

In 2018, Honduras made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

The National Congress approved a new penal code that updates penalties for human trafficking. The Secretariat of Labor and Social Security (STSS) also released a new national strategy for its labor inspectorate, and the Inter-agency Commission against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons obtained administrative and budget autonomy. As part of implementing its Roadmap to Eliminate Child Labor, Honduras

installed a National Council for Youth and Adolescents, and the country became only the second in Central America to join the Regional Action Group for the Americas against the Sexual Exploitation of Girls, Boys and Adolescents in Tourism Travel. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, it did not provide information about criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, limiting the ability to assess the adequacy of its criminal enforcement. Children in Honduras engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking and recruitment by gangs into illicit activities. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. Labor and criminal law enforcement agencies experience financial and human resource challenges that may hinder adequate law enforcement. In addition, the government's social programs that address child labor in agriculture do not appear sufficient to address the scope of the problem nationwide, and the government lacks social programs to eliminate child labor in other dangerous activities, such as fishing, mining, and domestic work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Honduras engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking and in agriculture. (1-3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Honduras.

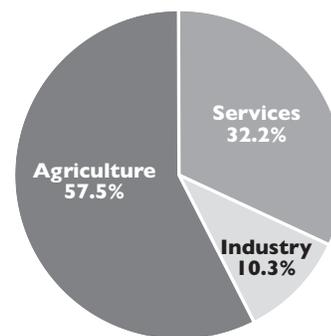
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.6 (158,891)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	87.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		84.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM), 2014. (5)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of melon, coffee, sugarcane, and okra (6-10)
	Harvesting mollusks† (11,12)
	Fishing, including working as divers' assistants,† and diving for lobster† (2,13)
Industry	Quarrying limestone† and production of lime† (14)
	Artisanal mining† (6,15-17)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Production and sale of fireworks† (18-22)
	Construction,† activities unknown (1,2,9,23,24)
Services	Street begging and vending, including dangerous street performances for tips† (1,20,23,25,26)
	Work in repair shops,† including in mechanical repair† (23,27)
	Scavenging in garbage dumps† (6,26,29,30)
	Work in hotels and laundromats, activities unknown (23,26)
	Domestic work† (6,9,26,28)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking (28,31-33)
	Forced begging (20,31,34)
	Use in illicit activities, including by gangs in committing homicides, extortion, and selling and trafficking drugs (1,20,24,31,35,36)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Honduras’ National Statistics Institute reported that 404,642 children between the ages of 5 and 17 worked in 2018. (1) Reports indicate that 20 percent of the Honduran population is of indigenous or African descent and that children from these groups are particularly vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (1,32,35,37,38) Children who lack economic and educational opportunities are the most vulnerable and are also among the most likely to migrate to other countries. Once en route, they are also vulnerable to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (32,33,39,40)

In Honduras, access to education is often limited and some reports indicate that approximately 220,000 children between the ages of 5 and 17 lack access to the educational system. More than 75 percent of these children live in rural areas, where lack of funding for schools, and in many cases, lack of any secondary schools, remain a problem. (1,36) However, one NGO reported that some 1.5 million children around the country lacked access to education in 2018. Limited infrastructure and violence originating from gang activity also present barriers to access for both children and educators. (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Honduras has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Honduras’ legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work compared to the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 120 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 15 of the Executive Agreement STSS-211-01; Article 32 of the Labor Code (41-43)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 122 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016 (41,42,44)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016; Article 8 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (41,44)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 179E, 179F, and 192 of the Penal Code (41,45,46)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013 (41,45,47)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 148 and 149A-E of the Penal Code (41,42,45,46)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013 (41,42,45,47)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 12 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (41)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (41)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Articles 8, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Articles 36 and 39 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence (42,48)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 7, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Article 36 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 171 of the Constitution (42,48,49)

* No conscription (41)

In January 2018, Honduras' National Congress approved a new penal code that is scheduled to take effect in November 2019. (3,50) Article 9 of the new law enables the application of criminal penalties under Honduran law against any individual who comes under Honduran jurisdiction for committing a range of crimes in any territory, including for human trafficking. (51)

