

In 2020, Ecuador made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion provided assistance to approximately 11,530 children and adolescents vulnerable to child labor and the Attorney General's Office indicted 39 individuals for child labor crimes. In addition, the Technical Secretariat for the Lifetime Plan sent out technical brigades to remote areas in all provinces to assist with medical checkups and other social services for children. The Ministry of Labor also signed a Framework Agreement for Inter-Institutional Cooperation with the Association of Municipalities of Ecuador to implement public policies and programs aimed at the prevention and eradication of child labor. Finally, technical teams from the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion visited 8,425 families to help keep children in school despite the partial lockdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, children in Ecuador are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in mining. The labor inspectorate continues to lack sufficient resources and children continue to face barriers to education, especially in rural areas.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Ecuador are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in mining. (1,2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ecuador.

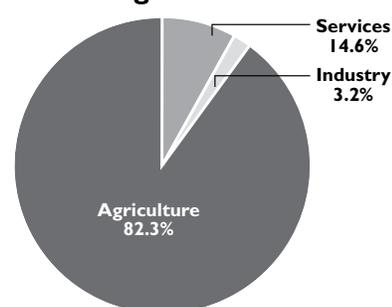
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.2 (302,796)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	8.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		104.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's Analysis of Statistics from Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo (ENEMDU), 2019. (4)

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



Although the National Council for Inter-Generational Equity worked closely with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) to complete a partial study on child labor that was published in early 2019, the government has not conducted a comprehensive nationwide child labor survey since 2012. Both government and civil society agree that a lack of updated statistics hampers efforts in eradicating child labor. (1,2,5)

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 bananas, coffee, cocoa, palm oil, and flowers, including the use of chemical products† and machetes† (1,2,6,7)
	Fishing† (1,2,6)
	Hazardous work in the carving† and threading† of abacá fiber(1,2,8)
Industry	Gold mining† and small-scale mining† (1,9)
	Production of bricks† (1,2)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction,† including loading construction materials, mixing materials to make concrete, and brickwork (1,2,6,10)
Services	Domestic work† (1,2,11)
	Street work, including begging, shoe shining, selling newspapers, and vending (1,12-14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,12,15)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking and robbery (1,5,16,17)
	Recruitment of children by Colombian non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,16,17)
	Use in the production of pornography (1,2,16,18)
	Forced labor in banana and palm plantations, floriculture, mining; and in domestic work, street vending, and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,5,9,15,16,19,20)

† 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.

Civil society and government sources reported incidences of Peruvian adolescents being recruited under false promises of employment into forced labor in illegal mines in Ecuador. (9,18,21) Migrant and refugee children from Colombia and Venezuela are particularly vulnerable to street work, including forced begging. They are also vulnerable to exploitative labor practices in some parts of the fishing sector in the coastal region and artisanal mining in southern Ecuador and in the northern province of Imbabura. (1,2,9,12,16) Indigenous children between the ages of 6 and 10 from the highlands are victims of trafficking in forced begging in Guayaquil and Quito, initially under false promises of employment. (1,7,22)

Migrant and refugee children from other Latin American countries, girls from poor families, and indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian girls are used in child prostitution. (1,2,15,17) Child prostitution in Ecuador also occurs near illegal mining sites. (1,2,10,22) Venezuelan, Colombian, and Peruvian girls are victims of sex trafficking in Ecuador. (1,2,12,17) Networks for commercial sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, also recruit children from schools, and, increasingly, through social media platforms that encourage children to recruit their friends and classmates. (16,18) On Ecuador’s northern border, traffickers force children into criminality, recruiting them to engage in drug trafficking and robbery. (1,2,17)

