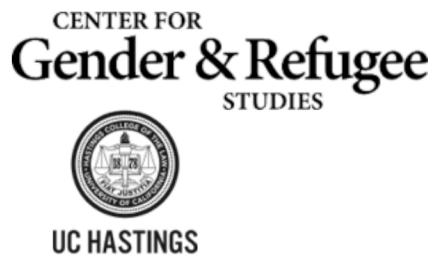


Childhood and Migration in Central and North America: Causes, Policies, Practices and Challenges

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Chapter 7 Northern Mexico

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I. Introduction

This chapter addresses various migration-related aspects of the reality of children and adolescents at the northern border of Mexico. It relies on information generated by the Mexican government itself and on the expertise of organizations that specialize in providing accompaniment and humanitarian aid to this group.

Our analysis concludes that a series of causal and structural factors make both migration and return a real risk for children and adolescents. Such risks include increasing violence, the participation of organized crime in human smuggling and trafficking, and the State's inability to respond with standardized policies to protect the rights of these children. Following new legislation on the rights of children and adolescents—discussed in chapter 5, the introduction to chapters on Mexico—Mexico now has an important opportunity to prioritize the best interest of the child over the child's migration status and the country's migration control objectives.

The northern border of Mexico, bordering the United States, is a little over 3,000 kilometers long and includes six states of the Republic of Mexico: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas.

It is an area with a long tradition of migration. Mexican migration to the United States began in the second half of the 19th century after Mexico lost its northern territory. However, it was not until the 20th century that the historical, political, and economic conditions of both countries, as well as social, cultural, and demographic circumstances, caused—and continue to cause—an increase in migratory flows.¹

The issue of unaccompanied Mexican children and adolescents became a matter of institutional concern for international organizations and some academics beginning in 1990, as shown by various studies.² Méndez cites Martín de la Rosa who conducted a study in the 1990s, based on data from the Casa del Migrante in Tijuana, documenting the migration process of children and

¹ Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional (May 2013). "Segundo informe sobre violaciones a derechos humanos de migrantes mexicanos detenidos en los Estados Unidos, 2011-2012." Available at <http://corteidh.or.cr/tablas/29958.pdf>

² Setién Santamaría, M. L. & Berganza, I. (2005). "Menores extranjeros no acompañados: una movilidad de jóvenes con expectativas de adultos," in González Ferreras, J / Setién Santamaría, M. L. (Eds) *Diversidad migratoria, distintos protagonistas, diferentes contextos*, pp. 65-92. Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto.

adolescents on the Mexico-U.S. border and attempting to characterize that migration.³ In order to obtain a general overview of the situation of child and adolescent migrants, the Mexican National Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* or CNDH) also conducted a socioeconomic study, administering a survey in several border cities where children and adolescents were being repatriated.⁴

Civil society organizations were at the forefront of efforts to systematize information about this population. In 1997, the *Albergue del Desierto* (Desert Migrant Youth Shelter) and other organizations in Baja California released a book called *La esperanza truncada* (*Hope Shattered*) assessing the situation of children and adolescents in the city of Mexicali.⁵

UNICEF's 2004 study of 11 cities along Mexico's northern border is an important source for understanding the phenomenon of child and adolescent migrants.⁶ The goal of the study was to analyze inter-institutional procedures for assisting children and adolescent migrants who were travelling alone without family members.

The most recent studies about children and adolescents in the context of migration are: (1) those based on data from the 2006 Statistical Yearbook of the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (*Sistema Nacional del Desarrollo Integral de la Familia* or DIF) for both Mexican borders (northern and southern);⁷ and (2) the non-governmental organization Appleseed's 2011 study, "Children at the Border" about the procedures and practices used by U.S. and Mexican government officials for repatriating children and adolescents.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first examines the causes of child and adolescent migration from Mexico. The second discusses the history of children and adolescents at the northern border, offers statistics, and provides a summary of the profiles of children and adolescents observed by academics and civil society organizations over time. The third section describes the dangerous environment that children and adolescents encounter at border crossing areas and includes a special emphasis on what happens to children when their parents emigrate. Next—because it is relevant to the vulnerability of child migrants—the chapter includes a section on the group often referred to as "circuit children." Finally, we present some final considerations and challenges for the protection of child and adolescent migrants.

³ Méndez Navarro, J. (November 2000) "Presencia de menores en la migración internacional: un estudio exploratorio del perfil sociodemográfico de los menores repatriados por la ciudad de Tijuana, 1999." p. 17. (Masters thesis). El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, Mexico. Available at: <http://www.colef.mx/posgrado/?tesis=presencia-de-menores-en-la-migracion-internacional-un-estudio-exploratorio-del-perfil-sociodemografico-de-los-menores-repatriados-por-la-c-d-de-tijuana-1999>

⁴ Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos. (1993). *Informe sobre el menor mexicano repatriado desde Estados Unidos*. Distrito Federal: Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos.

⁵ Oropez Rodríguez, M. (1998). *La Esperanza truncada: menores deportados por la garita Mexicali-Caléxico*. Distrito Federal: Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos.

⁶ Gallo Campos K. I. for DIF Nacional and UNICEF-México. (November 2004). *Niñez migrante en la frontera norte: Legislación y procesos*. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/mx_resources_publicacion_ninos_migrantes.pdf.

⁷ Ramírez Romero, S. J., García Hidalgo, J.O., Muñoz Castellanos, R.G., & Enciso Cruz, P.J. (2009). *Más allá de la frontera, La niñez migrante: Son las niñas y niños de todos*, Exploratory study on the protection of repatriated migrant children on the northern border.

II. Forced expulsion of Mexican child and adolescent migrants

Studies on the undocumented migration of Mexican children and adolescents to the United States have not been a prominent part of academic analysis. Ramos Tovar⁸ maintains that research on the issue has focused primarily on the labor and socio-demographic characteristics of migrants, their networks, their places of origin and destination, remittances, and the inclusion of women. All of these studies focus on adult and primarily male migration, and lack in-depth analysis of the relationship between migration flows and concepts such as development, well-being, and lives free of violence.

A. Why do Mexican children and adolescents emigrate to the United States?

It is clear that Mexican children and adolescents migrate for some of the same reasons as Mexican adults. In most cases, people migrate due to a combination of different factors—including multiple structural causes—making it difficult to determine and distinguish the relative importance of each factor to each migrant's decision to leave.

Until recently, studies on the displacement of children and adolescents focused on the following three factors as the most important reasons for their migration, in order of importance: (1) economic factors; (2) family reunification; and (3) the context of violence. For example, in the UNHCR study on the need for international protection of unaccompanied and separated children on Mexico's southern border (2006-2008), only 13% of children and adolescents interviewed named factors that suggested there may be a need for international protection.⁹

However, the UNHCR's more recent study *Uprooted (Arrancados de Raíz)*¹⁰ found that the percentage of children and adolescents migrating for reasons related to violence had tripled in a relatively short period of time. Information from other recent studies, and this study itself, show that the rising number of children and adolescent migrants in Mexico is increasingly linked with violence and lack of protection in the various countries of origin, including Mexico, and that many of these children are in transit to the United States. This tendency is corroborated in the UNCHR study *Children on the Run (Niños en Fuga)* which shows that 64% of children and adolescent migrants are in need of international protection, because they are likely to be victims of violence largely at the hands of gangs, organized criminal groups, or members of their household. Chapter 1 of this book provides an in-depth analysis of the international protection needs of children, based on data gathered and analyzed in *Children on the Run*.

The following section will further discuss the three most important reasons why Mexican children and adolescents migrate: poverty, violence, and the need for family reunification. The three causes

⁸ Ramos Tovar, M. E. (2009). "Entre la tristeza y la esperanza: reconstrucciones identitarias de los mexicanos en Estados Unidos," pp. 37-38. In Ramos Tovar, M.E. (Coord.), *Migración e Identidad: emociones, familia, cultura*. Monterrey: Fondo Editorial de Nuevo León.

⁹ UNHCR Regional Office for Mexico, Cuba and Central America. (2008). "La protección internacional de las niñas y niños no acompañados o separados en la frontera sur de México (2006-2008)." Available at: <http://www.acnur.org/biblioteca/pdf/6720.pdf?view=1>.

¹⁰ ACNUR. (2014). "Niños en Fuga, Niños no acompañados que huyen de Centroamérica y México y la necesidad de protección internacional." Available at: <http://www.unhcrwashington.org/sites/default/files/UNH%205%20Spanish%20Executive%20Summary%20FA.pdf>.

are presented here separately for ease of explanation, but it is important to understand that they are structurally related. In fact, the three factors together have a complementary or joint influence on most children and adolescents who decide to migrate.

Three significant conclusions can be drawn from the following information on child and adolescent migrants at the Mexico-U.S. border. First, their presence along the border is not a recent phenomenon, but rather has been visible to certain actors for several decades. Second, the number of child and adolescent migrants along the Mexico-U.S. border has increased year after year, especially since 2013. Third, the decision to migrate stems from a diversity of causes and the connection between these causes. Among these causes, different forms of violence against children and adolescents in Central America and Mexico have become an increasingly important driver of migration.

1. *Poverty and the Search for Dignified Living Conditions*

According to studies on the migration of children and adolescents, one primary cause of migration is the desperate search for opportunities. Le Goff¹¹ indicates that Mexican children and adolescents emigrate, among other reasons, because of the living conditions in their communities of origin.¹² In other words, they feel the need to flee from situations of poverty and the deprivation of basic social rights. Their living conditions are characterized by extreme poverty, low income levels, and a lack of educational and labor opportunities. As a result, they feel the need to seek access to those opportunities outside Mexico.

Academics as well as civil society organizations that provide shelter and other types of support to child and adolescent migrants in various parts of the country have gathered information and data that further clarify the reasons children and adolescents make the journey north to the United States. One study conducted several years ago by the Mexican Academy of Human Rights (*Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos*)¹³ on the Mexicali-Calexico border (in the states of Baja California and California), with 1990-1996 data from *Albergue del Desierto* found that young people at that time emigrated first, in search of income; second, to reunite with family members or friends; and third, in order to go to school.

On that same border one decade later, data recorded by the civil society organizations *Albergue del Desierto* and the Center for Support to Migrants (*Centro de Apoyo al Migrante*) from 2003-2004, 2005-2006, and 2008-2009 corroborates the earlier observations made in the 1990s about reasons for migration. According to this data gathered through 2009, the main reason that male

¹¹ Le Goff, H. (May 2012). "Niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes extranjeros no acompañados en México." *Rayuela: Revista Iberoamericana sobre Niñez y Juventud en Lucha por sus Derechos*, 3(5), pp. 127-134. Available at <http://www.arquitectura.uia.mx/boletines/11/diciembre/2/Anexo15.pdf>.

¹² Though here it must be emphasized—as Valdéz-Gardea indicates in the summary of the Encuentro Internacional de Migración y Niñez Migrante (First International Gathering on Migration and Migrant Children)—that the decision to migrate is not a decision of a single individual, but rather one that is influenced by family, friends, and by the community itself. Valdéz-Gardea, G. (Coord.). (2007). *Memoria del primer Encuentro Internacional de Migración y Niñez Migrante: actores de la globalización*. El Colegio de Sonora, Hermosillo, Sonora.

¹³Oropez Rodríguez, M. (1998). *La Esperanza truncada: menores deportados por la garita Mexicali-Caléxico*. Distrito Federal: Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos.

children and adolescents migrated to the United States continued to be the search for work, according to 7 out of 10 boys interviewed. Female children and adolescents interviewed from 2005-2006 and 2008-2009 reported that their main motive for migrating was to reunify with family members. In addition, a greater percentage of girls than boys expressed the desire to go to school.

