

In 2020, Mexico made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government published the 2019 National Child Labor Survey, the results of which will be used to develop policies and programs to combat child labor. In addition, it ratified International Labor Organization Convention 189 on Domestic Workers, and revised the Migration Law and Refugee Assistance and Asylum Law to prioritize the rights of migrant and refugee children, including prohibiting the detention of children in migrant centers and ensuring migrant and refugee children have educational access. Moreover, state governments investigated and prosecuted at least 199 child trafficking cases. The government also approved the creation of a national network of Local Committees to Prevent and Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Workers of the Permitted Age to improve coordination efforts to address the worst forms of child labor at the municipal and local levels. Further, it published the National Program on Human Rights 2020–2024 and the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare's National Program for 2020–2024. However, children in Mexico are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production of chile peppers, coffee, sugarcane, and tomatoes. The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the Mexican economy, resulting in a significant increase in the number of children engaging in child labor. Although nearly 60 percent of all employment in Mexico occurs in the informal sector, federal and some state-level labor inspectors carry out inspections in the informal sector only after receiving formal complaints. In addition, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies lacked human and financial resources which may hinder the adequate enforcement of labor and criminal laws, and the government did not publish complete information on its labor and criminal law enforcement efforts. Social programs to combat child labor do not address all relevant sectors in which child labor is found in Mexico.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mexico are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs. (1-5) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production of chile peppers, coffee, sugarcane, and tomatoes. (6-10) Data from the National Child Labor Survey (ENTI 2019), which was funded by USDOL, show that 3.1 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 engage in child labor, including hazardous household chores. It also shows that 52 percent of child laborers engage in hazardous work and 25 percent of child laborers do not attend school. (9,11) In addition, the ENTI 2019 shows that child labor primarily occurs in the central and southern states of Oaxaca, Puebla, Chiapas, and Michoacán, and 61 percent of child laborers are boys. (9,11) The Government of Mexico plans to use the ENTI 2019 results to develop policies and action plans to combat child labor. (9,12) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mexico.

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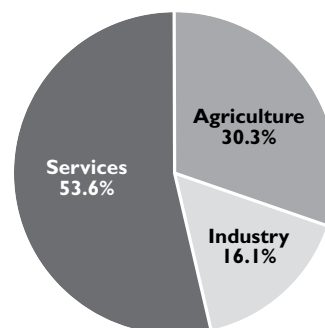
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.0 (866,293)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (13)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Encuesta Nacional de Trabajo Infantil (ENTI), 2019.(14)

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	Working in agriculture,† including in the production of avocados, chile peppers, coffee, cucumbers, eggplants, beans (green), melons, onions, sugarcane, tobacco,† and tomatoes (6-10,15-18) Cattle raising (19)
Industry	Manufacturing† footwear, furniture, garments, leather goods, and textiles (7,9,19-21) Producing baked goods (9,19,22) Construction,† activities unknown (7,9,19) Mining,† including amber (9,19,23-25) Working in woodworking and welding shops (7,9,19)
Services	Street work† as vendors, shoe shiners, beggars, car washers, and porters (6,22,26-29) Working in auto repair, beauty salons, restaurants, bars,† and coffee shops (7,9,28) Scavenging in landfills (6,30) Domestic work (9,11,19,31,32)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, street vending, and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,23,29,32-36) Commercial sexual exploitation, including in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3,4,7,23,37) Use by cartels to perform illicit activities, including the production of poppies for heroin, drug trafficking, and carrying out armed attacks, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,5,23,38-41)

† 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.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the Mexican economy, resulting in a significant increase in the number of children engaging in child labor. Experts estimate that as a result of the pandemic, the number of people living in poverty in Mexico will increase by 7.9 percent and the number of children engaging in child labor will increase by 5.5 percent. (5,24,42) Despite a government program to transmit public education classes via Internet, television, and radio during the pandemic, reports suggest that at least 2.5 million children did not continue their basic education. This includes 800,000 students who did not transition from lower secondary to upper secondary school. (43,44) In addition, students reported difficulty accessing classes as at least half of Mexican households do not have computers or Internet access, while 80 percent of indigenous or rural households lacked computers or Internet access. (44-46) The lack of access to education and school abandonment leaves children more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (5,47,48)