Despite education being free in Ecuador, children face barriers to accessing education, including having to pay for uniforms and textbooks, lack of space and teachers, inadequate school infrastructure, teen pregnancy, and lack of transportation for children who must attend schools far from their homes. (1,2,9,23) The lack of schools in rural areas specifically affects indigenous and refugee children, who must travel long distances to attend school. (2,9) Many indigenous children abandon school early, both in rural and urban areas. (6) This situation worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as all in-person education activities were canceled affecting an estimated 4.6 million students. These students were supposed to shift to an online distance-learning method but lack of access to Internet and electronic devices increased absentee and dropout rates, especially in rural areas. (2) Reports indicate that at least 100,000 children did not register for school for the 2020–2021 academic year, partially due to a lack of access to digital devices to continue remote education. (2) Reports indicate that as many as 65 percent of school-age Venezuelan refugee and migrant children are not enrolled in Ecuador’s educational system. While identity documents are not required for attending school, some local officials demanded these documents for processing enrollment applications for refugee and migrant children. (2,24)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ecuador 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's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 46 of the Constitution; Article 82 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (23,25)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 87 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (25)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 5, 6, and 8 of Resolution No. 016 of 2008; Article 5 of Ministerial Accord MDT-2015-0131 (26,27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 82, 91, 105, and 213 of the Integral Penal Code (28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 47, 91, and 92 of the Integral Penal Code; Article 117 of the Organic Law on Human Mobility (28,29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 91 and 100-104 of the Integral Penal Code (28)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 47, 219, and 220 of the Integral Penal Code (28)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 57 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 161 of the Constitution (23,25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 127 of the Penal Code; Article 57 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 161 of the Constitution (23,25,28)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 38, 42, and 43 of the Organic Intercultural Education Law (24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 4 of the Organic Intercultural Education Law; Chapter 5, Article 28 of the Constitution (23,24)

* No conscription (23)

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 authority of enforcement agencies 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
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws. Through the National Project to Eradicate Child Labor (PETI), monitors and identifies cases of child labor; assesses penalties; promotes public awareness campaigns to prevent child labor; provides technical assistance to local governments on child labor; and identifies victims of child labor for the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) to provide social services. (2) Using the Unified System of Registration of Child Labor (SURT), collects information on child laborers and refers children to appropriate government services. (1,2)
Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion (MIES), Office of Special Protection to Vulnerable Populations	Conducts routine inspections in the informal sector for child labor and provides remediation services to child laborers and their families. (1,9) Through its Office of Special Protection to Vulnerable Populations, maintains a national anti-child labor program involving coordination with civil society organizations and local governments. (1,2) Finances the activities of these organizations at the local level and focuses on familial child labor and child labor in the informal sector. (2)
Attorney General's Office (AGO)	Enforces criminal laws against child labor, hazardous child labor, commercial sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. (9,30) The AGO's Specialized Victim Witness Protection Program provides immediate support and shelter to victims and witnesses willing to press charges and testify against their abusers, and coordinates referrals for further assistance with other government agencies. (9)
Ministry of Government (MOG)	Oversees and evaluates all police actions, including the National Police Unit for Crimes against Children and Adolescents (DINAPEN). (9,21) DINAPEN investigates all crimes against children, including abuse, sexual exploitation, sex tourism, smuggling, kidnapping, exploitative child labor, and forced labor. (9,31) DINAPEN's National Investigative Unit against Trafficking in Persons and Illicit Smuggling of Migrants also investigates child trafficking cases, assists victims, and arrests traffickers. (32)
Office of the Prosecutor	Tries cases related to the worst forms of child labor. (1)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Ecuador took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4,171,420 (1)	\$2,874,793 (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	214 (1)	160 (2)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (33)	Yes (2,33)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (1)	N/A (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	25,280 (1)	7,559 (2)
Number Conducted at Worksites	25,280 (1)	7,559 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	53 (1)	6 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	4 (1)	3 (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	7 (1)	3 (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (34)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (33)	Yes (33)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (2)

As of November 2020, officials conducted 284 inspections specifically related to child labor complaints, though the overall number of inspections was greatly reduced due to nationwide mobilization restrictions under the pandemic. (2) Officials from the National Project to Eradicate Child Labor (PETI) also accompanied labor inspectors for 3,845 verifications and labor inspections not specific to child labor to determine whether companies were hiring children. During these verifications, PETI officials also provided technical advice on current

legal regulations and the process of hiring adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age in permitted activities. (2) MOL officials reported the identification of 346 children in child labor conditions in 2020 as a result of labor inspections, though they did not provide information on how many children were removed from child labor situations. (2) MIES also reported it had assisted approximately 11,530 children and adolescents vulnerable to child labor. (2)