Studies conducted in other border states showed the same causes of child and adolescent migration, but also uncovered additional causes. Salazar¹⁴ found that in the state of Sonora, 70% of the children and adolescents documented in the “Road Home” (“*Camino a Casa*”) program attempted to migrate to the United States with the intention of seeking employment. Hernández¹⁵ also found that the search for work was one of the causes of the migration of male children and adolescents repatriated to the state of Tamaulipas from the United States. According to Vilboa, who studied children and adolescent migrants in the city of Tijuana (2006), 28.1% stated that their main intention was to “labor” in the United States. The author believes that the desire of male children and adolescents to work is not only a personal aspiration, but also an economic need anchored in a masculine culture that requires men to work in order to be recognized as men.

Some children and adolescents cross the border to the United States multiple times in a circular fashion and as a way of life in order to work seasonally and then return to school and/or to support family they left behind in Mexico.¹⁶ In this kind of scenario—detected in various studies and by government institutions and social organizations that provide assistance to migrants along the Mexico-U.S. border—it has become increasingly evident in recent years that growing levels of violence are having an impact both on the increased migration of children and adolescents and the conditions they encounter along the border.

2. *Multiple Forms of Violence*

Other factors increasingly drive children and adolescents to migrate and must be studied in greater depth, such as the many forms of violence that have become prevalent in Mexican states. For example, violent organized criminal groups have infiltrated and taken control of economic and political spheres in places like Michoacán, Veracruz, Guerrero, and Tamaulipas. This situation impacts the children and adolescents who live in those states and decide to emigrate as a consequence of the violence, as well as Mexican and Central American children and adolescents who travel through these states on their way to the United States.

As a result of violence in communities of origin, children and adolescents are not guaranteed their rights to life, physical integrity, and adequate development. Many children and adolescents experience intrafamilial violence or dangerous social contexts in their local communities. These situations are frequently aggravated or caused by the fact that heads of the household (usually the

¹⁴ Salazar Serrano, O. (2007). Programa de atención a menores migrantes: “*Camino a casa*.” (“The Road Home”). In Valdéz-Gardea, G. (Coord.). (2007). *Memoria del primer Encuentro Internacional de Migración y Niñez Migrante: actores de la globalización*. El Colegio de Sonora, Hermosillo, Sonora.

¹⁵ Hernández Hernández, O. M. (June 2012). “Migración, masculinidad y menores repatriados en la frontera” Matamoros-Brownsville. *Trayectorias*, 14(33-34), 76-94. Available at <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=60724509004>

¹⁶ Le Goff, H., “Niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes extranjeros no acompañados en México.”

father or the mother) have emigrated,¹⁷ or because the children and adolescents are facing intimidation and violence at the hands of organized criminal groups in their communities.

In recent years, the northern border of Mexico has faced more challenges with organized crime than the rest of the country. Some of the states in that region suffer from the highest rates of death by homicide. Border children and adolescents face risks related to organized crime, sexual exploitation, and gender-based crimes (dramatically exemplified in the case of Ciudad Juárez, described below), among others.¹⁸

In terms of gender violence, intrafamilial violence occurs against a backdrop of the predominant model of patriarchy and a *machista* culture in Mexico. Ciudad Juárez has been an unfortunate symbol of this violence and the crimes have gone unpunished. According to unofficial data, the highest percentage of victims of femicide/feminicide corresponds to adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 0 and 19. Girls and teenage girls represent more than 50% of the total victims for which there is data, which demonstrates they are the group most vulnerable to gender-based violence in Ciudad Juárez.¹⁹

During her recent visit to Mexico (October 6-14, 2014), the Rapporteur on the Rights of Children and Adolescents of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights emphasized the severity of violence and crime affecting children, adolescents, and young people in Mexico. During the visit, the Rapporteur received information regarding an alarming increase in the number of children and adolescents whose whereabouts are unknown and who are presumably “disappeared.” She reported that, in spite of this situation, the State has not provided statistics about the number of children and adolescents who may have been disappeared. The Rapporteur met with a group of 94 families of victims of presumed forced disappearances in Tamaulipas, who primarily blame State forces for these disappearances. She also gathered information and documentation from civil society organizations on 2,000 cases of children who were murdered and mutilated—in some cases with extreme violence—between 2006 and 2014. The Rapporteur was also informed about a high number of girls and boys who have been recruited by organized crime groups, which carry out aggressive recruitment actions, especially in poor communities.²⁰

UNHCR’s 2014 study *Children on the Run* found that 64% of the 102 Mexican children and adolescent migrants interviewed were in need of international protection. 32% of the children interviewed indicated that they experienced societal violence [in Mexico], 17% suffered violence in the home, and 12% endured both societal violence and violence in the home.²¹ The study also showed that Mexican children and adolescents are frequently recruited by organized crime and by other criminal actors to work as guides to smuggle migrants. In fact, nearly 50% of the Mexican

¹⁷ Le Goff, H., “Niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes extranjeros no acompañados en México.”

¹⁸ Vargas Romero, C., & Pérez García, J. M. for Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México—REDIM. (2010). “La violencia contra niños, niñas y adolescentes en México. Miradas regionales. Ensayo temático de La Infancia Cuenta en México 2010.” Available at <http://www.derechosinfancia.org.mx/ensayoicm2010.pdf>.

¹⁹ Vargas Romero, C., “La violencia contra niños, niñas y adolescentes en México.”

²⁰ Inter-American Commission of Human Rights—IACHR (October 20, 2014) Press Release. “Relatoría sobre los Derechos de la Niñez culmina su visita a México.” Available at <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2014/125.asp>.

²¹ UNHCR, *Niños en Fuga*, (Children on the Run).

children and adolescents interviewed had been recruited by smugglers, precisely because of their age and vulnerable circumstances.

Statistics on deaths by homicide also reflect the stark reality of the situation in the northeastern areas of Mexico. Nationally, between the years 2000 and 2009, there was an increase of more than 200 cases per year of adolescents who died by homicide. In Ciudad Juárez the numbers of children killed increased dramatically from 44 cases in 2000 to 168 cases in 2009, with a particularly high increase in homicides of children ages 15 to 17. These numbers reveal the clear relationship between the increase in overall levels of crime and the increased recruitment of youth by organized criminal groups, and reflect the dire situation that Mexican children and adolescents face.²²

Along the same lines, as indicated in the introductory chapter on Mexico, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) emphasized the serious problem of violence in Mexico and particularly the two kinds on the rise: violence associated with organized crime (and with the fight against organized crime) and gender violence, where there is a particular impact on girls, teenage girls, and young women. The Committee expressed its concern “that women and girls have been subjected to increasing levels and different types of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, forced disappearances, torture and murders, and especially femicide, by state actors including law enforcement officers and the security forces, as well as by non-state actors such as organized crime groups.”²³ Among other things, CEDAW called attention the following:

- High levels of crime and violence, the responsibility of the State in these matters and, related to this, high levels of corruption and impunity;
- The contribution of this situation to the intensification of violence against women, sustained by patriarchal attitudes;
- The minimization and invisibility of the phenomenon of gender violence;
- The growing number of forced disappearances of children as well as the lack of consistent official records of these crimes;
- The low number of cases of violence against women that are reported to authorities due to fear of reprisals and lack of trust in the competent authorities;
- The lack of standardized protocols for investigating and processing cases of violence against women, as well as the corollary impunity and denial of the victim’s right to justice; and
- The connection between the increase in disappearances of women, in particular girls, all over the country and the phenomenon of human trafficking, where women and girls are subjected to sexual and labor exploitation and are forced to smuggle small amounts of drugs across the borders.²⁴

²² REDIM. (2011). *La Infancia Cuenta en México 2011* (Data Book), p. 90. Available at http://www.derechosinfancia.org.mx/ICM2011_librodedatos.pdf

²³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 9-27, 2012, *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Mexico*, ¶ 11, U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/MEX/CO/7-8, 52d Sess. (2012, July 27). Available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-MEX-CO-7-8.pdf>.

²⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2012, July 9-27, *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Mexico*, ¶¶ 11, 18, 20, U.N. Doc.

3. Family Reunification

Children and adolescents migrate because of the precarious economic environment they live in, their desire to find employment, and because of the multiple forms of violence that affect them. But they also leave their places of origin for other important reasons, such as family reunification. Vilaboa's 2006 study²⁵ found that family reunification was the primary reason for the migration of children and adolescents from Tijuana and Nogales. Forty-two percent of the children and adolescents she interviewed in those states expressed that they were motivated at that moment in time by their desire to join a father or a mother in the United States. Vilaboa clarifies, however, that this analysis cannot be generalized to all of the children and adolescents in the study. Valdéz Gardea's findings in her study on children and adolescents in transit in the Altar-Sasabe corridor (Sonora), coincide with those of Vilaboa in that the largest percentage of children and adolescents migrating at the time did so in order to reunite with family members.²⁶ However, Salazar, who studied children and adolescents in Hermosillo and Sonora, found that of the children and adolescents she interviewed only 16% reported that they had migrated in order to reunite with family, while only 8% said they were migrating to reunite with a partner or spouse.²⁷

When the goal is family reunification, children and adolescents begin the process of emigration with the purpose of joining parents and other close family members who are in the United States. The transnational networks referred to as "Laczko" and "Anich,"²⁸ which are organized communities of migrants in the United States, are a "push factor" that promote the migration of children and adolescents. While it is true that some children and adolescents decide on their own to make the journey, it is also true that a significant number of them migrate to the United States as a result of a parental decision.²⁹

The culture of migration is another push factor for Mexican children and adolescents. They regularly experience the emigration of their own family members or witness the migration of others in their communities, making the migration phenomenon part of their daily reality. Many children and adolescents have appropriated migration as a way of life, as shown by Gustavo López Castro's studies of migrants from Michoacán. López Castro finds that "coming of the age to go North" is a rite of passage for many children and adolescents.³⁰

CEDAW/C/MEX/CO/7-8, 52d Sess. (July 27, 2012). Available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-MEX-CO-7-8.pdf>

²⁵ Vilaboa Romero, E. for Save the Children. (July 2006). "Caracterización de la Niñez Migrante en la Frontera Norte de México: Los casos de Tijuana y Nogales." Available at <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/1925.pdf>

²⁶ Valdéz Gardea, G. C. (Coord.). (2013). *Memoria digital del IV Encuentro Internacional Migración y Niñez Migrante: Migración y Retorno: Retos para la familia migrante*. Hermosillo: El Colegio de Sonora.

²⁷ Salazar Serrano, O. (2007). Programa de atención a menores migrantes. "Camino a casa." In Valdéz-Gardea, G. (Coord.). *Memoria del Primer Encuentro Internacional de Migración y Niñez Migrante: Actores de la globalización*. Hermosillo: El Colegio de Sonora.

²⁸ Laczko, F. & Rudolf, A. for the International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2013). "Informe sobre las Migraciones 2013, El bienestar de los migrantes y el desarrollo," pp. 30-54. Available at http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/WMR2013_SP.pdf

²⁹ Le Goff, H., "Niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes extranjeros no acompañados en México."

³⁰ Escala Rabadán, L. (2003). Diáspora michoacana. In López Castro, G. (Coord.), *Migraciones Internacionales*, pp. 180-184. Available at <http://www.colef.mx/migracionesinternacionales/revistas/MI06/n06-180-184.pdf>.

III. The context of unaccompanied child and adolescent migrants on Mexico's northern border

A. History of child and adolescent migration on Mexico's northern border

First, it is important to emphasize that there is a lack of reliable public information on the number of Mexican child and adolescent migrants who attempt to cross into the United States, as well as the number of those who are repatriated back over the border to Mexico.