As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Secretariat of Labor and Social Security (STSS) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Secretariat of Labor and Social Security (STSS)	Conducts labor inspections and enforces child labor laws through the General Directorate for Labor Inspections. (52)
Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children (OSPC)	Prosecutes crimes against children, including trafficking of children, hazardous labor, forced labor, and commercial sexual exploitation. Coordinates with Honduran National Police to investigate crimes and protect victims. (24,53)
Public Ministry's Technical Agency for Criminal Investigations (ATIC)	Investigates and technically supports criminal prosecutions conducted by the Public Ministry, including by the OSPC, such as those related to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and child pornography. (15,20,24)
Prosecutorial Task Force to Combat Criminal Smuggling of Unaccompanied Children and Trafficking in Persons	Investigates and prosecutes criminal organizations that engage in the illegal smuggling of unaccompanied children and human trafficking. Overseen by the Special Prosecutor Against Organized Crime and the Special Prosecutor for Children. (34,54)
Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (DINAF)	Formulates, coordinates, and implements national plans concerning children and their families; monitors children's rights, including by investigating complaints of child labor and ensuring that victims receive government services; and coordinates state efforts with civil society institutions to protect children. Overseen by the Secretariat of Development and Social Inclusion. (20,55-57)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Honduras took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the STSS that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$3,300,000 (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	140 (40)	169 (1)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (58)	Yes (1)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (59)	Yes (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (59)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	32,268 (60)	25,546 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	32,268 (60)	4,300 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	12 (60)	2 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	12 (60)	0 (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (60)	0 (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (61)	Yes (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (61)	No (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (61)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (61)	Yes (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (61)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (36)	No (1)

In 2018, Honduras released a new national strategy for the General Directorate for Labor Inspections that re-envisioned the entire inspection process, primarily by consolidating all inspection duties under the labor inspectorate. (62) In addition, the labor inspectorate was provided additional resources for transportation, fuel, and other necessities during the reporting period. (1) Nonetheless, labor union confederations, employer organizations, and human rights organizations have indicated that the level of funding and resources for the General Directorate for Labor Inspections is insufficient to enforce child labor laws nationwide. (1,36) Furthermore, revisions to the administrative procedures for measuring the performance of the labor inspectorate resulted in a significant drop in the number of worksite inspections conducted in 2018. (63)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Honduras' workforce, which includes over 3.7 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Honduras would employ about 249 labor inspectors. Furthermore, the ratio of inspectors to number of inspections suggests that each inspector conducted 151 inspections during the year, which is a high number and may impact the quality of inspections. (1,64,65)

While STSS encountered 2 cases of child labor in 2018, the Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (DINAF) reported removing 97 children from child labor and providing all of these children with social services. (1) During the reporting period, inspections were carried out across a myriad of sectors but did not include businesses in the informal sector, even though children in Honduras are known to work in this sector. STSS and civil society partners have all indicated that the number of inspections conducted is insufficient to address the scope of labor violations in the country, including child labor violations. (1,36,61) In particular, reports indicate that the STSS conducts most inspections in the urban areas of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, while rural areas and indigenous communities, in which hazardous activities in agriculture and fishing or diving are concentrated, have had insufficient inspections to address the scope of the problem. (28,37,66)

NGOs report that STSS procedures for responding to child labor complaints are often not followed, largely due to institutional weaknesses and a lack of resources. (20) Furthermore, there does not appear to be an adequate mechanism for the STSS and DINAF to refer cases of child labor to each other, and reports also indicate that DINAF lacks sufficient resources to effectively carry out its mandates. (20,24,36)

In 2018, only 40 inspectors received refresher training on child labor and/or hazardous child labor. The STSS indicated the training provided during the reporting period was insufficient. (1,63)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Honduras took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (57)	No (1)

Two individuals were sentenced by the Supreme Court of Justice in 2018 on child pornography charges. (3) However, reports indicate that the level of funding and resources available to criminal law enforcement agencies is insufficient to meet agency needs. (57)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