In 2020, there were 160 labor inspectors in the country, a decrease of 54 inspectors from 2019. There are also no inspectors in the country dedicated only to child labor issues. (2) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Ecuador's workforce, which includes over 8 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Ecuador would employ about 534 labor inspectors. (1,2,35,36) During the reporting period, there was also a significant reduction in the amount of funding dedicated to the labor inspectorate. This reduction in funding was due to government-wide budget cuts prompted by the pandemic. (2) MOL acknowledged that this sort of unannounced budget cuts complicated their planning and program execution efforts during the reporting year. (2) Research also indicates that inspectors' coverage of the agricultural sector is insufficient, even though most children work in this sector. (9)

The MOL also reported that the labor inspectorate lacked the necessary resources, such as transportation and equipment, to fulfill its mandate. (1) Furthermore, inspectors do not have sufficient knowledge of child labor laws and lack training on identifying victims of trafficking in persons. (1,16,18) According to the MOL, Ecuador's labor inspectors focus primarily on formal sector employment. (1,37) Although Ecuadorian laws and regulations governing child labor are comprehensive, those regarding hazardous work are not enforced equally in rural areas and family-run businesses. (2,9,37)

The government does not publish information from the Unified System of Registration of Child Labor (SURT). (9,18)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Ecuador 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 a lack of training for criminal investigators on the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (1)	N/A (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (1)	Yes (34)
Number of Investigations	172 (1)	330 (2)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2,34)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	103 (1)	277 (2)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (2)

In 2020, the Ministry of Government (MOG) conducted various trainings for investigators in the context of broader trafficking in persons trainings, but they did not conduct specific child labor-related trainings. (2) The State's Attorney General executed several virtual and in-person training sessions through the Directorate of Training and Mission Strengthening during the reporting period. In February and March, officials offered training on conducting specialized forensic interviews with minors and sexual violence victims. (2) In total, 49 prosecutors and support staff attended. (2) In August and November 2020, officials taught the advanced course on children and adolescents' rights online, emphasizing the border population. Nine public officials participated from the provinces of Carchi and Esmeraldas. (2)

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During the reporting period, MOG's Human Trafficking Investigation Unit investigated 16 cases of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation and one for labor exploitation. The National Police Unit for Crime against Children and Adolescents (DINAPEN) investigated six cases regarding forced labor or other forms of labor exploitation and one case of trafficking for labor exploitation. (2) In addition, DINAPEN's Child and Adolescents Protection Unit reported 43 new investigations in 2020, including 7 for trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation and 1 for labor exploitation. No information on the number of victims was available to be included in this report. (2) The Attorney General's Office reported that 39 individuals were indicted for child labor crimes. However, the government did not provide information on the exact number of violations found and convictions made for the worst forms of child labor in 2020 for inclusion in this report. (2) Additionally, the Specialized Victim Witness Protection Program rescued six minors from trafficking related to sexual exploitation through November. It also provided social services to 20 children in 2020 in the provinces of Sucumbios, Pichincha, Napo, El Oro, Azuay, Guayas, and Tungurahua. (2)

The Attorney General's Office reported that the budget allocated to SPAVT between 2014 and 2020 decreased consistently, from \$1,165,259 in 2014 to \$256,916 in 2020. (2) Civil society reports that the National Investigative Unit and DINAPEN lack resources to adequately investigate trafficking in persons cases. (32)