Until 2001, Mexico did not maintain any systematic records on repatriations from the United States by age and sex. The only data available came from civil society organizations that provided services to children and adolescents on the border, particularly *Albergue del Desierto* in Mexicali. Currently, the National Migration Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Migración*, INM) provides regular data on repatriations, but their numbers do not coincide with the number of detentions recorded by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, since the INM collects data according to the calendar year (January 1-December 31), and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection collects data by fiscal year (October 1-September 30 of the following year). Because of this, the most reliable statistics on the repatriations of Mexican children and adolescents were found at the consular offices near the border cities.

As a result of Mexico's earlier failure to maintain records on repatriation, it was difficult to accurately quantify the number of children and adolescents trying to cross the northern border of Mexico to the United States. The INM claimed that child and adolescent migrants represented 2% of all deportations in 1995 and 1997. However, authors such as López and Villaseñor (2001)³¹ concluded that children and adolescents constituted 10% of the total migratory flow (in the 1990s).

Villaseñor and Moreno³² have maintained that the number of child migrants grew in the 1990s, a trend that was especially associated with the increase in the number of women migrating. At that time, Baja California was the state with the most border crossings, and 60% of all Mexicans were repatriated from the United States through Baja. According to Villaseñor and Moreno, 20% of all migrants repatriated through Baja, California in 1997 were women and children and adolescents, and Mexicali received the highest number of repatriated children and adolescents out of all cities in Mexico. From 1994 through 2000, using data from the consulate in Calexico, California, the civil society organization *Albergue del Desierto* recorded almost 18,000 child and adolescent repatriations through the Calexico-Mexicali border station.

Interestingly, during the time that the data was recorded by *Albergue del Desierto* (2001), an exponential increase in the arrival of children and adolescents to Mexicali had already begun, and civil society organizations were documenting the biological sex of children using information from the consulates. This effort to record information was an important step in learning more about

³¹ López Castro G. & Villaseñor, B. (2002). "Los menores en el flujo de migrantes." In *Albergue del Desierto Mexicali, Programa de Atención al Migrante, Migración: México entre sus dos fronteras, 2000-2001. Foro migraciones*. México: Albergue del Desierto Mexicali Programa de Atención al Migrante.

³² Villaseñor, B., & Moreno Mena, J. A. (Coord.). (2010). *En Busca de la vida ¿Dónde están los derechos humanos?* México. Albergue del Desierto, Centro de Reintegración Familiar de Menores Migrantes A.C., and Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador Migrante.

children's profiles and, later, about the reasons behind the growing movement of children and adolescents towards Mexican border cities.

Table 2. Number of child and adolescent migrants deported through the Calexico-Mexicali border station, 1994-2000

YEAR	MALE CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS		FEMALE CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS		TOTAL
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
1994	599	94%	38	6%	637
1995	937	96%	33	4%	970
1996	2,245	94%	135	4%	2,380
1997	3,369	88%	385	12%	3,754
1998	3,035	86%	476	14%	3,511
1999	3,085	90%	332	10%	3,417
2000	2,437	76%	750	24%	3,187
Total	15,707	87%	2,149	13%	17,856

Source: Report of *Albergue del Desierto* of Mexicali, 2001.

According to INM data, repatriation of migrants from the United States to Mexico grew very rapidly after 1995, reaching more than one million repatriations in 2000 and 2001, more than 100,000 of which were children and adolescents. Repatriations decreased after that and stabilized between 2003 to 2009, to about 525,000 to 600,000 repatriations yearly. That trend continued after 2010, but repatriations increased again in 2013 and 2014.

According to the INM, the annual average number of children and adolescents deported between 2001 and 2005 was 49,730, representing about 8.28% of the total number of migrants repatriated or returned. That means that 8 out of every 100 repatriations were of individuals under the age of 18.³³

³³ INM. (2013). Eventos de repatriación de mexicanos desde Estados Unidos (Adultos y NNA) de 2000 al 2013. Available at http://www.gobernacion.gob.mx/es_mx/SEGOB/Series_Historicasy and http://www.gobernacion.gob.mx/es_mx/SEGOB/V_Repatriacion_de_mexicanos_de_EUA, and archived by the authors. Note that these web pages can only be accessed from an IP Address in Mexico.

Table 3. Repatriation of Mexicans from the United States (adults and children/adolescents) from 2000 to 2014

Year	Overall total (Adults + children/adolescents)	Total C&A	Percentage C&A
2000	1,150,906	116,938	10.2
2001	791,256	63,756	8.1
2002	583,408	47,585	8.2
2003	559,949	52,535	9.4
2004	525,115	41,506	7.9
2005	557,357	43,271	7.8
2006	530,132	39,759	7.5
2007	528,473	37,756	7.1
2008	577,826	34,083	5.9
2009	601,356	26,016	4.3
2010	469,268	20,438	4.4
2011	405,457	15,524	3.8
2012	369,492	17,129	4.7
2013	332,865	16,971	5.0
2014	226,977	13,324	5.9

Sources: National Institute of Migration (INM) 2000-2014; Center for Migration Studies, Migration Policy Unit,, Department of the Interior (Centro de Estudios Migratorios de la Unidad de Política Migratoria, SEGOB).

According to INM statistics, the number of overall repatriations went down in 2011 and 2012, along with the number of child and adolescent repatriations. As shown in Table 3, there were 405,457 events involving the deportation of Mexican migrants recorded in 2011 [deportation events track the number of deportations, not the number of individuals deported]. 15,524 of those events were repatriations of children and adolescents. In 2012, total deportations went down to 369,492, and 17,129 of those were deportations of children and adolescents.³⁴ Data from the last two years, however, show that while the total number of repatriations tends to be the same or less—compared to the previous decade—the situation has changed with respect to children and adolescents. Thus, while 16,971 children and adolescents were repatriated in 2013, the number went to 13,324 in 2014, which is to say an intermediate level as compared to the past few years.³⁵

³⁴ This information corresponds to the total number of repatriations of Mexican migrants from the United States to Mexico, more than 99% of which are to the states on Mexico's northern border.

³⁵ Official statistics published by the Unidad de Política Migratoria, Secretaría de Gobernación (Migration Policy Unit of the Department of the Interior).

Table 4. Repatriation of children and adolescents, percentages by sex

YEAR	NUMBER	% Boys	NUMBER	% Girls	TOTAL
2000	75,133	64.3	41,805	35.7	116,938
2001	42,707	67.0	21,049	33.0	63,756
2002	32,437	68.2	15,148	31.8	47,585
2003	33,977	64.7	18,558	35.3	52,535
2004	29,733	71.6	11,773	28.3	41,506
2005	31,548	72.9	11,723	27.1	43,271
2006	29,584	74.4	10,175	25.6	39,759
2007	28,249	74.8	9,507	25.2	37,756
2008	25,740	75.5	8,343	24.5	34,083
2009	20,127	77.4	5,889	22.6	26,016
2010	16,549	81.0	3,889	19.0	20,438
2011	12,853	82.8	2,671	17.2	15,524
2012	14,340	83.7	2,789	16.3	17,129
2013	14,625	86.2	2,346	13.8	16,971
2014	11,117	83.4	2,207	16.6	13,324

Sources: *Instituto Nacional de Migración, 2000-2014;*
Centro de Estudios Migratorios de la Unidad de Política Migratoria, SEGOB.

The above data, disaggregated by sex, shows that two-thirds of the children and adolescents who migrated until 2003 were boys, and one-third were girls. The proportion of boys to girls began to change in later years. By 2012, eight out of ten child or adolescent migrants were boys, and only two were girls.

INM data also shows how migration routes, both of adults and of children and adolescents, move from one state to another, according to border controls (e.g., how secure a border is) and risks involved in attempting to cross particular borders. In 2000, children and adolescents began to be deported more to the state of Sonora, and Nogales became the city that received the highest number of deportees (except in 2007 and 2008, when Baja, California received the most). In 2012 and 2013, most repatriations took place in the states of Sonora and Tamaulipas, as reflected in corresponding statistics from the consulates in those states (see Table 5). Tamaulipas is a dangerous state for repatriations because of high incidents of attacks there on Mexican and foreign national migrants trying to reach the United States. Children and adolescents are at heightened risk of being victimized in Tamaulipas and other areas where violence proliferates.

When former President Felipe Calderón declared war on drug trafficking during his six-year term, the states along Mexico's northern border were the first to be impacted by that violence. Tamaulipas is part of the gulf route used by migrants to get from Central and South America to

the United States, and has seen the worst tragedies of all states. San Fernando, Tamaulipas, experienced two of the biggest recorded massacres of the Mexican drug war, one of which resulted in the massacre of 72 migrants. One of the presumed reasons for the massacre is that the Zeta cartel was forced to diversify its criminal enterprises beyond drug trafficking to include kidnapping, extortion, and human trafficking of migrants for labor purposes. According to the sole surviving migrant, the Zetas attempted to extort the group and opened fire when the group resisted.

Table 5. Number of children and adolescents served by Mexico’s consular network by border region with the United States and Mexico, 2012 and 2013

US-MEXICO BORDER AREA	2012		2013	
	Absolute#	%	Absolute#	%
Texas-Tamaulipas (1)	4,930	36.6	6,880	43.0
California-Baja California(2)	1,534	11.4	1,327	8.3
Texas-Coahuila (3)	919	6.8	1,008	6.3
Texas-Chihuahua (4)	657	4.9	646	4.0
Arizona-Sonora (5)	5,414	40.3	6,155	38.4
Total	13,454	100.0	16,016	100.0

Source: Own elaboration with database of the Mexican Consular Network at borders.

(1) Includes data from Mexican consulates located in the cities of Brownsville, Laredo, and McCallen, in the state of Texas. These U.S. cities are on the border with the Mexican cities of Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, and Reynosa (respectively) in the state of Tamaulipas.

(2) Includes data from Mexican consulates located in San Diego and Calexico, California, cities that are on the border with Mexican cities of Tijuana and Mexicali, respectively, in the state of Baja California.

(3) Includes data from Texan cities of Del Rio and Eagle Pass, on the border with Mexican cities of Ciudad Acuña and Piedras Negras, respectively, in the state of Coahuila.

(4) Includes data from Mexican consulates located in El Paso and Presidio, Texas, on the border with Mexican cities Ciudad Juárez and Ojinaga, respectively, in the state of Chihuahua.

(5) Includes data from Mexican consulates located in Douglas, Nogales, and Yuma, Arizona, close to the Mexican border cities of Agua Prieta, Nogales, and San Luis Rio Colorado in the state of Sonora.

B. Current profiles of child and adolescent migrants served by civil society organizations in four border cities: YMCA youth shelters and Albergue del Desierto

Sufficient data exists on adult migrants to characterize the different segments of the migrant population. However, very few studies have analyzed Mexican unaccompanied child and adolescent migrants and deportees. During September and October of 2013, we conducted interviews with 335 Mexican children and adolescents who had been repatriated from the United States and were staying temporarily in YMCA youth shelters or at *Albergue del Desierto*. Details

are discussed further below. We gathered demographic and other information on the children, such as: gender, level of education, place of origin, where they crossed the border, where they were detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the length of time they stayed at the YMCA shelters or *Albergue*, and the way in which they left those shelters (alone, with parents, etc.).

Ramírez³⁶ conducted a study in 2009 focused on repatriated Mexican children and adolescent migrants, concluding—in part—that child migration, like adult migration, has followed clearly established routes. Ramirez explained that as a result of these common migration routes, cities of origin become connected with border cities where children attempt to, or do, cross the border to the United States. The investigation traced the routes that children and adolescents commonly followed from their places of origin to the northern border state where they were headed. It identified the following migration routes:

1. The Pacific Route, taken by migrants headed to the states of Baja California or Sonora. This route may originate in any of the following states along the way: Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Michoacán, Jalisco, Nayarit, and Sinaloa.
2. The Central Route, followed by migrants who start their journey in places like Pueblo, Mexico City, Morelos, Mexico state, and Guanajuato, who are also going to the border areas of Baja California and Sonora.
3. The Gulf of Mexico route, taken by migrants originally from the states of Veracruz and San Luis Potosí (which does not have a border on the Gulf) who are headed to border areas in the state of Tamaulipas.