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Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor	Coordinates government policies and efforts on child labor issues. Chaired by STSS and includes officials from eight government ministries, DINAf, the Supreme Court, and other government entities. (52,67,68) Oversees regional sub-commissions, led by STSS and DINAf officials, which implement national efforts at the local level. (52,67,68) During the reporting period, the National Commission did not hold any meetings. However, the Commission's technical council held two meetings to review actions taken by various sectors to combat child labor. (1)
Inter-Institutional Commission Against Exploitation and Commercial Sex Trafficking (CICESCT)	Prevents, tends to the victims of, and prosecutes crimes of sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons. Comprising representatives from 35 organizations, including several government ministries, NGOs, and private companies. (69) Oversees 19 local CICESCT committees and implements the Strategic Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking. (35) In 2018, CICESCT achieved budget and administrative autonomy and was relocated under the Ministry of Human Rights. (3,69)
Migration Task Force*	Convenes several government ministries to collaborate on addressing irregular migration, including combating the risks associated with trafficking in persons. Initiated in 2018 and chaired by Honduras' First Lady Ana Garcia de Hernandez. (3)
Secretariat of Social Development and Inclusion (SEDIS)	Coordinates social protection policies and the provision of services to vulnerable populations. (70) SEDIS indicated that in 2018 it had invested over 60,000 USD in the Vida Mejor conditional cash transfer program and had provided services to over 350,000 families across the country. (71)

*Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Roadmap for the Eradication of Child Labor in Honduras	Aims to eradicate all forms of child labor by 2020 and to improve the government's response to child labor issues. Works at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels and addresses poverty, health education, and social development. (72,73) Implemented by STSS. (20,72) Held three sessions of the Guarantee System for Rights of Children and Adolescents in Honduras during 2018, including the installation of the National Council for Youth and Adolescents, which is chaired by the Secretariat General of Coordination of Government. (1,74)
Strategic Plan to Prevent and Eliminate Child Labor (2016–2020)	Identifies lines of action for preventing and eliminating child labor, including by increasing child labor law enforcement, strengthening engagement with the private sector, developing procedures for inter-agency coordination, and developing social programs to support children removed from child labor. (68) Implemented by STSS and other executive and judicial branch agencies, and employers', workers', and other civil society organizations. (68) Includes the U.S.-Honduras Labor Rights Monitoring and Action Plan (2015–2018), which aims to improve the enforcement of labor laws, including laws related to child labor, by implementing legal and policy reforms, strengthening STSS, enhancing enforcement activities, and increasing outreach efforts. (75) In 2018, the U.S. and Honduras agreed to extend the action plan into 2019. (3)
Strategic Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Honduras (2016–2022)	Establishes national priorities to combat commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking in four principal areas: (1) prevention and awareness; (2) investigation, prosecution, and punishment of violations; (3) detection, assistance, and protection of victims; and (4) coordination and cooperation. (76) In 2018, CICESCT held workshops and trainings with NGOs and international donors, and developed and disseminated information materials, including translations for vulnerable Miskito and Garifuna populations. (3)
First Public Policy and National Action Plan on Human Rights	Aims to implement the government's national and international human rights commitments, including those addressing child and forced labor. (24,77) Research was unable to identify relevant activities undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (78-84)