Organized criminal groups recruit and exploit children in illicit activities, including serving as lookouts, carrying out armed attacks against authorities and rival cartels, and in the production, transport, and sale of drugs. Most of the time these children abandon school, are unable to access future employment in the formal sector, or go on to commit graver crimes. (4,5,41,49) Children in Mexico are also trafficked internally for commercial

sexual exploitation and illicit activities, including by organized criminal groups. The state of Tlaxcala is known as the predominant source and transit center for child commercial sexual exploitation in Mexico, but it also occurs in tourist areas such as Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, and Cancun, and in northern border cities such as Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. (1,3,23,50) The states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Puebla, and Veracruz are also source and transit centers for human trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labor exploitation. (23) Reports by Mexico's National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime found that 25 percent of female trafficking victims in Mexico are under 18 years of age while 45 percent of child trafficking victims are boys and girls of indigenous descent. (1,4,36,51,52) In addition, Mexican authorities reported that they registered an increase of 73 percent in online child pornography distribution during the pandemic. (37)

Child labor in agriculture is more prevalent among boys. Although children engage in agricultural activities throughout the country, the majority of child labor in this sector occurs in the central and southern states of Oaxaca, Puebla, Chiapas, and Nayarit. (9,11) Children's work in agriculture often includes long working hours, use of sharp tools, handling pesticides, and carrying heavy loads. (10,53,54) A 2018 report by the *Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan* found that 42 percent of migrant agricultural worker households had at least one child engaged in child labor, while in 2020, the government estimated that there are approximately 714,000 Mexican children who are internal migrant agricultural workers. (15,55,56) In addition, some children ages 15 to 17 living in agricultural export-producing communities are vulnerable to involvement in organized crime as they may not be able to find legal work. (18,57-59)

Children from indigenous populations are more likely to work across all sectors, including in agriculture, than non-indigenous children. (15,55,60) According to CNDH, indigenous populations are especially vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking due to low educational levels, linguistic barriers, and discrimination. (36,50,61-63) Indigenous children are also less likely to attend school due to the lack of schools near their homes, and the lack of educational materials and instruction in native languages. (60,64-66)

Migrants, mostly from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, who are fleeing violence, instability, and lack of opportunity in their countries of origin travel through Mexico en route to the United States. In 2020, Mexican authorities reported identifying and processing at least 87,000 migrants of whom approximately 20 percent were children, including at least 4,100 unaccompanied minors. (67-75) Migrant children, especially those travelling by themselves, are more vulnerable to human trafficking, forced recruitment by organized criminal groups, and other worst forms of child labor. (4,70,71) In addition, many migrant children do not have access to education. (68,69,71)

The National Institute of Migration (INM) is responsible for enforcing the rights of migrant children in coordination with the National System for Integral Family Development (SNDIF), and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) is tasked with refugee assistance. However, due to government austerity measures and an increase in the number of migrants, including unaccompanied children, INM, SNDIF, and COMAR may have insufficient funding to carry out their mandates. (23,72,73,76,77) In addition, although the government revised laws in November 2020 to address the best interests of migrant and refugee children including placement in child protection centers while waiting to be repatriated, some children remained in INM detention centers without access to education during the reporting period. (68,70,73,78-80) Moreover, the lack of implementation and poor coordination by INM and SNDIF left some unaccompanied children and migrant families with children in vulnerable conditions and without access to shelter. In addition, many SNDIF shelters, in which these families and children are being housed, have reached or are nearing capacity. (49,77,81) To address these challenges, some state governments in states with large migrant communities have coordinated with civil society to provide shelter and education to migrant families. (70,71,82,83)







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II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mexico 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	✓