According to Ramírez (2009), it was evident that the children and adolescents they studied were from the poorest states, were headed north, and were being taken by family members, neighbors, acquaintances, guides (*polleros*), and smugglers (*coyotes*). Most of them were following routes towards the state of Sonora to cross in the highest-risk crossing areas of the desert. In fact, these authors were able to show that, according to available statistics and considering the border city where the attempted crossings were taking place, Sonora was the state with the highest number of children and adolescents migrants cared for in 2006 (7,574), followed by Baja California (5,746), Tamaulipas (2,945), Chihuahua (2,646), and Coahuila (1,116).

In an *amicus curiae* brief filed with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2012, the Binational Defense and Advocacy Program (*Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional* or PDIB) categorizes child and adolescent migrants as follows:

- *Unaccompanied children/adolescents*: those repatriated from the U.S. and those in transit who were unable to cross the border or were in the process of trying to cross, without the accompaniment of any family member.

³⁶ Ramírez Romero, S. J., García Hidalgo, J.O., Muñoz Castellanos, R.G., & Enciso Cruz, P.J. (2009). "Más allá de la frontera, La niñez migrante: Son las niñas y niños de todos," Exploratory study on the protection of child migrants repatriated to the northern border.

- *Migrant children and adolescents and children of Mexican migrants in the US:* children and adolescents born in Mexico who are travelling to the U.S. to join family, or the sons and daughters of Mexican migrants who were born and raised in the U.S.
- *Circuit children and adolescents:* those who cross into the United States multiple times without documents in a context in which they are recruited and exploited by organized crime and other criminal networks, and used as guides or drug mules.

Some children and adolescents also migrate in the company of one or more family members, usually the mother, an older brother, or a member of the extended family such as an uncle or cousin. The different typologies show that child and adolescent migrants are immersed in different kinds of situations. However, the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of migrant children also make it possible to determine general profiles.

In an effort to work with the most recent and authentic information about the characteristics of child and adolescent migrants in the border region of northern Mexico, we administered a survey instrument to children and adolescents in the YMCA youth migrant shelters located in the border cities of Tijuana, (Baja California), Agua Prieta (Sonora), and Piedras Negras (Coahuila), and to children and adolescents sheltered at *Albergue del Desierto* in Mexicali (Baja California). Due to time constraints, we decided to work with a sample of repatriated children, to whom we administered the survey instrument in the months of September and October 2013.

The sample group was 335 repatriated children and adolescents who were given shelter by the above-mentioned civil society organizations. Most of them stayed in the YMCA youth shelters in Tijuana and Piedras Negras, as shown in Table 6. The instrument we gave them is a standardized questionnaire administered by the DIF Federal System to children and adolescents all along the border. The instrument consists of 50 questions divided in four sections: (1) general information; (2) socio-demographic information; (3) information about migration and repatriation; and (4) information about family and migration. The objective of the questionnaire is to capture data that makes it possible to obtain a general profile of the children and adolescents and to explore the process in which they cross the border and are repatriated. The questionnaire is administered directly to the children and adolescents in the YMCA shelters just a few hours after their repatriation, with their consent, and in a respectful environment. When a child or adolescent does not want to answer a question, their right not to do so is respected. The instrument is made up primarily of closed, multiple-choice questions.

Table 6. Number of children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities on Mexico's northern border in September and October 2013

NAME OF BORDER CITY AND SHELTER	NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS SERVED	PERCENTAGE
YMCA shelter in Agua Prieta, Sonora.	84	25.1
<i>Albergue del Desierto</i> in Mexicali, Baja California.	17	5.1
YMCA shelter in Piedras Negras, Coahuila	107	31.9
YMCA shelter in Tijuana, Baja California.	127	37.9
Total	335	100.0

Source: Elaborated from data of YMCA shelters in Agua Prieta, Sonora; Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Tijuana, Baja California; and *Albergue del Desierto*, Mexicali.

Of the total number of children and adolescents served (335), 94% were male and only 6% were female. It should be emphasized that girls and young women were only seen in the YMCA shelters in Tijuana and Piedras Negras (9.4% and 7.9%, respectively, of the total received in each shelter during the period of analysis). During the same period in Agua Prieta and Mexicali, only male children and adolescents stayed at the shelters. This data indicates that male children continue to be more prevalent in the flows of unaccompanied child migrants.

See Graph 1 appended to the end of this chapter, on children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities of the northern border of Mexico, during September and October 2013 by sex.

In terms of age, the data shows that 70.7% of the children and adolescents surveyed were 16-17 years old. Another 25.4% were 14-15 years old, and only 3.9% were 13 or younger. The age distribution was similar in all four of the border cities where repatriated children and adolescents were surveyed (Tijuana, Agua Prietas, Piedras Negras and Mexicali), as shown in Graph 2.

In terms of the education levels of the children and adolescents surveyed, the data obtained indicate that most had been to primary school and some had gone to secondary school. Graph 3 shows that 30.7% of the sample indicated that they had finished only some level of primary education, while 54.3% had gone to secondary school. Only 11.6% said that they had finished high school (*nivel medio superior* or *preparatoria*). Some children and adolescents surveyed had not been to school

at all (3% of the total sample). This data shows that children and adolescents who arrive at, or cross, the northern border have grown up in environments where the opportunity for higher levels of schooling was either not within their reach, or did not represent a way for them to fulfill their life plans. In addition to lack of opportunities for higher education, the data shows that Mexican children continue to suffer from an overall lack of educational opportunities.

See Graph 2 appended to the end of this chapter, on age ranges of children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities of Mexico's northern border in September and October 2013.

See Graph 3 appended to the end of this chapter, on educational attainment levels of children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities of Mexico's northern border in September and October 2013.

Eighty-six percent of the children and adolescents surveyed primarily came from or resided in one of Mexico's 12 main states. *See Graph 4, below, showing states of origin of the children in order of importance from the bottom up.* Two of the three most common states of origin for the children and adolescents surveyed were the border states of Baja California and Coahuila. 59 children/adolescents or 17.6% of the group surveyed came from Baja and 32 children/adolescents, or 9.6% of the group came from Coahuila. The 12 states of origin include states with high levels of poverty and large indigenous populations, such as Oaxaca (34 children/adolescents or 10.1% surveyed); Guerrero (29 children/adolescents or 8.1% surveyed); Puebla (13 children/adolescents or 3.9% surveyed); and Chiapas (12 children/adolescents or 3.6% surveyed).

The home states from which many of the children come share the experience of high levels of violence due to the presence of organized criminal groups. Organized criminal violence is rampant in Michoacán, the place of origin of 26 (7.8%) of the children and adolescents; Veracruz, home to 17 (5.1%); Jalisco, home to 12 (3.6%); and Guerrero, home to 27 (8.1%) of the children. Some of the sending states are ones that have traditionally sent migrants to the United States: for example, Guanajuato, from which 27 (8.1%) of the children originated. Migration is a relatively recent phenomenon in a few of the states from which children migrated, like Mexico State with 16 (4.1%) and San Luis Potosí with 13 (3.9%).

See Graph 4 appended to the end of this chapter, on primary home states of the children and adolescents served by four civil society organizations on Mexico's northern border in September and October 2013.

Notwithstanding the fact that a considerable percentage of the children and adolescents we surveyed named the desire to work and family reunification as their primary motivations for migrating, increasing levels of violence may be another push factor. The instrument used for capturing data, described earlier, asks only one multiple-choice question about the reason for, or cause of, the migration of these Mexican children and adolescents to the United States. There are no other questions about the causes of migration. Violence is not included as one of the answer choices to the question about the reasons for children's migration (which should be seen as a serious methodological omission and public policy error on the part of DIF). The only answer choice that might capture violence as a driver is "other reasons" for migration. The issue of intrafamilial violence is not included in the DIF questionnaire, nor is violence in the place of origin.

Instead, the DIF study aims only at capturing data on violence that occurs during the process of crossing the border or during repatriation (as well as demographic data).³⁷

Where and how children attempted to enter the United States and the risks involved in crossing the border varied according to the border city from which they attempted to cross. For example, most of the children and adolescents in the YMCA shelter in Agua Prieta indicated that they had tried to cross the border through unpopulated hill or brush areas, generally full of low vegetation and dangerous animals. The children and adolescents at the YMCA shelter in Tijuana, also said they had tried to cross through hilly, mountainous, or desert areas, which were risky not only because of the vegetation or animals, but also because of the extreme climates of the region.

By contrast, the children and adolescents at the YMCA shelter in Piedras Negras reported that they attempted to enter the United States by boat or by swimming, which likely means that they tried to cross the *Río Bravo* (or Rio Grande).³⁸ Some children and adolescents sheltered at *Albergue del Desierto* in Mexicali also indicated that they attempted to enter the United States by boat or by swimming. Migrants sheltered there frequently try to cross the All American Canal,³⁹ which is near the dividing line between the Mexican municipality of Mexicali and Imperial County in California.

See Graph 5 appended to the end of this chapter, on places where children and adolescents sheltered by civil society organizations in four cities on Mexico's northern border crossed into the United States or were detained by the Border Patrol, during September and October of 2013.

Some children and adolescents attempted to cross through border stations or checkpoints, risking detention and even their physical wellbeing, as U.S. Border Patrol agents in the checkpoints use weapons against those who run or resist arrest when they cross in an unauthorized fashion. This latter method of crossing was seen in places where the cities on both sides of the border are very close to each other and where the division is marked only by border fences, which is the case between Tijuana and San Ysidro, and between Mexicali and Calexico.

The information above, as well as various studies on the subject, show that migrants are crossing the border into the United States in increasingly inhospitable and dangerous places, which increases their risk of physical harms.⁴⁰ In short, children and adolescents who try to cross the

³⁷ The question about the reason for migration included in the survey is: "Why did you want to cross the border or be in the United States?" The answers choices are: "1-to join my family, 2-to join friends, 3-for adventure, 4-to work, 5-(my family) took me, 6-to go to school, 7-other reasons."

³⁸ The Río Bravo (or Rio Grande) is the border dividing Mexico from the United States in the area where the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, and the U.S. states of New Mexico and Texas are located.

³⁹ Contreras Rodríguez. E. "El revestimiento del Canal Todo Americano." Available at <http://www.tij.uia.mx/academicos/elbordo/vol15/canal1.html>.

⁴⁰ See Anguiano Tellez, M. E. & Trejo Peña. A. (2007). "Políticas de seguridad fronteriza y nuevas rutas de movilidad de migrantes mexicanos y guatemaltecos," *Liminar, Estudios Sociales y Humanísticos*, V(2), pp. 47-65. Available at <http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/745/74511236004.pdf>. See also Rubio Salas, R. (2011, 22 January). "Cambios en el patrón migratorio y vulnerabilidades de los migrantes indocumentados mexicanos con destino y desde Estados Unidos." Available at <http://www.colef.mx/emif/resultados/articulos/2011%20->

border into the United States are increasingly risking exposure to more and more difficult conditions, victimization by criminal groups, and even death.

See Graph 6 appended to the end of this chapter, on length of time children and adolescents stayed in shelters run by civil society organizations in four cities along Mexico's northern border in September and October 2013.

The sample group of children and adolescents at the YMCA shelters and *Albergue del Desierto* stayed at those shelters for very brief periods of time. Of the 335 children and adolescents in the four cities studied, 57.3% (180) left the same day they arrived; 21.2% (71) stayed for one night; 11.3% (38) stayed for two nights; 11.9% (40) stayed for three nights; and only 1.8% (6) of the total number of children and adolescents stayed for more than three nights. The short periods of stay at these shelters, which provide support and services, is a sign that the civil society organizations are helping the children and adolescents to contact family members or friends quickly so that they can return to their places of origin.

