

Methodology

This report is based on field research by Human Rights Watch in June and November 2018 and April 2019 in Kabwe, Zambia, and the capital, Lusaka.

Given lead's particular dangers for children, Human Rights Watch set out to assess how the government's approach to lead cleanup, testing, and treatment has affected children's rights, 25 years after the closure of the Kabwe mine.

Human Rights Watch interviewed 44 parents and other guardians and 35 children between the ages of 6 and 16 in five townships around the former Kabwe mine where children have been found to have elevated blood lead levels: Chowa, Makululu, Waya, Railway, and Katondo. Most interviews were conducted in the first three townships. In addition, we interviewed 20 adults and 3 older children (ages 16 to 17) working as small-scale miners at the old mine site. We conducted 11 discussions in groups of four or more with over 100 individuals, including parents, children, young adults, teachers, and miners, to learn more about life in lead-affected townships. These included meetings with 10 members of a youth environmental group; about 45 teachers at a public school; three groups of small-scale miners, including anywhere from 10 to 40 miners; and two groups of fewer than 10 parents and other adults in lead-affected townships.

Human Rights Watch researchers also interviewed community members, including school headteachers, teachers, nurses, community health workers, local councilors, and Ward Development Committee members. In addition, researchers interviewed municipal, district, provincial, and central government officials from several ministries and bodies. These included officials from the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Child Development; Ministry of General Education; Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA); Human Rights Commission; and the Kabwe Municipal Council. We also met with representatives of the World Bank; Japan International Cooperation Agency; United States Agency for International Development; the German, British, and Canadian governments; and independent civil society organizations working on environmental issues and children's rights in Zambia.

We also conducted interviews by telephone or in person with experts on lead as it relates to children's health, environmental health, occupational health, and remediation.

Human Rights Watch conducted most of the interviews with parents and guardians, children, and miners in Bemba, the main local language in Kabwe, with translation into English. Interviews with government officials, representatives of civil society organizations, and other community members were conducted in English.

Most interviews were conducted privately, one-on-one, in quiet places within the affected townships, such as under trees or behind houses. Each individual interview lasted approximately twenty minutes to one hour.

Human Rights Watch also reviewed secondary data sources, including laws, government documents, reports from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions, and maps.

Interviewees did not receive any compensation; they were informed of the purpose of the interview, its voluntary nature, and the ways in which the information would be used. They provided oral consent to be interviewed and were informed that they could decline to answer questions or could end the interview at any time. Where appropriate, Human Rights Watch provided contact information for organizations that could provide social support or other services.

Some parents and guardians shared information about children's blood lead levels. The specific blood lead levels provided in this report are solely based on the statements of parents, guardians, or Human Rights Watch partners, based on their recollections. Human Rights Watch was not able to confirm the lead levels referenced in the report for individual children. For that reason, Human Rights Watch cannot guarantee the accuracy of each precise level stated. The same is true for the age at which the child was tested and the year of testing.

Human Rights Watch has used pseudonyms for community members interviewed to protect their privacy.

On the advice of Ministry of Health officials, Human Rights Watch wrote the Kabwe District Medical Officer requesting permission for a meeting. The letter was addressed to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health in November 2018. Human Rights Watch sent a follow-up letter in February 2019. Both letters went unanswered.

In June 2019, Human Rights Watch wrote the World Bank inviting staff to comment on our key findings related to World Bank-funded projects in Kabwe. The World Bank sent a response, which Human Rights Watch references in this report.

In July 2019, Human Rights Watch shared its key findings with Zambian government officials. The Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development sent a written response (Appendix I) with more details on the government's plans under ZMERIP.