On July 3, 2020, Mexico ratified ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). (84,85)

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 123 of the Constitution; Article 22 <i>bis</i> of the Labor Code; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents; Article 6 of the General Law on Education (18,86-88)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 175 of the Labor Code (18)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 175–176 of the Labor Code (18)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1 and 5 of the Constitution; Articles 11, 12, and 22 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (86,87,89)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 10 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (87,89)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 202–205 of the Federal Penal Code; Articles 13 and 18 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (87,89,90)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 196 and 201 of the Federal Penal Code; Article 24 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 2, 4, and 5 of the Law on Organized Crime (89-91)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 5 of the Military Service Law (92)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 24 of the Military Service Law (92)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 123 and 201 of the Federal Penal Code; Articles 16 and 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (87,90)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Articles 6 and 129 of the General Law on Education (88)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3 of the Constitution (86)

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) entered into force on July 1, 2020. The agreement contains a labor chapter with fully enforceable labor obligations, including on internationally recognized labor rights. (93-96) Under this chapter, Mexico commits to adopt and maintain in its statutes, regulations, and practices the effective abolition of child labor and a prohibition on the worst forms of child labor. This chapter

also requires each country to prohibit the importation of goods into its territory from other countries produced in whole or in part by forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory child labor. (49,93,96)

In November 2020, the government revised the Migration Law and the Refugee Assistance and Asylum Law to harmonize the provisions regarding migrant and refugee children's rights with the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents. These revisions include prohibiting the detention of migrant and refugee children, whether unaccompanied or not, in INM detention centers, and ensuring access to education for migrant and refugee children. (79,80,87,97,98)

As the minimum age for work at 15 years is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (18,88)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS)	Leads efforts to enforce child labor laws, conduct labor inspections, and refer cases for investigation. The Federal Prosecutor for the Defense of Work, an independent entity under STPS, prosecutes cases in which workers' rights are violated, including cases with workers under age 18. (18,99-104) The STPS inspectorate is responsible for labor law enforcement in 22 industrial sectors under federal jurisdiction, including the sugar and tobacco industries, three types of enterprises, and labor matters affecting two or more states. The state-level labor inspectorates are responsible for labor law enforcement in all other situations. (18,86,105) During the reporting period, STPS collaborated with USDOL on two projects to strengthen its capacity to enforce labor laws and train Mexican workers and unions on labor standards and identifying labor violations. (106-110)
Attorney General of the Republic (FGR)	Prosecutes crimes involving human trafficking, including criminal violations related to child trafficking and other worst forms of child labor. The Attorney General of the Republic's Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (FEVIMTRA) and the Specialized Unit on Trafficking in Minors, People, and Organs (UEITMPO) are responsible for investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases at the federal level. (4,104,111-114) In addition, all 32 states have specialized Trafficking in Persons (TIP) prosecutors or units, which are responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking at the state level. Some state TIP units or prosecutors also prosecute cases of gender-based violence. (50,59,115,116) In addition, federal and state TIP units receive some cases of child trafficking from the National Institute of Migration and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance. (76,78,117-120)
National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH)	Independent ombudsman body. Receives complaints and conducts investigations on human rights violations, including cases involving the worst forms of child labor. (121)
Conciliation and Arbitration Boards and Labor Tribunals and Conciliation Centers	Tripartite boards which mediate and adjudicate labor disputes according to federal and state labor laws, including processing cases in which children between the ages of 15 and 18 request permission to work. Beginning in 2020, these boards are being replaced by federal- and state-level Conciliation Centers and Labor Tribunals, which will oversee conciliation and adjudication of labor disputes, respectively. (18,41,86,122-125) In 2020, STPS and state governments also began establishing systems and institutions to address 2019 labor reform obligations to strengthen freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. This included dedicating \$69 million to establish Conciliation Centers and independent Labor Tribunals in eight states, begin file digitization, and carry out trainings on labor reform implementation. (108,126-131)
Secretariat of Health's National System for Integral Family Development (SNDIF)	Provides social assistance to child victims, including shelter and legal services. Employs representatives at the national, state, and municipal levels. (87,104,132) At the federal and state levels, also employs special prosecutors to carry out legal action against crimes related to children and adolescent rights, including violations related to the worst forms of child labor. (87,104,132) During school holidays, some state-level SNDIF ministries conduct operations to monitor for child labor in the informal sector. (133-145)