See Graph 7 appended to the end of this chapter, on family members who received the children and adolescents after they left the shelters of the civil society organizations in four cities along Mexico's northern borders, in September and October 2013.

Graph 8 shows that of the total number of children and adolescents in the sample, 17.9% left the shelter on their own, while 49.3% were reunified with a family member, and 30.7% of were picked up by someone other than a relative. A very small number, 0.6% of the children/adolescents ran away, and there is no record regarding the circumstances of the departure of 1.2% of the children/adolescents, such as whether they were picked up or whether they left on their own.

Mexican government child protection authorities delegate to these organizations most of the process of reconnecting the children and adolescents with their families. Given the fact that civil society organizations run most of the shelters for deported children and adolescents, they cannot legally hold the children and adolescents against their will. The shelters' mission is to provide assistance and protection to the deported children and adolescents who come to their doors. Civil society organizations do what they can to try to help ensure a safe return home, but their protocols regarding returning children and adolescents to their family members are flexible.

This model (of civil society overseeing return to family) has significant limits, and enormous deficits clearly exist in the area of the return and reintegration of Mexican children and adolescents deported from the United States. Notwithstanding the contributions of non-governmental organizations, the primary responsibility for protecting, respecting, and guaranteeing the rights of repatriated children and adolescents lies with the government at all levels—federal, state, and municipal. Government authorities should apply the principle of the best interests of the child to ensure that no child or adolescent is repatriated to a situation in which the child is at risk of a danger to his/her life or physical wellbeing, or to a violation of any of the child's fundamental rights. The government should also guarantee—based on the best interest of the child—that there

[%20Cambios%20en%20el%20patron%20migratorio%20y%20vulnerabilidades%20de%20los%20migrantes%20indocumentados%20mexicanos%20con%20destino%20y%20desde%20Estados%20Unidos.pdf](#).

are policies and practices aimed at ensuring children's effective reintegration to their community of origin. In other words, the Mexican government should ensure that repatriation of a child happens in the context of the full exercise of the child's rights in the short and medium term.

The serious gaps evidenced here, and in this report's introductory chapters on Mexico, reveal the limitations of the legal framework on children and adolescents as of late 2014, and especially the limitations of the institutional network charged with guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents. It is also clear that Mexico's approach to the issue of migrant children is contaminated by links to national security and border control. Thus, as discussed in chapter 13 of this book, bilateral agreements between Mexico and the United States prioritize and facilitate the repatriation of Mexican children and adolescents over and above guaranteeing their rights. These repatriation agreements fail to adopt the best interests of the child principle and other principles that should govern repatriation procedures, policies, and practices related to children and adolescents.

Returning to analysis of data obtained from the sample group, it is worth emphasizing that the greatest number of children and adolescents reunified with family members following repatriation occurred in the cities of Tijuana and Mexicali (60.6% and 58.8% respectively). Records from the shelters in Piedras Negras and Agua Prieta show that more children and adolescents left the shelters with unrelated individuals who were authorized to pick them up, or who presented some kind of document in order to pick them up.

At the same time, the shelters in Piedras Negras and Tijuana recorded large numbers of children and adolescents leaving on their own accord (28% and 22%, respectively, of the total cases received in the YMCA shelters). Approximately 12% of the children and adolescents served by *Albergue del Desierto* in Mexicali left the shelter on their own. Meanwhile, the civil society organizations that run the shelters in Mexicali and Agua Prieta recorded only a few cases of children and adolescents who ran away from the shelters (0.6% of those at the shelters).

terms of the absence of important principles regarding the human rights of children and adolescents.

Before 2008, the government of the United States had an “revolving door” policy, which meant that children and adolescents were sent back to Mexico as soon as they were apprehended in the United States.⁴¹ That presumably changed, however, with the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Protection Act (TVRPA) in 2008 which aimed to protect children and adolescents who were victims of persecution or human trafficking, allowing them to enter the United States for a more thorough evaluation of their cases. The TVRPA requires the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to individually screen each Mexican child/adolescent migrant to determine whether circumstances of persecution or trafficking exist—rather than to repatriate them automatically, as before. If DHS cannot be sure that a child or adolescent is not at risk of trafficking or persecution, then the child or adolescent must be placed in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement for further evaluation and must be permitted to seek protection from the U.S. government. In spite of the fact that the TVRPA intended Mexican children and adolescents to be evaluated individually in order to detect risks of trafficking and persecution, however, the reality is that the U.S. continues to repatriate most of the children almost automatically.

In 2010, the NGO Appleseed conducted a detailed investigation into the procedures and practices used by U.S. and Mexican authorities to repatriate children and adolescents. The investigation considered the TVRPA’s mandate in examining how the process of repatriation had improved. The study showed a lack of true progress and a continuation of the “revolving door” policy. It found that children and adolescents were not being evaluated in the manner or environment necessary to obtain information about their vulnerability to smuggling, trafficking, or other types of abuse, or to the risks they would face if returned to their home communities. Rather, the study found, that the U.S.’s objective was simply to return children and adolescents rapidly. As the study showed, agents of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency (CBP) lack the necessary training or tools to question children and adolescents, much less safeguard their wellbeing.⁴²

CBP reports apprehensions of Mexican children and adolescents to the Mexican consular network. Consular authorities act as intermediaries in the repatriation process, interviewing the children to ascertain their health status and migration situation, to aid them if necessary, and to ensure their physical wellbeing. Later, consulates are involved in turning the children and adolescents over to the Mexican National Migration Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Migracion* or INM), which in turn communicates immediately with the Mexican National System for Integral Family Development (*el Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia* or DIF), the government institution responsible for protecting the rights of children, and, on the sub-national level, the DIF subsystems of each federal entity (Ramírez, et. al. 2009).

The process of repatriation from the United States to Mexico is a rapid one. However, as mentioned earlier, the DIF does not guarantee that children and adolescents will be sent to safe environments. Children aged 12 and under are housed in shelters of the National DIF System, but those 13 and

⁴¹ Cavendish, B., & Cortazar, M. (2011). *Children at the Border: The Screening, Protection and Repatriation of Unaccompanied Mexican Minors* (hereinafter “Children at the Border”). Available at <http://appleseednetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Children-At-The-Border1.pdf>.

⁴² Cavendish, B., & Cortazar, M., *Children at the Border*.

Table 7. Civil society shelters serving children and adolescents, Municipal DIF shelters, and Service Modules at INM Migration Stations identified on the border cities in northern Mexico

State	Municipality	Civil society run shelter	Module	DIF Shelter
Baja California	Mexicali	2 (<i>Albergue del Desierto</i> , Emmanuel Orphanage)	1	1
	Tijuana	2 (YMCA shelter, Betesda A.C.)	1	2
Coahuila	Acuña	0	1	1
	Piedras Negras	1 (YMCA shelter)	1	0
Chihuahua	Ciudad Juárez	1	1	1
	Ojinaga	0	0	1
Nuevo León	Monterrey	0	0	1
Sonora	Agua Prieta	1 (YMCA shelter)	1	1
	Nogales	0	1	1
	San Luis Río C.	0	1	0
Tamaulipas	Matamoros	0	0	1
	Nuevo Laredo	0	1	1
	Reynosa	0	1	1
Total		7	10	12

Source: Own elaboration with data from YMCA shelters, 2011; SNDIF, 2012.

IV. Environment of Insecurity and Risk for Children and Adolescents

A. Mechanisms for receiving and reintegrating Mexican children and adolescents who are returned or deported from the United States

Existing mechanisms and programs of the United States and Mexico for the repatriation and reintegration of children and adolescents do not take into consideration the best interest of the children and adolescents or their human rights. Instead, they prioritize ensuring expedited repatriation and regulating logistical aspects of the repatriation process. As a result children and adolescents are repatriated to situations where their emotional and physical wellbeing, and even their lives, may be in danger.

Between 1996 and 2004, Mexico and the United States entered into bilateral accords for the safe and orderly repatriation of Mexican migrants from the United States. Based on these accords, local agreements have been forged between the Mexican border states and various U.S. entities (including at the county level). One example is an agreement on “safe and orderly repatriation” executed between Baja California and U.S. authorities on December 9, 2008. The agreement stipulates that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) should notify detained Mexican nationals that they have the right to communicate with their consulates in San Diego and Calexico. Chapter 13 documents the various and serious limitations of these types of accords, particularly in

over are sent to shelters on the northern border, which are primarily run by civil society organizations that lack sufficient resources to complete the task of reconnecting the children and adolescents with their families. The responsibility of safely returning children to family falls on civil society organizations, despite the fact that the legally responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of these children lies with the State.

Both DIF shelters and civil society shelters focus on making quick evaluations in order to achieve family reunification. However, there is a serious contradiction between the objective of reunifying repatriated children with family, and the reality that some children and adolescents have been deported even though their parents reside in the United States. Mexico and the United States pay little attention to the dangers that the children and adolescents may face in their communities of origin or in their homes and do not adequately coordinate efforts to identify and solve problems that children and adolescents may encounter as they attempt to cross the border. They also do not make an effort to ground government action on either side of the border in a human rights perspective in order to guarantee the rights of these children and adolescents in the short and medium term.

The root causes that force children and adolescents to migrate are practically never analyzed. In most cases, this lack of analysis not only leads to failure in the reintegration process, but also places children in grave danger. Children and adolescents continue to be in situations in which their rights are violated, leading them to attempt re-migration, this time in conditions of even greater vulnerability. In summary, U.S. and Mexican authorities are interested in expedited repatriation, and do not aim their actions at ensuring the best interests of the child or adolescent and effectively protecting his or her rights.

B. Environment of social insecurity and risk for child and adolescent migrants on Mexico's northern border.

Child and adolescent migrants face serious and growing dangers along Mexico's northern border, including kidnappings, sexual and physical abuse, and human trafficking. Migrants confront both physical and virtual walls that are being built and reinforced by the "Operation Gatekeeper" ("*Operación Guardián*") migration control program.⁴³ This initiative began in the early 1990s during the Clinton administration and was extended thanks to the "securitization" policy of subsequent administrations after the September 11, 2001 attacks. This new focus made migration a matter of national security, along with terrorism and drug trafficking (Moreno, 2013).⁴⁴ As described in chapter 13, this vision was extended throughout other countries in the region (like Mexico and Central America's "Northern Triangle") through bilateral and regional agreements promoted by the United States, both on matters of migration and security.

The "war" that the last Mexican government administration (2006-2012) declared against drug trafficking and organized crime—which has changed little under the current administration—must

⁴³ For details on this program, see *Víctor Sánchez et al. v. United States* ("Operación Gatekeeper"), Petition 65-99. Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, Report No. 104/05 (2005, 27 October). Available at <http://www.cidh.oas.org/annualrep/2005sp/EEUU65.99sp.htm>.

⁴⁴ Moreno Mena, J. A. (September 1, 2013). "Bienvenidos al infierno." *México Social*. Available at <http://mexicosocial.org/index.php/secciones/especial/item/342-bienvenidos-al-infierno>.

be considered alongside security-driven accords. U.S. policy has been similar in many ways. The security-focused approach to the migration issue, the reinforcement of control mechanisms, and the increase in practices of detention and deportation have been very well documented in government statistics and explained in various chapters of this report and by studies by other institutions. These policies, along with other factors, have only contributed to a dramatic increase in the levels of crime and violence along the U.S.-Mexico border, which has had a particularly serious impact on children and adolescents.