A reciprocal referral mechanism exists between law enforcement and social services for victims of human trafficking; however, civil society reports that the mechanism is at times ad hoc. (1,2) Shelters serve only girls who have been victims of sex trafficking. There are no specialized shelters for boys or girls who have been victims of labor trafficking. (15) Although the MIES will generally assign child victims to shelters depending on space availability, the National Investigative Unit and MIES officials cite a lack of shelters in many provinces as a primary constraint in victim assistance. (1,9,16,31,38)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including for the provision of social services for victims of the worst forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Institutional Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor	Coordinates government efforts to combat child labor. Includes participation from MOL, DINAPEN, AGO, and MIES. (9,21) Regional inter-agency sub-committees on children and adolescence represent local governments on the committee. (1) Although research was unable to determine whether the national coordinating body was active during the reporting period, 40 regional inter-agency committees were active in 2020 and continued to report cases of child labor to MOL via SURTI. (2)
Inter-Institutional Coordinating Committee for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Illicit Traffic in Migrants	Coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking, including child trafficking. Established as part of the National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, Sexual and Labor Exploitation, and Other Forms of Exploitation, which has since been updated. (30) Met periodically in 2020 to coordinate government anti-trafficking in persons efforts, including child trafficking. This committee continued implementing an updated National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking in 2020, and MOG continued chairing this coordinating mechanism. (2)
Technical Secretariat for the Lifetime Plan	Convenes government ministries to discuss issues, including child labor. (39) During the reporting period, it sent out technical brigades to remote areas in all provinces of the country to assist vulnerable populations, including children, and provided them with medical checkups, along with other basic social services. (2)
National Council for Inter-Generational Equity (CNII)	Coordinates inter-agency efforts to protect vulnerable populations, including children. Local autonomous governments also participate in coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor and implement the guidelines provided by CNII and are responsible for ensuring the correct application of norms related to child labor. (39) Although research was unable to determine activities taken by the National Council during the reporting period, local autonomous governments continued to monitor and assist children in child labor conditions through their technical working groups in 2020. (2)
Inter-Agency Sub-Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor (<i>Mesa Interinstitucional de Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil</i>)	Coordinates regional efforts to address child labor. (40) Participants include MIES; regional councils of Childhood and Adolescence; ministries of Education, Labor, and Interior; DINAPEN; and AGO. (38,40) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active during the reporting period.

Coordination between ministries providing social services has improved in recent years, but the government continues to have difficulties ensuring that some children rescued from working in the informal sector receive adequate social assistance. (41,42)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the approval of the national action plan on child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Project to Eradicate Child Labor (PETI) (2015–2017)	Establishes a strategy to eradicate child labor in Ecuador by 2021 and prevent hazardous child labor in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and mining. Led by MOL, the plan operates under the National Plan for Good Living. (6,9,43) A new 3-year national plan to eradicate child labor is still awaiting executive approval, which is reportedly needed to improve inter-agency coordination. Although implemented by MOL as a pilot initiative, PETI operates without a permanent budget guaranteeing a dedicated agency in charge of efforts to combat child labor. (1) As of the time of this report, MOL and the other agencies involved in eradicating child labor continued to work under this policy. (2)
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2019–2030)	Aims to prevent, investigate, and impose legal sanctions against human trafficking with a focus on human rights, mobility, and gender, as the majority of victims in Ecuador are women. Launched in December of 2019, it includes U.S.-funded support through the IOM, it is the government's first multi-sectoral plan on trafficking that establishes goals for every public sector institution to address human trafficking. (44-46) In 2020, several initiatives were carried out under this policy, including MIES' launch of the National Strategy for Prevention, Care and Protection of People in Situations of Begging, Child Labor, Street Dwellers and Other Rights Violations. (2)
Lifetime Plan (<i>Plan Toda Una Vida</i>) (2017–2021)	Aims to support vulnerable populations from birth to advanced age through a series of social welfare programs. Aims to reduce child labor of children ages 5 to 14 to 2.7 percent by 2021. (18,47) Led by the Technical Secretariat for the Lifetime Plan. (48) In 2020, remained the government's signature social program to assist vulnerable populations, including children. (2)

In 2020, the MOL signed a Framework Agreement for Inter-Institutional Cooperation with the Association of Municipalities of Ecuador for the implementation of public policies, plans, programs, and actions aimed at the prevention and eradication of child labor. (2)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, 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 efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Business Network for a Child Labor Free Ecuador	UN initiative that seeks to gain commitment from participating industries to promote the prevention and elimination of child labor in their supply chains, trains businesses on child labor prevention, and creates employment opportunities for the parents of children engaged in child labor. (49) As a public-private partnership, it aims to exchange best practices and design strategies towards the progressive eradication of child labor among industries and their value chains. The program focuses on three geographic hubs in Azuay, Pichincha, and Guayas provinces. (2) In 2020, the network executed the “Train of Dreams, Return to Classes” project to adapt to new virtual educational realities during the pandemic. (2) The project benefitted 205 children previously removed from child labor by local NGO Miners of Dreams, providing the children with access to digital resources to facilitate their continued education virtually. (2)
National Program to Combat Child Begging†	Seeks to raise awareness about child begging and aims to facilitate social services for children begging in the streets. (9) The government did not provide information on activities undertaken to implement this program in 2020 for inclusion in this report.
<i>Palma Futuro</i> (2019–2022)	\$6 million regional project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and implemented by Partners of the Americas to improve the implementation of social compliance systems that prevent and reduce child labor and forced labor in palm oil supply chains. (50) In 2020, activities continued in Santo Domingo de las Tsachilas. (2) For additional information, please see our website .