Since 2019, the Government of Mexico has implemented austerity measures that have left many secretariats and agencies at both the federal and state levels without the appropriate personnel, expertise, and leadership to carry out core government functions, including establishing and implementing policies and programs related to the worst forms of child labor and enforcing related laws. (146-151)

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Federal and state labor inspectorates carry out labor inspections in formally registered businesses. (99,100,106,152) Although these inspectorates have the authority to conduct unannounced inspections in the informal sector, including inspections related to child labor, in practice, inspections are only conducted in response to a formal complaint. As the informal sector accounts for 57 percent of employment in Mexico, the lack of inspections in this sector leaves children vulnerable to labor exploitation. (7,99,101,106,152-154)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Mexico took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human and financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,449,826 (155)	\$1,420,784 (156)
Number of Labor Inspectors	421 (104)	447 (41)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (106)	Yes (41,152)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	N/A	Yes (156)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	N/A (156)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (157)	No (41)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	35,981 † (104)	29,177 ‡ (41)
Number Conducted at Worksite	35,981 † (104)	29,177 ‡ (41)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	3 (158)	1 (158)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (104)	Unknown (156)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (104)	Unknown (156)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (159)	Yes (41)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (160)	Yes (41)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (104,159,160)	Yes (41,152)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (159,160)	Yes (41)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (160)	Yes (41)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (160)	Yes (156)

† Data are for federal inspectorate only. (104)

‡ Data are for federal inspectorate only. (41)

During the reporting period, STPS hired and trained 26 additional federal labor inspectors. (127,156) However, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Mexico's workforce, which includes approximately 54 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Mexico should employ roughly 3,634 labor inspectors. (104,127,161,162)

The STPS initiates routine and targeted inspections based on analysis of compliance data and patterns of complaints. Unannounced inspections for child labor violations are only conducted in response to complaints and must be coordinated with representatives from SNDIF and the local Office of the Attorney General (FGR). (100,104,106,108) The STPS did not report carrying out inspections for child labor in 2020, and the total number of complaints received or complaint-based inspections carried out is not known, as the STPS does not have an internal system to track cases of child labor violations. (105,107,152,160) However, the STPS carried out labor inspections at establishments to identify illegal subcontracting practices and inspections related to health and safety measures at the federal level; the latter were a priority given the pandemic. (156,163)

Research could not verify that all state-level labor ministries conducted child labor inspections, sanctioned establishments in violation of the Labor Code, or applied the guidelines on identifying and sanctioning child

labor violations as outlined in the "Labor Inspection Protocol to Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Workers". (41,100,104,133-137) However, during the reporting period, some state-level inspectorates reported carrying out inspections for child labor, including the state of Guanajuato, which detected 90 children engaged in child labor, and the state of Chihuahua, which identified 24 children of indigenous descent working in agricultural establishments. Other states had also planned to carry out child labor inspections in targeted sectors, including in agricultural and informal work; however, the results of these inspections are unknown. (164-171) In addition, although children between the ages of 15 and 17 are required to obtain work permits, only the state of Aguascalientes reported issuing work permits to children in this age group, granting 326 permits in 2020. Information on the issuance of work permits for other states was not provided for inclusion in this report. (164)

The STPS and state-level labor ministries share enforcement authority of child labor laws, and are authorized to establish agreements for coordination of inspection duties. However, due to limited information sharing between federal and state-level inspectorates, some establishments may not be inspected for labor law violations. (99,152,160) Moreover, concerns remain with Mexico's lack of enforcement of laws governing the minimum age for employment in rural areas or at small and medium enterprises, particularly in the agricultural sector. (49,172,173)