In this dangerous context, children and adolescents are highly susceptible to suffering rights violations, because they are either travelling alone or accompanied by people who are not suited to protect them. In many cases they may be travelling with people who are part of a network of criminals. Children and adolescent migrants are exposed to many high-risk situations, including migrant smuggling networks, drug trafficking networks, and networks that traffic in persons for sexual exploitation. Although all migrants, including children and adolescents, confront risks from organized criminal networks, migrant women and girls suffer violence in ways that differ from that endured by men and boys as a result of the *machista* culture that permeates environments of organized crime. In this culture, violence (including gender violence) is normalized and even exalted and sexual abuse is common, with women and girls as the primary targets.

In February 2011, the National Commission of Human Rights (*Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos* or CNDH) published a report about kidnapping of migrants.⁴⁵ The CNDH report documents 214 kidnappings of entire groups of migrants and 11,333 kidnappings of individual migrants between April and September of 2010. According to the testimonies of the victims and witnesses of these kidnappings, Veracruz, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, and Chiapas were the states with the greatest risk. The CNDH report highlights the participation of State actors in the kidnapping of migrants. According to the report, government authorities were involved in 8% of the kidnappings documented. The statistics given in this report not only reflect an increase in the number of kidnappings of migrants, but also an increase in the participation of governmental actors in the commission of these crimes.

According to Amnesty International⁴⁶ and a report leaked from the Mexican Attorney General's office (*Procuraduría General de la República*), a minimum of 25,000 cases of abductions, disappearances, and missing persons occurred all over Mexico during the administration of President Calderón. Criminal groups perpetrated most of the kidnappings, but public officials were also implicated in some of the kidnappings. The CNDH investigated 2,126 cases of presumed forced disappearances. According to the CNDH, at least 15,921 unidentified dead bodies had been found and more than 1,400 remains had been exhumed from common clandestine graves. In March 2013, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances published a report highlighting the alarming rate of enforced disappearances and impunity in Mexico. Migrants in transit continued to be victims of kidnapping, murder, and forced recruitment into criminal groups. Women and child migrants were found to be the groups at greatest risk of victimization.

⁴⁵ CNDH. (February 22, 2011). "Informe especial sobre secuestro de migrantes en México." Available at http://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/all/fuentes/documentos/informes/especiales/2011_secigrantes_0.pdf.

⁴⁶ Amnesty International, Mexico. Available at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/annual-report-mexico-2013>.

In many cases, there was suspicion that the criminal groups relied on the collusion of public officials who subjected migrants to other abuses, such as extortion and arbitrary detention.⁴⁷

Kidnapping continues to be the greatest risk for migrants on the northern border, and children and adolescents are not exempt from this danger. The YMCA identifies the following risks for children and adolescents before, during, and after migration along Mexico’s northern border:

Table 8. Risks encountered by children and adolescents on the northern border, according to YMCA shelters

No.	PHASE OF MIGRATION	POTENTIAL RISKS
1	Trip towards the border	Abduction, assault, and extortion by criminal gangs Arbitrary harassment, arrest, detention, and extortion by police Sexual and labor exploitation Human trafficking Natural and environmental risks
2	Border city (before the attempt to cross the border)	Participation (sometimes forcibly) in criminal activity (e.g., drug smuggling, migrant smuggling, prostitution) Arbitrary harassment, arrest, detention, and extortion by police Sexual and labor exploitation. Human trafficking “Payments” required by drug cartels or gangs that control the area
3	Border crossing	Natural and environmental risks such as dehydration, hypothermia, injuries (especially to feet) Sexual exploitation or abuse Being attacked or abandoned by smugglers or coyotes Being attacked by vigilantes (Minute Men) Human trafficking
4	Arrest by U.S. Border Patrol	Brutal or inappropriate treatment, including while being transported Separation of members of the same family
5	Detention on the U.S. border	Deprivation or insufficiency of food and/or water Crowding and uncomfortable (freezing) temperatures in the detention cells Lack of medical assistance Physical and verbal abuse Attacks by other prisoners Lack of privacy to make phone consultations with personnel at the Mexican consulate

⁴⁷ Amnesty International, Mexico. Available at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/annual-report-mexico-2013>.

		Repatriation of children and adolescents during the night
6	Mexican consulate	Non-compliance with bi-national accords: for example allowing repatriation during the first 24 hours, or not verifying the health status of repatriated migrants Inappropriate conditions for interviews
7	Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM)	Not believing that the repatriated child or adolescent is of Mexican nationality
8	Desarrollo Integral de la familia (DIF)	Shelter conditions for children and adolescents are similar to detention center conditions
9	YMCA shelters for migrant children	Migrants arrive feeling anxious, exhausted, discouraged, mistrustful, stressed, and may have been interrogated by 5 or 6 different agencies
10	Family reunification or leave shelter on own accord	Poverty Physical or emotional family violence Criminal activity

Source: YMCA, Report of activities (2011)

C. Lateral deportations and family separation during deportation: risks for children and adolescents⁴⁸

The issue of the separation of families, especially of women from their children, was made visible by civil society organizations in Baja California and San Diego beginning in 2003. In September of that year, the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation's (CRLAF) Border Project sent a letter to Robert C. Bonner, CBP Commissioner of the DHS, expressing concerns about the consequences of a pilot program called "Lateral Repatriation."⁴⁹ The program involved the daily transfer of 300 Mexican migrants detained on the border in Arizona or Texas for deportation through border cities.⁵⁰ The Lateral Repatriation program often returns migrants to places far from where they attempted to cross the border, to areas where violence and organized crime proliferate, placing them in situations of serious risk.

⁴⁸ Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional (PDIB). (May 2013). "Segundo informe sobre violaciones a derechos humanos de migrantes mexicanos detenidos en los Estados Unidos, 2011-2012." Available at <http://corteidh.or.cr/tablas/29958.pdf>.

⁴⁹ At that time it was officially called the Lateral Repatriation Program, and the plans were to deport through the following cities in Texas: El Paso, Del Río, McAllen, and Brownsville. See Smith, C. (2003, September 17). Letter to Mr. Robert C. Bonner, Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Department of Homeland Security. Letter on file with authors.

⁵⁰ Smith, C. (2003, September 17). Letter to Mr. Robert C. Bonner, Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Department of Homeland Security. Letter on file with authors.

The Lateral Repatriation program deports members of the same family separately, leading to family separation. More than a decade ago, CRLAF realized that the program would in fact separate families, especially children and adolescents from their mothers, because it did not exempt children. Lateral Repatriation continued as a pilot program for several summers, then was incorporated into the unilateral repatriation policies of the U.S. government. Lateral Repatriation continued in the city of Agua Prieta and at other repatriation points, meaning that members of the same nuclear family who are apprehended together are deported on different dates or through different border sites (PDIB, 2013).

PDIB's second report (2013) also documented lateral repatriation practices and determined that lateral repatriation was part of Custom and Border Protection's broader plan called the "Alien Transfer Exit Program." The stated objective of the Alien Transfer Exit Program was to ensure the physical integrity of repatriated migrants and to protect them from the crime that was prevalent along the border with Arizona. The hidden agenda of the Alien Transfer Exit Program, however, was to keep migrants away from the Arizona border so that they would not attempt to enter the United States again, or—if they did attempt to do so—their subsequent journey would take longer.⁵¹

The PDIB report reached the same conclusion as the CRLAF that the Lateral Repatriation program violated the principle of family unification and actually promoted family separation by repatriating family members through different border cities located far away from each other (PDIB, 2013). Family separation was also a serious issue in the deportations that resulted from the "287g" and "Safe Communities" programs. Civil society organizations had begun to document multiple cases of mothers and fathers being separated from their minor children and were alarmed by the frequency of separated families at Tijuana checkpoints.

Even more serious was the realization that Mexican parents were being separated from their children who had been born in the United States (and are thus U.S. citizens) and who also had a right to Mexican nationality. PDIB's second report (2013) found that: "The cases of family separation of mothers and fathers from children and adolescents constitute 33% of the violations documented in Tijuana."⁵²

In addition to suffering due process violations as a result of lateral repatriation procedures, parents and children endure emotional consequences caused by their physical separation. Most parents are unable to communicate with their children during detention, and are unable to inform their family members that they are being deported from the U.S.

Another consequence of these detentions and deportations is that many children and adolescents who remain in the United States have ended up in the child protection system because their parents were not allowed to designate someone—a family member or a close friend—to care for them temporarily. Being placed in foster care jeopardizes children's familial relationships because

⁵¹ This particular program began formally on October 12, 2012, but had been signed into being by the Mexican Secretary of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in February. Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Bilateral (PDIB). (2013, July). Request to DIF through the Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información (IFAI), mimeo. Source on file with the authors.

⁵² PDIB. (2013, July).

parental rights may be terminated and the children may ultimately be adopted. Termination of parental rights caused by immigration enforcement deprives children and parents of their most fundamental rights. As some organizations have pointed out, these practices come close to the illegal appropriation of a child or adolescent by the U.S. government.⁵³ The problem is aggravated when parents are on the Mexican side of the border, because Mexican authorities do not have sufficient experience or information to be able to guide parents through a process in which they can recover their children.⁵⁴

The PDIB (2013) documented that the most frequent human rights violations that detained Mexican parents experienced in detention were “first, the lack of contact with their children, whether through telephone calls, letters, or visits; followed by the lack of timely information to their family members about their expulsion from the country, since family members were not informed.”⁵⁵

It is clear that neither the right to family unity nor the best interests of the child or adolescent are guaranteed by U.S. or Mexican authorities, who simply do not take into account international conventions and protocols protecting children. While it is true that the United States has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Arrangements for the Safe and Orderly Repatriation of Mexican Nationals, which cover every one of the eleven border cities, stipulate that repatriations must be carried out according to the principle of the preservation of the family unit.

D. The situation of children and adolescents when their parents migrate: psycho-social care

That the migration of one or more parent has negative consequences for the family environment is a well-documented fact. According to Zavala,⁵⁶ families are broken and generations of children are being raised without a father and/or mother figure. Other authors add that there may be consequences for the mental health of the children and adolescents left behind in the place of origin. The psycho-social effects of the migration of family members have been studied both in places of origin and places of transit. Most studies agree that migration is a stress factor associated with problematic health, finance, gender, policy, social, and family situations (Rivera et al., 2009; Falicov, 2007; López, 2006; Achótegui, 2004).⁵⁷

López Castro's⁵⁸ studies, conducted in rural areas of Michoacán, found that women migrants frequently develop somatic and psychic disorders, such as muscle tension and lower back pain, gastritis, headaches, insomnia, and colitis when they are abandoned by or separated from their

⁵³ See Latino Policy Coalition. (2012, April 17). Submission of the Latino Policy Coalition to the United Nations Human Rights Council Regarding the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Record of the United States of America. Available at <http://www.latinopolicycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/LPC-UN-Submission-Final-for-website-no-signature.pdf>.

⁵⁴ PDIB. (2013, July).

⁵⁵ PDIB. (2013, July).

⁵⁶ Zavala Rayas J. et. al. (2008, August). “Migración: algunas consecuencias psicológicas en niños y adolescentes de dos municipios del Estado de Zacatecas.” *Revista Investigación Científica*, 4(2). Available at <http://www.uaz.edu.mx/cippublicaciones/ricvol4num2tom1/Humanisticas/Migracion.pdf>.

⁵⁷ López Castro, G. (2006, November). “El síndrome de Penélope. Depresión y ansiedad en mujeres en una región de alta migración a Estados Unidos.” *Conferencia en el 2º Seminario de Migración Internacional: Efectos de la globalización y las políticas migratorias*. Toluca: UAEM.

⁵⁸ See Garduño, S. (2008, September 7). “Afecta migración salud de esposas.” *La Jornada*.

husbands. An increase in the consumption of psychoactive substances (anti-anxiety medications, alcohol, and illicit drugs) among this population has also been observed, as has an increase in various syndromes.⁵⁹

All of the authors to have analyzed the issue agree that children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the migration and deportation of their parents. However, little is known about the effects of family separation as a result of migration or deportation on Mexican children and adolescents. Guarnaccia and López⁶⁰ explain that parents make the decision to leave their homes and migrate in the hopes of improving living conditions and increasing security for themselves and for their family members.

