspectorate as of 2023? And how many labor inspections have been carried out in tobacco farms since 2018?

25. *We encourage the Committee to call on the government of Zimbabwe to:*

- Revise the list of hazardous occupations for children set out in the 2001 amendment to the Children’s Act, or enact a new law or regulation, to explicitly prohibit children from working in direct contact with tobacco in any form.
- Support programs to provide age-appropriate educational and employment opportunities to children above the minimum age of employment in small-scale farming communities as alternatives to work in tobacco farming, so that they can develop skills and contribute to family livelihoods without risking their health and safety.
- Develop and implement an extensive public education and training program to promote awareness of the health risks of work in tobacco farming. At a minimum, ensure that the program includes information on the risks of exposure to nicotine, pesticides, and the special vulnerability of children and pregnant women; prevention and treatment of acute nicotine poisoning; the safe handling and storage of pesticides; methods to prevent occupational and take-home pesticide exposure; and the use of personal protective equipment.
- Vigorously investigate and monitor child labor and human rights violations on tobacco farms, including small-scale farms. Conduct unannounced inspections at the times of year, times of day, and locations where children are most likely to be working.

Human Rights Abuses in Diamond Mining (articles 7, 10, 12, and 13)

26. Following the discovery of diamonds in Marange in June 2006, the Zimbabwean police and army used brutal force to control access to the diamond fields and to take over unlicensed diamond mining and trading. In 2009, Human Rights Watch documented Zimbabwe’s armed forces, under the control of then-President Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front, engaging in forced labor of children and adults and torturing and beating local villagers on the diamond fields of Marange district.²⁷

27. Human Rights Watch also documented security forces in 2018 beating and otherwise abusing Marange residents after protests against mining turned violent; three children were hospitalized.²⁸ Many residents felt harassed by authorities who declared Marange a “protected area” that could only be visited with special authorization. Security forces arrested several people caught without an identity document proving their residency.²⁹

28. In 2018 and 2019, private security officers employed by the state-owned Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC) used violence to deter local residents from mining diamonds, according to victims. In

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Diamonds in the Rough: Human Rights Abuses in the Marange Diamond Fields of Zimbabwe* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/06/26/diamonds-rough/human-rights-abuses-marange-diamond-fields-zimbabwe>.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Sparkling Jewels, Opaque Supply Chains: Jewelry Companies, Changing Sourcing Practices, and Covid-19* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2020), https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/11/24/sparkling-jewels-opaque-supply-chains/jewelry-companies-changing-sourcing#_ftn18.

²⁹ Farai Maguwu and Juliane Kippenberg (Human Rights Watch), “Diamond Trade Still Fuels Human Suffering,” commentary, *Le Temps*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/10/diamond-trade-still-fuels-human-suffering>.

several cases, ZCDC security personnel set dogs on men accused of mining illegally, injuring and even killing some of the men.³⁰

29. After the outbreak of Covid-19, the Zimbabwean government declared mining an essential service and allowed operations to continue. This caused concern among trade unions and nongovernmental organizations who have called for better protections for mine workers at the ZCDC and Anjin diamond mines in Marange.³¹ Illegal small-scale diamond mining and diamond smuggling to Mozambique continued during the pandemic, and soldiers continued to raid and arrest artisanal miners.³²

30. *Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to ask the government of Zimbabwe:*

- What steps has the government taken to address human rights abuses in the diamond mining sector?
- What steps has the government taken to better protect mine workers and monitor rights violations, including child labor, in the diamond mining sector?

31. *Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to call on the government of Zimbabwe to:*

- Vigorously investigate and monitor child labor and human rights violations in the diamond mining sector.
- Require business enterprises in the diamond mining sector to respect internationally recognized human rights, including labor rights, in their own operations and business relationships, including global value chains.

Right to Free and Compulsory Education (article 13)

32. The Constitution of Zimbabwe requires all practical measures to be taken to promote free and compulsory basic education for children. The Education Amendment Act of 2020 further emphasizes that every child is entitled to mandatory basic state-funded education—which includes two years of pre-primary education, seven years of primary education, and four years of lower secondary education—and for which pupils shall not be required to pay fees or levies.³³

33. Human Rights Watch's research on child marriage, teenage pregnancies, and child labor in Zimbabwe has found significant financial barriers to realizing the right to education. For example, interviewees for our 2018 research on abuses on tobacco farms said that primary school fees were typically \$10 to \$15 per term, and secondary school fees were higher—sometimes close to \$150 for the first term, and \$35 to \$50 for subsequent terms. Some interviewees said school administrators sent children home, or refused to provide end-of-year exam results if school fees were unpaid.³⁴ Interviewees also described how indirect educational costs for things like books and uniforms posed a challenge for many families.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Sparkling Jewels, Opaque Supply Chains: Jewelry Companies, Changing Sourcing Practices, and Covid-19*.