Even though federal labor inspectors have the authority to assess penalties for most labor infractions, child labor and forced labor infractions are considered criminal offenses. In such cases, inspectors are required to file a citation with the STPS's Directorate of Judicial Affairs to initiate sanctioning procedures with the state-level finance ministries or the FGR, who are then responsible for collecting fines or initiating criminal sanctions. (99,106,156,160)

In 2020, STPS implemented the new voluntary reporting system, "*CumpliLab*," to build a database of formally registered businesses that self-identify as being in compliance with the Labor Code, including provisions related to child labor. (160,174,175) Registered businesses deemed to be in compliance will be exempt from labor inspections for one year. (106,160,175,176) During the reporting period, STPS carried out virtual webinars on the implementation of the labor reform and on how to use "*CumpliLab*" for relevant stakeholders. (177,178)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mexico 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 insufficient financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Training for Investigators	Yes (153)	Yes (49)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	No (41)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (153)	Yes (49)
Number of Investigations	31 (49,153)	601 (49)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (153)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	31 (153)	Unknown (49)
Number of Convictions	4 (153)	43 (49)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (153)	Yes (49)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (153,179)	Yes (49)

In 2020, state-level prosecutors reported investigating and prosecuting at least 199 cases involving child trafficking victims. (180) In addition, the National Trafficking in Persons Hotline, managed by the Citizens' Council for Safety and Justice of Mexico City, received 2,117 reports of human trafficking and referred cases to the Attorney General of the Republic's Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (FEVIMTRA), the Specialized Unit on Trafficking in Minors, People, and Organs (UEITMPO), and state-level

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trafficking in persons prosecutors during the reporting period. Cases reported by the Hotline accounted for 8 percent of all open investigations during the reporting period. (49,59,179,181) However, the total number of children referred and assisted as a result of reporting by the Hotline is unknown. (49,179,181) FEVIMTRA and UEIMTPO also collaborated with the Governments of Argentina, Peru, Spain, and the United States to investigate or extradite perpetrators of human trafficking. Moreover, collaboration with law enforcement personnel from the United States resulted in the apprehension of a suspected trafficker and the dismantling of a sex trafficking ring operating between the two countries. (49)

In 2020, there were 18 specialized shelters for human trafficking victims. Of these, the government operated six shelters and provided NGOs with \$565,000 to operate three other trafficking shelters. (49,182-184)

Reports indicate that the lack of training for criminal law enforcement officers on how to perform prosecutorial and police investigative functions, and confusion over territorial jurisdictions, has hampered their ability to adequately investigate and prosecute cases involving the worst forms of child labor. (4,49,153,185,186) In addition, the insufficient capacity of prosecutors and judges to try criminal cases related to human trafficking meant that many suspected traffickers were incorrectly prosecuted for minor offenses or were acquitted. (4,49,185,186) Moreover, FEVIMTRA had limited financial resources available for investigations, training, and outreach. (49,50,183,184)

Although the government provided some information on the number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, and convictions made related to the worst forms of child labor at the federal level and for some states, the total number of investigations, and convictions for the federal level and for all states is not known due to weak coordination and inconsistent data sharing among government ministries. In addition, the data provided for 2020 are not disaggregated by the number of child victims. (4,23,49) Research identified that inconsistent data collection and the lack of coordination amongst government ministries may hinder criminal prosecutions and impact government efforts to provide victim services. (49,59,153,185,186)