Mancillas (2009) discusses case studies on transnational families that can serve as a reference point. He cites a study by Jorge Partida (1996, cited in Mancillas, 2009), that discusses the negative effects of migration on children and adolescents and concludes that when one or more parents migrate, the family members left behind in Mexico may come to feel that they do not need the parents and may get used to not having their physical presence in the family system and dynamic. As a result, return of the mother or father to Mexico to reunite with the family, can have a negative effect associated with feelings that the family “has managed on its own” without their presence and does not need them.

The educational and migratory aspirations of children and adolescents can also be negatively impacted by international migration, as indicated by a study conducted in Zacatecas by William Kandel.⁶¹ Another study aimed at associating educational achievement with the impact of absent parents⁶² evaluated the self-esteem levels of adolescent children left behind by migrant parents in secondary schools and high schools in the state of Veracruz. The conclusion was that the majority of adolescents worried about their families and felt excessive responsibilities. A third of them reported feeling lonely. The problems most often identified and associated with parental absence were low self-esteem, poor grades, and bad behavior at home.

V. “Circuit” children and adolescents and their characteristics

The term “circuit children” (“*niños de circuito*”) often comes up when referring to children and adolescents on the northern border, and merits its own section in this chapter. This group of children and adolescents faces heightened social risks.

The DIF State Systems have begun to use this category of “circuit” children and adolescents to describe a new group that has emerged in the last few years in Mexico. These are children and

⁵⁹ Achótegui, J. (2004). “Emigrar en situación extrema: el síndrome del inmigrante con estrés crónico y múltiple (síndrome de Ulises).” *Revista Norte de Salud Mental*, 21, pp. 39-52.

⁶⁰ See Mancillas Bazán, C. (2009). “Migración de menores mexicanos a Estados Unidos.” En Leite, P. & Giorguli, S. (Coord.). *El estado de la migración, Las políticas públicas ante los retos de la migración mexicana a Estados Unidos*, pp. 211-246. Distrito Federal: Consejo Nacional de Población. Available at http://www.conapo.gob.mx/work/models/CONAPO/migracion_internacional/politicaspUBLICAS/COMPLETO.pdf.

⁶¹ Kandel. (2000). Cited in Mancillas. (2009).

⁶² Oliva Zárate, L., León Córdoba, D., & Rivera Vargas, E. (2007). “La emigración del adulto como factor de riesgo en la autoestima de los adolescentes.” *Enseñanza e Investigación en Psicología*, 12(2), pp. 359-366. Available at <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=29212210>.

adolescents who cross repeatedly into the United States without documentation for different reasons: for personal symbolic satisfaction; because they have been recruited to support criminal groups; because they have been coerced or forced to work for these groups due to their vulnerability; and even because of their need to escape situations of violence (PDIB, 2012).⁶³

A. *Who are the circuit children and adolescents and what do they do?*

The *Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional* has described the situation of children and adolescents who are from, or who live in, Mexican border cities (PDIB, 2012). Being in these cities facilitates frequent crossings into the United States, so much so that migration is simply part of the life experience of children and adolescents living there. Many of these children and adolescents cross Mexico's northern border just to see how far they can get, and thus are satisfied even if they are repatriated, since the decision to cross the border has the symbolic value of acquiring experience and demonstrating maturity and/or courage.

According to the PDIB (2012), some circuit children and adolescents are involved with migrant smuggling networks, either of their own free will⁶⁴ (although children cannot legally consent) or against their will. In these cases, their job is to guide migrants over the border. Others may be involved with organized criminal groups and may be involved in transporting drugs over the border to the United States. These options have become part of a culture of survival. In fact, criminal groups target these children and adolescents for recruitment precisely because they have no other means of survival. They cross the border repeatedly to the United States while performing different jobs for these groups.

In 2012, the daily paper *La Jornada* published an article about the types of activities these children and adolescents are involved in, or are forced to do. They include:

. . . locating possible victims in the very shelters that are run by the government or by civil organizations to serve children and adolescent migrants who need a place to stay after deportation and before they are sent home to their places of origin, or in the crossing points established by coyotes and guides, so that these victims can be exploited for sexual or labor purposes. Some circuit children and adolescents under the age of 18 attempt to lure children and adolescents and convince them to escape the shelter. They offer to help children and adolescents cross the border, but in reality, they leave the children and adolescents in the hands of criminal organizations (Pérez Silva, *La Jornada*, 2012).

Situations like the ones described above have led to this new category of circuit children and adolescent migrants, caught up not only in the web of undocumented migration, but also in networks of organized crime. Because of their links with these criminal groups, they are also called

⁶³ PDIB. (2011, April 6). Solicitud de Opinión Consultiva sobre Niñez Migrante ante la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos. Available at http://www.corteidh.or.cr/solicitudoc/solicitud_esp.pdf.

⁶⁴ Because minors cannot be charged with crimes in the Mexican legal system, the concept of free will or consent is considered invalid even in the case of an action they may take themselves or a decision they may make themselves. When children or adolescents participate in smuggling human beings or drugs, other legal exceptions also come into play because although their decision to become involved may seem "voluntarily," there is always at least some level of indirect coercion, such as pressure from *grupos vecinales*, among others.

enganchadores (recruiters), or *polleritos* (child smugglers).⁶⁵ However, in reality, these children and adolescents are often themselves victims.

B. Reasons why children and adolescents cross the border to the United States

In order to understand why the circuit children and adolescents attempt to cross into the United States without authorization, it is important to understand the context in which the circuit children and adolescents are immersed. Like other children and adolescents, some of them begin their journey of migration in search of job opportunities to improve their economic situation or in order to reunite with family members. However, when their hopes are frustrated or when they have no other way to survive, they become involved voluntarily or forcibly in illegal activities such as migrant smuggling, drug smuggling, or recruitment of other children and adolescents into criminal groups. Most often, they are recruited while they are in transit and are forced to carry drugs into the U.S., but they can also fall victim to human trafficking organizations that prostitute them to satisfy demand in the United States. This is documented in the records of the consular network that is part of the General Office for the Protection of Mexicans Abroad (*Dirección General de Protección a Mexicanos en el Exterior*) of Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs which, as part of its 2012 statistics, asked the children and adolescents seen at the consulates about their primary motivation for migration.⁶⁶

Most of the income that circuit children and adolescents earn goes to support their families and to pay for their own expenses. The following example shows how the need to support family can lead children to become circuit children:

In our organizations [YMCA], we had the case of boy who was repatriated. We provided him with the corresponding services and as we talked with him, we learned about his work as a guide. Later, we were able to establish contact with his mother to make sure that he would be reunited with his family, and when we talked with her about how risky this activity was for a child, she said that she knew that, but that the boy was bringing home \$500 a week to the household and that they could not do without that income (PDIB, 2012: 11).

La Jornada newspaper has written about parental pressure on, and exploitation of, some circuit children and adolescents in order to provide income for the family by, for example, turning them into guides for other children seeking to cross the border. In one case cited by *La Jornada*, a father received between 300 and 500 *pesos* for each child or adolescent his child guided across the border (Pérez Silva, in *La Jornada*, 2012). Children and adolescents involved in these activities face serious dangers, and can be exploited by third parties, including their parents, as this example shows.

⁶⁵ Pérez Silva, C. (2012, December 29). "Los *polleritos*, otro fenómeno de riesgo para los menores migrantes hacia EU." *La Jornada*. Available at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2012/12/29/politica/012n1pol>.

⁶⁶ Consular network of the Office for the Protection of Mexicans Abroad (Dirección General de Protección a Mexicanos en el Exterior) under Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013). "Repatriación de menores no acompañados 2012 y 2013."

C. A phenomenon on the rise

For approximately a decade now, analysts have begun to detect the existence of this group of children and adolescents and the risks they face due to their involvement in certain activities. The following statement comes from a 2006 seminar, “Unaccompanied Migrant Children on the Northern Border: Repatriation, Protection, and Attention,” held at the *Colegio de la Frontera Norte* in the city of Tijuana:

We know of the existence of two types of migrant children: those who come from the southern part of the country, whose main interest is to cross the border into the United States, and those who live in the region who, in reality, may be involved in a common practice of serving as guides in the undocumented crossing of people into the United States.⁶⁷

Vilaboa,⁶⁸ who conducted a study on children in the border city of Nogales (Sonora), found that 1.6% of the children and adolescents interviewed were residents of the border area. Most of them decided not to talk about their reasons for having entered the United States. Another 1.6% said that they had crossed the border to deliver drugs. While some, such as the Municipal DIF of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, have noted that the number of “circuit” children has decreased in recent years, the reality is that circuit children still represent a significant portion of the total flow of migrant children and adolescents, and their precarious situation warrants careful attention.

Examples help illustrate the number of circuit children and adolescents who cross Mexico’s border with the United States, and can serve as a reference point for the dimensions of this phenomenon. According to the Municipal DIF in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, for example, in 2008 the agency recorded an average of 20 repatriations of children and adolescents per month who were from, or were living in, that city, as well as cases of children who had repeatedly crossed into the United States, sometimes up to 15 times.⁶⁹

In April 2008, a delegation from the INM in the state of Chihuahua also confirmed that children and adolescents called *polleritos* were collaborating in smuggling undocumented migrants to the United States through the Ciudad Juárez border. The INM delegation referred to *polleritos* who were boys between the ages of 14 and 17 and who participated in the border crossings or served as guides (Chaparro, 2008).⁷⁰ By August 2012, the INM had detected at least 97 children for whom

⁶⁷ El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (“Colef”) & UNICEF. (2006, June 9). Minutes from the Seminar titled “Niñez migrante no acompañada en la frontera norte: repatriación, protección y atención.” Available at http://www.biblioteca.cij.gob.mx/Archivos/Materiales_de_consulta/Migracion/Articulos/ni%C3%B1ez_migrante.pdf.

⁶⁸ Vilaboa Romero, E. for Save the Children. (2006, July), “Caracterización de la Niñez Migrante en la Frontera Norte de México: Los casos de Tijuana y Nogales.” Available at <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/1925.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Pulgarin, M. M. (2010, November 4). “Disminuyen casos de menores ‘de circuito.’” Available at <http://www.infonor.com.mx/index.php/norte/10-norte/33246-disminuyen-casos-de-menores->.

⁷⁰ Chaparro, A. (2008, April 18). “Desmienten al INM, no ‘hay niños polleritos.’” Available at <http://www.oem.com.mx/esto/notas/n667757.htm>.

there were several records of unauthorized entry to the United States and frequent returns to Mexico.⁷¹

Hernández (2012)⁷² conducted a study on children repatriated to Matamoros, in the state of Tamaulipas, using records from the Center for the Care of Border Children (*Centro de Atención para Menores Fronterizos* or CAMEF) in Matamoros. Hernandez found that Tamaulipas was the state of origin of 61.2% of the children and adolescents who were at the CAMEF shelter in 2011. While the number does not specify how many of the children were originally from, or living in, the city of Matamoros (and would be circuit children of that city), the data is important because it provides a sense of the number of children from that area that frequently attempt to cross the border into the United States without documentation. These children are at risk of being drawn into or co-opted by organized criminal groups because they live in a context of extreme vulnerability and deprivation of rights. Furthermore, since they live in a border state, it is easier for them to attempt to cross the border several times in one week.

In 2013 statistics published by the Observatory on Migration Legislation and Policy (*Observatorio de Legislación y Política Migratoria*) of the School of the Northern Border (*El Colegio de la Frontera Norte*), showed that of the children and adolescents repatriated to Mexico that year, 4,981 were originally from one of the six Mexican states that border the United States. 5.6% of these children and adolescents traveled to the U.S. accompanied by an adult, and 94.4% were alone at the time of apprehension by U.S. Border Patrol.