³¹ Donald Nyarota, "Protect Mine Workers from Coronavirus, Government Urged," *263Chat*, March 23, 2020, <https://263chat.com/protect-mine-workers-from-coronavirus-govt-urged/> (accessed June 29, 2023).

³² Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition, "The Impact of Covid-19 on African communities affected by diamond mining," June 2020, <https://www.kpcivilsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-African-communities-affected-by-diamond-mining-KPCSC.pdf> (accessed June 29, 2023).

³³ See Education Act, ch. 25:04, sec. 5(1) and Education Amendment Act 15 of 2019, sec. 2(a).

³⁴ Human Rights Watch's findings were consistent with a 2017 study into rural livelihoods by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC), a consortium of Zimbabwe government agencies, UN agencies, and other organizations. The report found, "The high proportion of children who were turned away from school due to non-payment of school fees is worrisome," and called for stricter monitoring of the government's policy that no

34. According to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 9 out of 10 children of primary-school age are in school. This figure has remained stable in the last decade, but pre-primary schooling remains a challenge. Only 6 children out of 10 ages 3 to 5 are enrolled in pre-primary education. And half of the adolescents in Zimbabwe ages 13 to 19 are outside of school.³⁵
35. A 2021 report by UNICEF also indicates that only 15 percent of children in Zimbabwe complete upper secondary education, with children belonging to the poorest quintile and those living in rural areas having particularly low completion rates, and girls being less likely to complete an education level the further they progress through the education system.³⁶
36. *Human Rights Watch recommends that the Committee ask the government of Zimbabwe:*
- What barriers does the government see to increasing enrollment rates within compulsory pre-primary, primary, and secondary education?
 - What steps is the government taking to expand the right to free education to include upper secondary education?
37. *Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to call on the government of Zimbabwe to:*
- Ensure universal access to free primary and secondary education, including by removing tuition fees, indirect costs, and family contributions.
 - Expand free education to include upper secondary.
 - Ensure appropriate follow-up for children who drop out of school or are absent from school for prolonged periods of time, including by offering bridging programs for out-of-school children to transition back into the educational system.
 - Adopt a robust reporting mechanism to ensure all schools regularly monitor students who are out of school for prolonged periods of time or drop out of school altogether, and report reasons for truancy, including work in tobacco farming.

Protection of Education from Attack (article 13)

38. Between 2015 and 2019, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack documented more than five attacks on education in Zimbabwe, including armed forces and non-state armed groups using schools, and incidents of sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school or university.³⁷

child should be denied access to school for failing to pay fees. Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC), “2017 Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report,” 2017, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000019918/download/?_ga=2.11814903.2121128953.1513566366-340146079.1513566366 (accessed January 2, 2018), p. 198.

³⁵ UNICEF, “Zimbabwe goes back to School 2023,” [n.d.], <https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-goes-back-school-2023> (accessed June 29, 2023).

³⁶ UNICEF and the Zimbabwean Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, “Zimbabwe Education Fact Sheets | 2021 Analyses for learning and equity using MICS data,” 2021.

³⁷ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Education Under Attack 2020*, July 2020, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2020_full.pdf (accessed June 5, 2023).

39. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child addressed attacks on education in its concluding observations on Zimbabwe in 2016, calling for measures to deter the military or political use of schools and the establishment of mechanisms to monitor and investigate allegations of attacks on education facilities.³⁸
40. Zimbabwe has not yet endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, an inter-governmental political commitment that provides countries the opportunity to express political support for the protection of students, teachers, and schools during times of armed conflict; the importance of the continuation of education during armed conflict; and the implementation of the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*. As of May 2023, 118 states have endorsed the declaration, including the majority of Zimbabwe's fellow African Union members.³⁹
41. *Human Rights Watch recommends that the Committee ask the government of Zimbabwe:*
- Are protections for schools from military use included in any policies, rules, or trainings for Zimbabwe's armed forces?
 - What measures has the government taken to deter the military or political use of schools and establish mechanisms to monitor and investigate allegations of attacks on education?
42. *Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to call on the government of Zimbabwe to:*
- Endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

³⁸ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Zimbabwe, U.N. Doc. CRC/C/ZWE/CO/2 (March 7, 2016), paras. 68(g), 69(h), https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FZWE%2FCO%2F2&Lang=en (accessed June 22, 2023).

³⁹ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, "Safe Schools Declaration Endorsements" (webpage), 2023, <https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/endorsement/> (accessed May 12, 2023).