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 funding.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Institutional Commission for Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Workers of the Permitted Age in Mexico (CITI)	Coordinates Mexico's activities to develop policies, approve programs, and coordinate, monitor, and evaluate efforts to combat child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by STPS and includes representatives from the secretariats of the Interior, Economy, Foreign Affairs, Wellbeing, Agriculture, Transportation, Education, Health, Tourism, Social Security, SNDIF, and FGR. (156) Meets on a quarterly basis and includes NGO networks, international technical and financial partners, such as UNODC and IOM, and bilateral partners, including the United States. (156,160) Met regularly during the reporting period and approved the creation of a national network of Local Committees to Prevent and Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Workers of the Permitted Age* to improve coordination efforts to address the worst forms of child labor at the municipal and local levels. In addition, implemented a temporary working group to develop policies to prevent child labor during the pandemic. (156)
Inter-Institutional Commission for the Prevention, Sanction and Eradication of Crimes Related to Trafficking in Persons and for the Protection and Support of Victims of those Crimes	Defines policy and coordinates efforts to address human trafficking in Mexico. Chaired by the Secretariat of the Interior and includes representatives from STPS, secretariats of numerous other government ministries, NGOs, and international technical and bilateral partners. (89,187) In 2020, added two NGOs as members and continued to draft the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. (49,188)
National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA)	Coordinates national child protection policy and programs. Chaired by the Secretariat of the Interior and made up of a steering committee from multiple other ministries and representatives of civil society groups. (88) During the reporting period, met regularly and approved the National Program for the Protection of Children and Adolescents 2021–2024. (156)

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
State Committees for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and for the Protection of Young Persons (CITI Estatales)	Implements and evaluates activities related to the elimination of child labor through the 32 state and Federal District committees. These committees also compile, analyze, and report their activities to the federal CITI. (101) Although some state committees, including the Mexico State, Hidalgo, Puebla, and Queretaro committees, met on a regular basis during the reporting period, research could not determine whether all state committees met regularly during the year. (41,189,190)
Commission for the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children and Adolescents	Coordinates, develops, monitors, and evaluates strategies and programs to protect the rights of migrant and refugee children. Chaired by SIPINNA. (156,191,192) During the reporting period, the Commission held state-level roundtables to ensure implementation of the Critical Roadmap for the Protection of Migrant and Refugee Children and to strengthen collaboration between state authorities and relevant stakeholders to protect migrant and refugee children's rights. (156)

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

Both government officials and civil society sources have stated that Mexico's federal budget allocates only 1 cent per child or \$196,000 to the federal CITI to implement programs and activities to prevent and combat child labor. Sources have reported this amount is insufficient to address the extent of the problem. (59,193-196)

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 policy implementation and coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Program for the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (2020–2024)†	Aims to strengthen the fundamental rights of work and to increase labor force participation in the formal sector. The plan prioritizes combating child labor as part of STPS' social inclusion strategy. (197)
National Human Rights Program (2020–2024)†	Aims to increase the national well-being of the general population and to ensure equality and equity. Includes actions to ensure children's rights and combat child labor. (156,198)
National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2019–2024)	Supports inclusive education for vulnerable children, including migrant and indigenous children. (199,200) During the reporting period, supported the implementation of the <i>Aprende en Casa</i> program to provide educational services for 25 million students, from pre-school through upper secondary school, including a radio component to reach indigenous children, during the pandemic. (43)
Integral Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y México	Aims to support strategic economic development in Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries to address the root causes of migration and increase employment in the region. In 2020, supported the implementation of the <i>Jovenes Construyendo el Futuro</i> program in Honduras and El Salvador, and continued to fund and operate the <i>Centros Integradores para el Migrante</i> shelters in the states of Baja California and one in Chihuahua. These shelters operate as "integration centers," assisting foreign migrants in obtaining employment and providing social services, including educational access, for migrants and their children. (201-207)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (208)

Mexico became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7 in 2019. This involves accelerating commitments toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030, and the eradication of child labor by 2025. (209,210) As a Pathfinder country, the government developed and implemented the Alliance 8.7 Roadmap to Eradicate Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Trafficking in Persons, which includes the goals of improving information generation on child and forced labor, strengthening coordination between the CITI and the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Prevention and Punishment of Human Trafficking Crimes, and establishing preventative actions to combat child and forced labor in supply chains. In 2020, the government also developed and published a diagnostic document on gaps and priority actions to eradicate child labor and reported on initiatives to combat child labor and forced labor. (209,211)