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
Youth Impulse (<i>Impulso Joven</i>)†	Seeks to increase job training and higher education opportunities for at-risk youth, support youth entrepreneurship through preferential loans, and connect employers with at-risk youth. (9) The government did not provide information on activities undertaken to implement this plan in 2020 for inclusion in this report.

† Program is funded by the Government of Ecuador.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,42,51-53)

In 2020, technical teams from MIES visited families to raise awareness on the importance of school attendance and other typical childhood activities essential to the integral development of children. These teams usually comprise a psychologist, social worker, and a protection service specialist. (2) Through June 2020, they visited 8,425 families to help keep their children in school despite the partial lockdown triggered by the pandemic. MIES also delivered financial protection bonuses to families due to the additional economic hardships faced during the first stages of the pandemic. (2) In total, 950,000 people benefited from these government programs through June. (2) In addition, the government sustained funding levels under its "Toda Una Vida" social program and continued to publicly highlight its social brigade activities during the reporting period despite budget cuts across the public sector. These initiatives also included an expansion of monthly social payments between April and June while the government imposed mandatory lockdowns to combat the pandemic. (2)

Although civil society stakeholders commended the government's social programs, they reiterated that these programs only make limited interventions in sectors in which child labor is most prevalent, specifically the informal and agricultural sectors. (9) While the government used the social registry to provide additional social assistance payments to vulnerable families during the pandemic, research found that the registry had not been updated since 2015 and some of the most vulnerable families may have been overlooked for those payments. Civil society notes that an update to the social registry should prioritize the most vulnerable populations at risk of child labor—single mothers with more than one child. (2)

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 Ecuador (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2009 – 2020
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is properly funded so that inspectors receive sufficient resources, including transportation and equipment, to adequately carry out their duties. Ensure that inspections sufficiently cover sectors in which child labor has been reported, including the agricultural sector and the informal sector.	2014 – 2020
	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient knowledge of existing laws, penalties, processes, and training in victim identification to conduct inspections and refer victims to social services.	2015 – 2020
	Ensure that laws and regulations governing child labor, especially hazardous labor, are enforced consistently throughout the country, including in rural areas and family-run businesses.	2016 – 2020
	Publish information on the number of criminal violations found and convictions of crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that criminal investigators, including the National Police Unit for Crimes against Children and Adolescents and the Specialized Victim Witness Protection Program, receive sufficient resources to investigate cases of the worst forms of child labor and refer victims to services.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that investigators receive sufficient resources, including shelters for victims, to investigate cases of the worst forms of child labor and refer victims.	2016 – 2020
	Strengthen the provision of specialized services for victims of human trafficking.	2018 – 2020

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Coordination	Ensure that key coordinating committees and councils, including the Inter-Institutional Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor, the Inter-Agency Sub-Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor, and the National Council for Inter-Generational Equity convene and undertake activities on a regular basis to address the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2020
	Strengthen coordinating mechanisms among ministries providing social services to victims of child labor, especially in the informal sector.	2015 – 2020
Government Policies	Update the National Plan to Eradicate Child Labor to ensure adequate funding for implementation and effective inter-agency coordination.	2019 – 2020
	Transition the National Plan to Eradicate Child Labor from its original pilot project status to a permanent directorate with a permanent budget.	2020
Social Programs	Conduct a comprehensive child labor survey so that there is sufficient data to inform government actions to eliminate child labor.	2018 – 2020
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including indigenous and refugee children and children from rural areas, by increasing classroom space and teachers, addressing teen pregnancy issues, and providing adequate transportation.	2014 – 2020
	Enhance efforts to address exploitative labor practices and labor trafficking of migrant and refugee children.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that children of refugees and migrants have full access to education.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that all social programs that address child labor, including the National Program to Combat Child Begging and Youth Impulse, are active and publish information on activities taken during the reporting period.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that social programs make interventions in sectors in which child labor is most prevalent, specifically in the informal and agricultural sectors.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that the social registry includes families most vulnerable to child labor by updating the list of recipients of social assistance.	2020

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