

Problems that lead is causing for children and their rights in Zambia

Lead is a metal that is found in the earth



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“We have to be worried”

The impact of lead contamination on children’s rights
in Kabwe, Zambia



About us

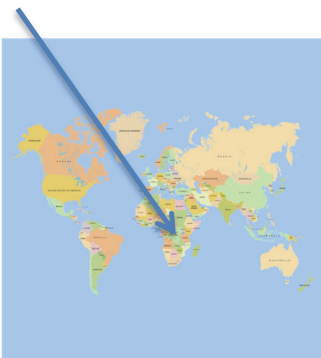
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We are called Human Rights Watch.



We work to make sure that everyone in the world is treated fairly and gets their rights.

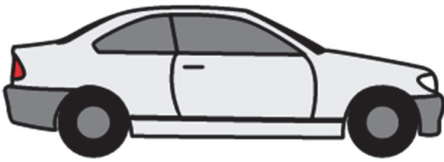
About this report



This report is about a country in Africa called Zambia.



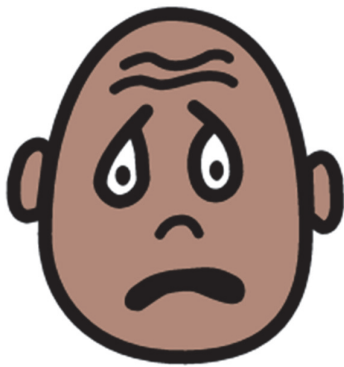
It is about problems that lead is causing for children in a part of Zambia called Kabwe.



Lead is a metal. It is used in cars and other things.

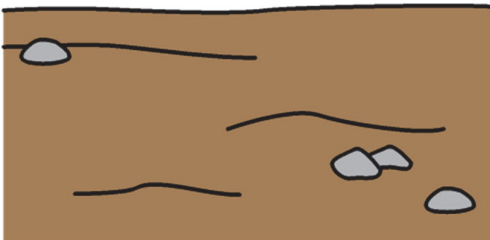


People dig into the earth to get lead. They work in places called mines to do this.



There was a mine in Kabwe until 1994.

The mine has closed. But the work to get lead has caused big problems for people in Kabwe.



This is because lots of dust and rocks still have lead in them after the mine has closed.

The wind blows the dust around the town and moves the lead to other places.



Lead is dangerous when it gets into the body. It can make people very sick.



In 2018 and 2019 we went to Kabwe to find out what was going on.

We spoke to:

- Families who are having problems because of lead
- Government people
- Other people and groups



This report looks at:

- How the problems with lead affect children's rights
- What the government in Zambia is doing about it
- What we want to happen next

What problems can children have because of lead?



Lead affects children more than adults.

Children take more lead into their bodies than adults.



Too much lead can be very bad for children. It causes more problems if they don't get the right health care.

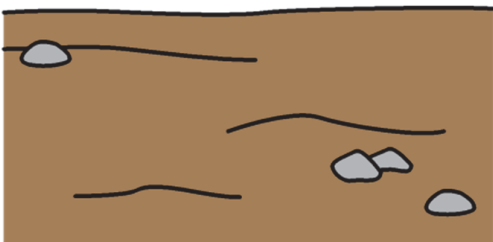
For example, children might have:

- Problems with reading and learning
- Problems with their behavior
- Damage to their brains, stomachs and other parts of their bodies



Too much lead can make children ill or even kill them.

What is happening to children in Kabwe?



There is too much lead in the ground and in the air in many parts of Kabwe.

Some people are still working to get lead from the ground.



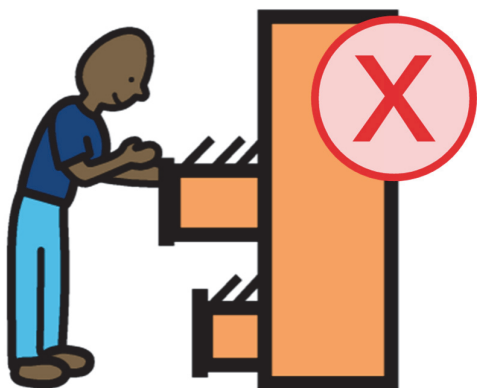
Many children have too much lead in their bodies because of this.



Health care

We found that hospitals and health centers in Kabwe had many problems:

- The hospitals did not have medicine to treat problems with lead
- The hospitals did not do tests to see how much lead is in someone's body
- The hospitals did not have information about who was in the hospital or had died because of lead

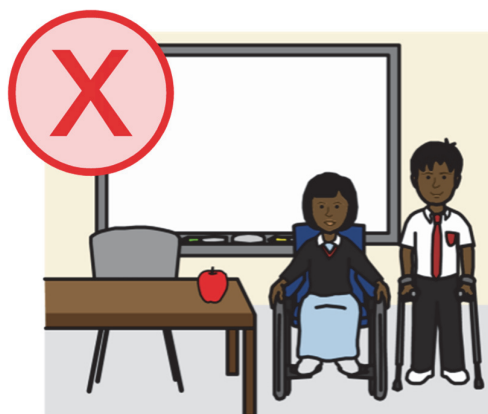


Poor people

The problems with lead are worse for poor people in Kabwe.