Even though the government drafted the Plan of Action on Child Labor 2019–2024 and the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons 2020–2024 in 2019, these plans have not been officially approved. In addition, the National Program for the Protection of Children and Adolescents 2020–2024 is still awaiting approval and

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publication by the Government of Mexico. (104,156,157,212) Although the government has adopted the National Program for the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare 2020–2024 and the National Program on Human Rights 2020–2024 to combat child labor, research found no evidence of an existing policy on other worst forms of child labor. (156,197,198)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

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 the problem in all sectors and in all states.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Secretariat of Public Education Programs for Indigenous and Migrant Children*	Nationwide Secretariat of Public Education- funded programs to support public education for children in indigenous and migrant communities. These programs include the Indigenous People's Education Diversity Program, a \$3.5 million program created to support the diverse education of indigenous people using a multi-language and multi-cultural approach, and the Educational Program for Migrant School Population, a \$3.5 million program created to support centers of migrant education and improve migrant teaching practices using multi-language and multi-cultural techniques. (41)
Benito Juárez Wellbeing National Scholarship Program†	Secretariat of Public Education cash transfer program that offers two types of scholarships for families living in poverty and students at risk of school desertion. The Wellbeing Basic Education Family Scholarship provides bi-monthly payments of \$80 per household for all children under age 15 enrolled in school, while the Benito Juárez Scholarship provides bi-monthly payments of \$80 to each child enrolled in high school. (213-215) Although the program reaches a high number of students, it has been criticized for providing insufficient cash transfers, lacking monitoring and evaluation, and having implementation issues. (216-221) In 2020, the program assisted scholarship participants age 15 years and older to establish personal bank accounts to facilitate the scholarship cash transfer. The program also carried out surveys at 50,000 schools in marginalized and rural areas to increase outreach and enroll more students of indigenous descent. (222,223)
Support for Indigenous Education Program‡	Implemented by the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples to support educational access of children from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities through scholarships, boarding houses, and nutritional support. (224) In 2020, the program assisted 73,912 children through the program's <i>Casas y Comedores de la Niñez Indígena</i> and <i>Casas y Comedores Comunitarios del Estudiante Indígena</i> . (225)
Assistance for At-Risk Minors and Adolescents Program†	Implemented by SNDIF at the state and municipal levels to assist youth at risk for child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and in illicit activities, by providing shelters, psychosocial assistance, and training. Research found the program was active during the reporting period in a few states and municipalities, but it is not implemented across all states and municipalities where the program is needed. (41,156)
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL-funded projects that aim to eliminate child labor through research, increased labor inspection capacity, and expanded participation in education, training, and social protection programs. These projects include <u>Campos de Esperanza</u> , an \$11 million project implemented by World Vision which has reached over 5,300 sugarcane workers in targeted agricultural communities in Oaxaca and Veracruz; and <u>MAP16</u> , an ILO-implemented global project, with \$2.4 million dedicated to support the Mexican National Child Labor Survey (ENTI 2019) with the results released in 2020. (9,226,227) Additional projects include <u>Senderos</u> *, an \$8 million project implemented by Verité to combat child and forced labor in agricultural communities in Jalisco and Nayarit; <u>EQUAL</u> *, a \$5 million project implemented by World Vision to increase women's and adolescent girls' economic empowerment in the agricultural sector; <u>COFFEE</u> , a \$2.2 million project implemented by Verité in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico to promote social compliance and develop tools for businesses to prevent, detect, and combat child and forced labor in coffee supply chains; and <u>Improving Workers' Occupational Safety and Health in Selected Supply Chains in Mexico - A Vision Zero Fund</u> *, a \$5 million project implemented by the ILO's Vision Zero Fund to improve the OSH of workers, with a focus on COVID-19, female workers, and workers in vulnerable conditions. (228-231) <u>Senderos</u> uses workers' rights training, integrates grievance mechanisms for workers, and coordinates efforts with the Mexican government and the private sector to strengthen labor law enforcement in a sector that has long experienced poor working conditions, while <u>EQUAL</u> works to increase vulnerable women and girls' access to safer and higher quality jobs and address gaps in social programs for impoverished families. <u>COFFEE</u> builds the capacity of coffee producers, agronomists, field technicians, certifiers, and monitors in Mexico to identify and address labor issues in the coffee sector through online trainings that will be refined and available to the public via open source. <u>Improving Workers' Occupational Safety and Health in Selected Supply Chains in Mexico - A Vision Zero Fund</u> will increase prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 and strengthen adherence to OSH laws and policies in selected supply chains. (228-231) For additional information, please visit our <u>website</u> .