In 2018, the Colombian and Honduran Ministries of Labor held an exchange to examine best practices for the prevention and elimination of child labor particularly in the coffee sector, and more generally in the agricultural sector. (1,3)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Better Life Voucher (Bono Vida Mejor)†	Conditional cash transfer program that aims to reduce poverty by providing financial assistance to households after parents ensure their children participate in health, education, nutrition, and other programs. (40,85) Objectives include the elimination of child labor. (28) In 2018, the Secretaría de Desarrollo e Inclusión (SEDIS) carried out the second phase of the program with cash transfers to nine departments. (86) IDB reported in 2018 that the <i>Bono Vida Mejor</i> program had reduced poverty by 12.2 percentage points in Honduras. (85)
Program for the Reintegration of Returned Unaccompanied Migrant Children‡	Government program that assists unaccompanied migrant children who have been returned to Honduras. Implemented by the National Institute for Migration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DINAF, SEDIS, and the National Center for Social Sector Information. (87) In 2018, DINAF sent regional reintegration teams to 10 departments across the country to respond to specific cases of children who returned to the country. (88)
Program to Prevent Sex Tourism Involving Children and Adolescents†	Government program that aims to raise awareness and provide training on sex tourism for the tourism industry. Implemented by the Honduran Tourist Board, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Tourism Institute. (72,89) In 2018, registered 238 companies, each signing a code of conduct for the protection of children and adolescents against commercial sexual exploitation. (3)
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL projects that aim to eliminate child labor through technical assistance to businesses, direct services to Honduran youth, and capacity building with the Honduran government. These projects include: \$2 million Addressing Child Labor and Forced Labor in the Coffee Supply Chain in Honduras (2017–2020); \$16.5 million Youth Pathways Central America (2015–2020); and \$8.7 million Bright Futures (2014–2019). During the reporting period, 28 youths from San Juan completed a training course in coffee management, and the project established 10 new youth bank groups to promote and implement youth-led community development projects. (91) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
USAID-Funded Projects	USAID-funded projects, including Honduran Youth Alliance, which focuses on gang prevention, including for vulnerable youth; Strengthening Capacity to Build a Culture of Peace, which aims to improve citizen security, including for at-risk youth; and Improving Education for Work, Learning, and Success, which aims to increase educational opportunities for youth. (66,92)

† Program is funded by the Government of Honduras.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (24,28)

In 2018, Honduras became only the second Central American country to join the Regional Action Group for the Americas against the Sexual Exploitation of Girls, Boys, and Adolescents in Tourism Travel. (3)

Although the Government of Honduras funds or participates in social programs that aim to eliminate child labor in forced begging, commercial sexual exploitation, and the illegal recruitment of children into gang-related activities, research did not identify programs that specifically target children working in other dangerous activities, such as fishing, mining, and domestic work. In addition, social programs that address child labor in agriculture do not appear to be sufficient to address the scope of the problem nationwide.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Honduras (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Raise the minimum working age of 14 to conform with the compulsory education age of 17.	2018
	Ensure that agencies such as the Secretariat of Labor and Social Security; the Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family; the Special Prosecutor for Children; and other criminal and labor enforcement agencies have sufficient funding and resources to address the worst forms of child labor nationwide.	2010 – 2018
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet ILO's technical advice and to ensure a sufficient number to carry out quality labor inspections; and conduct a sufficient number of inspections to address the scope of child labor in Honduras.	2010 – 2018
	Follow established procedures for responding to child labor complaints and carrying out labor inspections in areas in which child labor is prevalent, such as rural areas, the informal sector, and indigenous communities where children engage in agriculture and fishing or diving.	2018
	Ensure that all labor inspectors receive training on child labor and make information about the initial training for new criminal investigators publicly available.	2014 – 2018
	Ensure that there is an adequate, reciprocal referral mechanism between the Secretariat of Labor and Social Security and the Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family for the enforcement of labor laws and the provision of social services for child labor victims.	2014 – 2018
	Publish complete information on criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, such as trainings held, number of investigations conducted, and number of convictions.	2015 – 2018
Government Policies	Ensure resources are available for the implementation of the Policy on Human Rights and report on actions taken to carry out the policy during the reporting period.	2018
Social Programs	Increase access to education by increasing funding to schools, building more schools, particularly in rural areas, and enhancing efforts to protect students from gang recruitment and violence.	2014 – 2018
	Expand social programs that address child labor in agriculture and create programs that aim to prevent children from migrating and to eliminate child labor in other dangerous activities, such as fishing, mining, and domestic service.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure social programs reach the children who are most vulnerable to child labor, including children of African descent and indigenous children.	2017 – 2018

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