For example, more lead gets into people's bodies if they do not have enough to eat.



Education

Some children have disabilities or problems with learning because of lead.

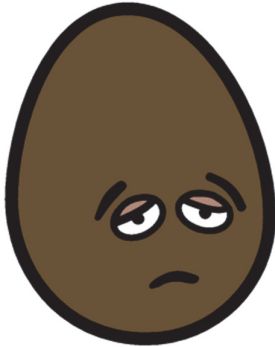
Some of these children do not get a good education.

What the government is doing



The government in Zambia has done some work to solve the problem with lead.

For example, they have given some children health care for lead problems.



But the government has not done enough.

In 2016 the government started a new project to:

- Clean up places where there is too much lead
- Give people health care if they have too much lead in their bodies



But nothing has happened yet.



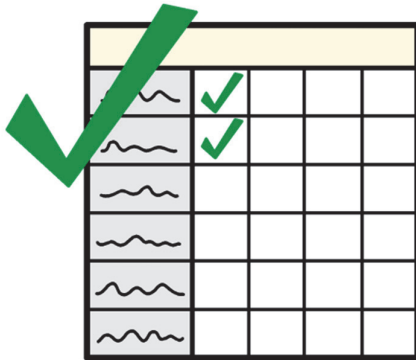
All children have the right to:

- Get the health care they need
- Live in a healthy place
- Get a good education



But many children in Kabwe are not getting these rights.

The main things that we want to happen now



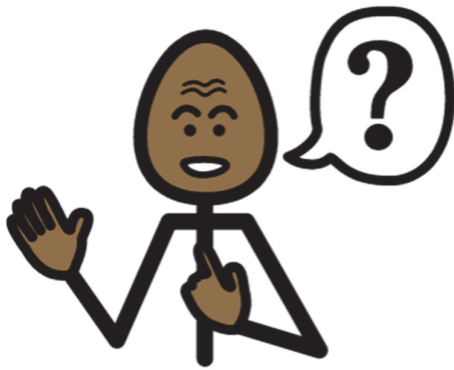
Solve the problems with lead

The government should make plans to solve all the problems with lead now and in the future.

This includes:

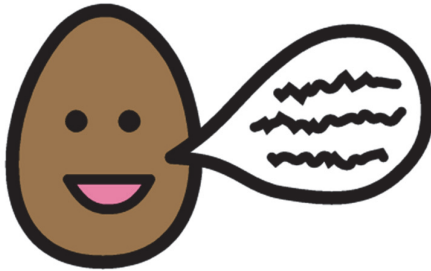
- Cleaning up the lead from all places, like homes, schools, health centers, roads and other public places
- Making sure people get the right health care when they need it
- Making sure the old mine is safe





People in Kabwe should have a real say in:

- The plans to solve the problems with lead
- Checking how the plans are working



This includes people with disabilities, women, children and older people.

Health care and tests



All children and adults should get free health care for lead problems when they need it.

This means now and in the future.



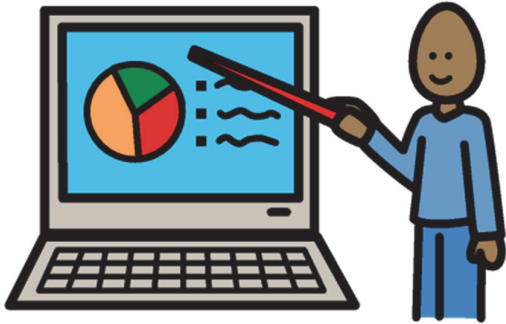
Problems with lead are worse for some people than others.

For example, children under 5 and pregnant women.

They should get the tests and health care first.



Hospitals and health centers should have the right medicine and equipment.



Health workers should have the right skills and training to support people with lead problems.



Information about lead tests should be easy to understand.



Pregnant women, new mothers and babies should get the right support if there is too much lead in their bodies.



For example, new mothers may need special milk to feed their babies.

There should be good information about who has health problems because of lead and what happens to them.



Make the earth, air and water clean

There should be checks now and in the future to see how much lead is in the earth, air and water.



Everyone should be able to see information about the checks.



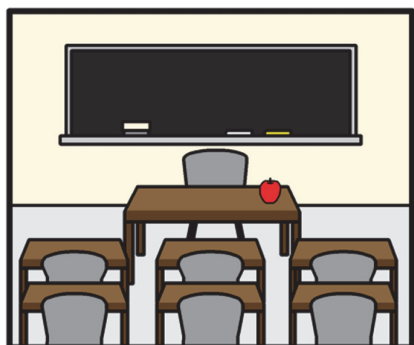
Work that happens now to get lead from the earth

Some people in Kabwe still work to get lead from the earth.



There should be checks to make sure that:

- These people follow laws and rules about keeping everything safe



- Children are not doing this work. They should be able to go to school instead



People who work to get lead should get help to:

- Know how to keep safe
- Find safer ways to earn money

Make sure all children get a good education



Children with disabilities or learning problems because of lead have the right to:

- Get a good education in the same schools as children without disabilities
- Get the support they need to learn and do well



Teachers should have training about how lead can affect children.



Other countries and organizations can help the government in Zambia with this work.

For example, they can check that children in Zambia are getting their rights.