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Mexico.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (41,156,232-238)

In 2020, the STPS created the Labor Policy Implementation Program to encourage companies to improve working conditions by promoting self-evaluation tools and sharing best practices from socially responsible companies, but it is unclear whether any companies have used these tools. (23,41,59)

Despite an increase in the rate of poverty and extreme poverty during the pandemic leading to an increase in the number of children vulnerable to child labor, the government did not implement any additional social protections programs that would prevent the root causes of child labor. (42,239-249) In addition, although the Full-Time Schools Program, known as the *Programa de Escuelas de Tiempo Completo*, had yielded positive results in the past, including reducing child labor in rural and marginalized communities by extending the school day and providing meals to students, in November 2020, funding for this program became dependent upon disbursement from another social program, *La Escuela es Nuestra*, causing delays in implementation. (146,237,250)

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 Mexico (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2019 – 2020
Enforcement	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors in accordance with the ILO's technical advice to provide adequate coverage of the workforce.	2019 – 2020
	Conduct refresher trainings and train federal and state-level labor inspectors on the Labor Inspection Protocol to Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Workers and ensure its guidelines related to identifying and sanctioning child labor violations are followed.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare at the federal and state levels conduct targeted routine and unannounced labor inspections in all sectors, including in the informal sector and in rural areas.	2019 – 2020
	Improve coordination and information sharing between federal and state-level labor inspectorates.	2019 – 2020
	Publish information at the federal and state level on the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor penalties imposed and collected, and the number of unannounced inspections conducted.	2019 – 2020
	Establish a case tracking system to ensure that violations of child labor laws are recorded and victims of child labor are referred to the appropriate services.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies receive sufficient funding to conduct investigations and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor and provide services to victims.	2019 – 2020
	Increase coordination among government ministries to ensure adequate criminal prosecutions of perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2020
	Increase training for enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges to ensure adequate criminal law enforcement related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2020
	Publish information at the federal and state level on the number of investigations and prosecutions initiated and convictions secured, and disaggregate the number of prosecutions initiated and number of convictions secured by the number of cases involving children.	2019 – 2020
Coordination	Ensure that coordination mechanisms to combat child labor meet regularly and are adequately funded.	2019 – 2020
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all worst forms of child labor such as child trafficking, the use of children in commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities.	2019 – 2020
Social Programs	Expand access to education by increasing school infrastructure, providing education materials and instruction in native languages, and ensuring that all children are able to attend school, including those in migrant or indigenous communities.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that unaccompanied migrant children are placed in child protection centers instead of detention centers and receive access to education.	2019 – 2020
	Remove children from organized criminal groups and ensure that they are provided with adequate social services.	2019 – 2020

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure that government agencies addressing migrant and refugee populations effectively coordinate and are adequately funded to carry out their mandates.	2020
	Ensure that the Benito Juárez Wellbeing Scholarship Program provides sufficient assistance to vulnerable students and receives regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective implementation.	2019 – 2020
	Implement or expand social protection programs throughout the country for victims of child labor in all relevant sectors, including in commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities.	2019 – 2020

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