⁷¹ Internetchihuahua.com. (2012, August 18). “Indaga Migración mexicana nexos de menores con red de ‘polleros.’” Available at http://diario.mx/Estado/2012-08-18_8b4d8542/indaga-migracion-mexicana-nexos-de-menores-con-red-de-polleros/.

⁷² Hernández Hernández, O. M. (2012, June). “Migración, masculinidad y menores repatriados en la frontera Matamoros-Brownsville.” *Trayectorias*, 14(33-34), 76-94. Available at <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=60724509004>.

Table 9. Children and adolescents repatriated from the United States, originally from Mexican states along the U.S./Mexico border, 2013

	BAJA CALIFORNIA		SONORA		CHIHUAHUA		COAHUILA		NUEVO LEÓN		TAMAULIPAS		TOTAL F.N.	
	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%
ACCOMPANIED														
Age 12-17	24	0.5	12	0.2	36	0.7	15	0.3	28	0.6	70	1.4	185	3.7
11 or under	17	0.3	3	0.1	25	0.5	10	0.2	18	0.4	19	0.4	92	1.8
Subtotal	41	0.8	15	0.3	61	1.2	25	0.5	46	0.9	89	1.8	277	5.6
UNACCOMPANIED														
AGE 12-17	249	5.0	2,343	47.0	468	9.4	350	7.0	69	1.4	1,188	23.9	4,667	93.7
11 or under	4	0.1	5	0.1	3	0.1	3	0.1	1	0.02	21	0.4	37	0.7
Subtotal	253	5.1	2,348	47.1	471	9.5	353	7.1	70	1.4	1,209	24.3	4,704	94.4
TOTAL	294	5.9	2,363	47.4	532	10.7	378	7.6	116	2.3	1,298	26.1	4,981	100.0

Source: Created with data from the Observatorio de Legislación y Política Migratoria- COLEF (2014). Map of age ranges of minors repatriated by the U.S., according to their place of origin, in 2013. Available at: <http://observatoriocollef.org/Mapa/77>.

This data gives a better sense of the number of children and adolescents coming from the border areas in northern Mexico who are crossing without documentation into the United States. Their residence near the border zone makes it easier for them to cross repeatedly, which can potentially turn them into circuit children and adolescents. Table 9 shows that, in 2013, the northern Mexico border states with the most repatriated children and adolescents were Sonora (47.1%) and Tamaulipas (24.3%).

The most robust data showing an increase in the number of circuit children are the 2012-2013 statistics on the repatriation of unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents compiled by the Consular Network of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷³ This information shows that in one year alone the number of unaccompanied children and adolescents crossing into the United States who could be characterized as circuit children had grown exponentially. The data illustrates that the phenomenon is on the rise and describes a situation of great concern that urgently requires the formulation of public policies aimed at protecting migrant children and adolescents from such dangerous situations.

Furthermore, the deficiencies and limitations in the legal, institutional, and operational context of the reception and repatriation of migrant children and adolescents, which have already been highlighted in this and other reports (Appleseed 2011, WOLA 2015, among others), have particularly complex effects for circuit children and adolescents who face a continuous cycle of violence, risks, and vulnerability. In some recent reports from late 2014, DIF authorities

⁷³ Red Consular de la Dirección General de Protección a Mexicanos en el Exterior de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. (2013). "Repatriación de menores no acompañados 2012 y 2013."

themselves discuss the lack of adequate practices, mechanisms, and resources for responding effectively and comprehensively to the challenges posed by the so-called circuit children and adolescents.⁷⁴

D. Risks encountered

In the current context of violence and crime that characterizes a large part of the U.S.-Mexico border—as well as the nearby states on the Mexico side where the number of Mexican and Central American migrant children and adolescents has increased—circuit children and adolescents are in an extremely vulnerable situation. They have become the preferred victims of diverse actors associated with violence in the region. They are recruited with promises of money or coerced by threats of harm to cross the border acting as guides or carrying drugs.

Organized criminal groups recruit children and adolescents because, unlike adults, minors are not always charged criminally for their activities as guides or drug mules. Rather, they are usually just repatriated to Mexico after being apprehended in the U.S. (PDIB 2012). Once back in Mexico, however, the INM sometimes files criminal charges against circuit children or adolescents for the crime of migrant smuggling, especially in cases of children with a record of numerous irregular entries to the United States. Documents drawn up by U.S. immigration authorities that state the facts establishing the crime are submitted as proof of the crime of smuggling.

Children and adolescents who are charged with a crime end up being judged in special proceedings for adolescent offenders where documents issued by U.S. migration authorities are accepted as valid evidence. In addition to the due process violations that result from relying on U.S. immigration documents as evidence for a criminal case in Mexico, criminally charging these children and adolescents fails to recognize that, generally, they are themselves victims of crime. Circuit children and adolescents arrested in the U.S. sometimes serve (sometimes under pressure) as witnesses in criminal cases against migrant or drug smuggling networks. Rather than protecting these children, the U.S. typically repatriates them to Mexico after they have testified—placing them in grave danger of retribution by the criminal groups against whom they testified—in violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Some government officials on the Mexican side have pointed out that the situation is serious, both for migration institutions and for those who provide shelter to circuit children and adolescents. The Officer for Child Protection (*Oficial de Protección a la Infancia* or OPI) of the INM has said that “this is an issue that requires bilateral negotiation because U.S. officials may detect who has crossed the border, where they crossed, and how many times they have crossed, but even when they know of a child crossing several times using different names during each detention, they do not report this to us.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See Pizzey, N., Frederick, J. & Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA). (January 15, 2015). “Forgotten on ‘La Frontera’: Mexican Children Fleeing Violence Are Rarely Heard.” Available at http://www.wola.org/commentary/forgotten_at_the_border. See particularly the video available at http://www.wola.org/es/video/ninos_migrantes_mexicanos_olvidados_en_la_frontera_0.

⁷⁵ This statement was made by the Oficial de Protección a la Infancia (OPI) of the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM), Patricia Fragoso, to the *La Jornada* daily newspaper. The complete article can be seen at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2012/12/29/politica/012n1pol>.

In spite of the seriousness of the situation in Mexico, however, the main institution charged with protecting, serving, and safeguarding these children and adolescents and ensuring their appropriate and safe reintegration into their family and/or society is the DIF, which is not fulfilling its responsibility. Indeed, on some occasions, DIF has refused to receive these children and adolescents in their shelters. One OPI official shared concerns with the media:

The National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF) has said that the agency does not want to shelter repatriated circuit children because doing so endangers staff and other children at the shelter. In some cases, violent individuals or groups have come to, and sometimes surrounded, DIF shelters within a few hours of the arrival of a circuit child or adolescent to demand that the child must go with them. They claim to be the child's family members and demand that the shelter release him (Pérez Silva in *La Jornada*, 2012).

While it is true that latent risks like the one described here exist in many cases, it is also true that the DIF System has not made an effort to establish policies to ensure the protection and security of circuit children and adolescents. In fact, when a request for information about circuit children was made through the Federal Access to Information Institute (IFAI) in July 2013, DIF gave the following response:

The information requested does not exist in the files of this General Office, since, according to the provisions of Article 29 of the Organic Statute of the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF), the powers entrusted to this office, among others, include establishing, promoting, and executing policies and guidelines as well as programs and projects in the area of providing children and adolescents with attention and protection from social risks as well as issues that affect children and adolescents in situations of vulnerability; promoting studies and research on the causes and effects of their social vulnerability; and administering programs and actions of the organization, aimed at preventing risks that young children face, emphasizing aspects of assistance and education. In this context, and as a result, this Administrative Unit, according to current law, is not required to have the requested information and, therefore, it is impossible to provide it.⁷⁶

There is an egregious and serious omission by the State regarding circuit children and adolescents—as demonstrated by DIF's refusal to collect and make publically available information about circuit children and adolescents who have been repatriated or seen at the shelters. DIF's failure to "administer programs and actions . . . aimed at preventing risks that young children face," despite the fact that such programs and actions are key to its mission to protect children and adolescents, also demonstrates this serious gap.

⁷⁶ Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional. (July 2013). Request made to the DIF through the Federal Access to Information Institute (Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información—IFAI), mimeo. Source on file with authors.

VI. Final considerations and challenges

The risks that children and adolescents confront in the repatriation process have increased with recent deportation policies developed by the United States. One of the proven consequences of these policies is the separation of families, which violates the right to family unity. Lateral repatriations also violate the personal safety and integrity of children and adolescents, and increase the risk that children will be repatriated to unsafe border areas that they are not from or familiar with. The policy of lateral repatriations is incongruent, given that the United States government has issued travel alerts exhorting its citizens not to visit certain dangerous areas of Mexico—mentioning Coahuila and Tamaulipas as places of special concern (PDIB, 2013)—and yet is repatriating children and adolescents to those same areas, without taking into consideration the dangers they may face or evaluating alternatives to return.

Communication between U.S. and Mexican authorities regarding Mexican migrant children focuses on expediting deportation of the children or adolescents, and does not prioritize the best interests of the children and adolescents. The lack of binational policies and practices that include or refer to international human rights treaties puts children and adolescents at risk of future exploitation by criminal groups, migrant smugglers, and human traffickers. In the absence of these policies, arbitrary mechanisms and practices of detention and deportation are employed, contrary to the best interests of the child and other guiding principles.

So far, the Mexican government does not have uniform national policies regulating the rights of unaccompanied child and adolescent migrants or overseeing the different agencies responsible for their custody following repatriation. As described in the introduction to the chapters on Mexico, a law on the federal protection of children and adolescents was passed in 2014. This law transfers responsibility for functions that involve safeguarding the wellbeing of unaccompanied migrant children from INM to the National DIF system. The law has not yet gone into effect. Its regulation and implementation beginning in 2015 could provide an opportunity to begin reducing the gaps and deficiencies that exist in this area, paying special attention to the numerous challenges along Mexico's northern border.

In cases where parents are expelled from the United States, the U.S. government does not guarantee the right of children and adolescents to family life as established in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. The U.S. government's practices of deporting parents, as well as unaccompanied children and adolescents on the border, without taking into consideration the best interests of the child, flout obligations it has incurred by ratifying international treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture, and the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Furthermore, as a result of the 287(g) and Safe Communities programs, there is inadequate communication and coordination between the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Child Protective Services agencies during deportations. This has led to parents losing the ability to exercise certain rights, such as the right to visits with their children, and even the right to obtain adequate legal counsel through a private lawyer or through the assistance of the Mexican Consulate. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has maintained that the detention

of a migrant father or mother should in no circumstances be a factor that leads to loss of legal custody of their children.⁷⁷ Chapter 11 of this book explores this issue in greater detail.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that any separation of parents and children be regulated by law and result from a process that respects fundamental guarantees and ensures judicial intervention. Family separation can only be justified when the rights of the child or adolescent have been violated in the context of family life. The right of the child or adolescent not to be separated from his or her parents and the principle of family unity must, therefore, be heavily prioritized when examining the migratory situation of the parents, especially when deportation measures are involved.

When children and adolescents are repatriated, the National DIF System currently tries to ensure the quickest family reunification possible, without thoroughly evaluating whether reunification is in the best interests of the child, or whether it will actually put the child in a state of greater vulnerability. As a result, children and adolescents who have fled conditions of exploitation or abuse may find themselves back in the same circumstances that originally forced them to migrate across the border. Sometimes the child's closest family connections are with people who reside in the United States. When that is the case, family reunification should happen in the U.S., not Mexico. This is the procedure generally followed with Central American children and adolescents once they have been released from the Department of Health and Human Services in the U.S. (in spite of limitations, such as the risk that the children will ultimately be separated from family again due to deportation).

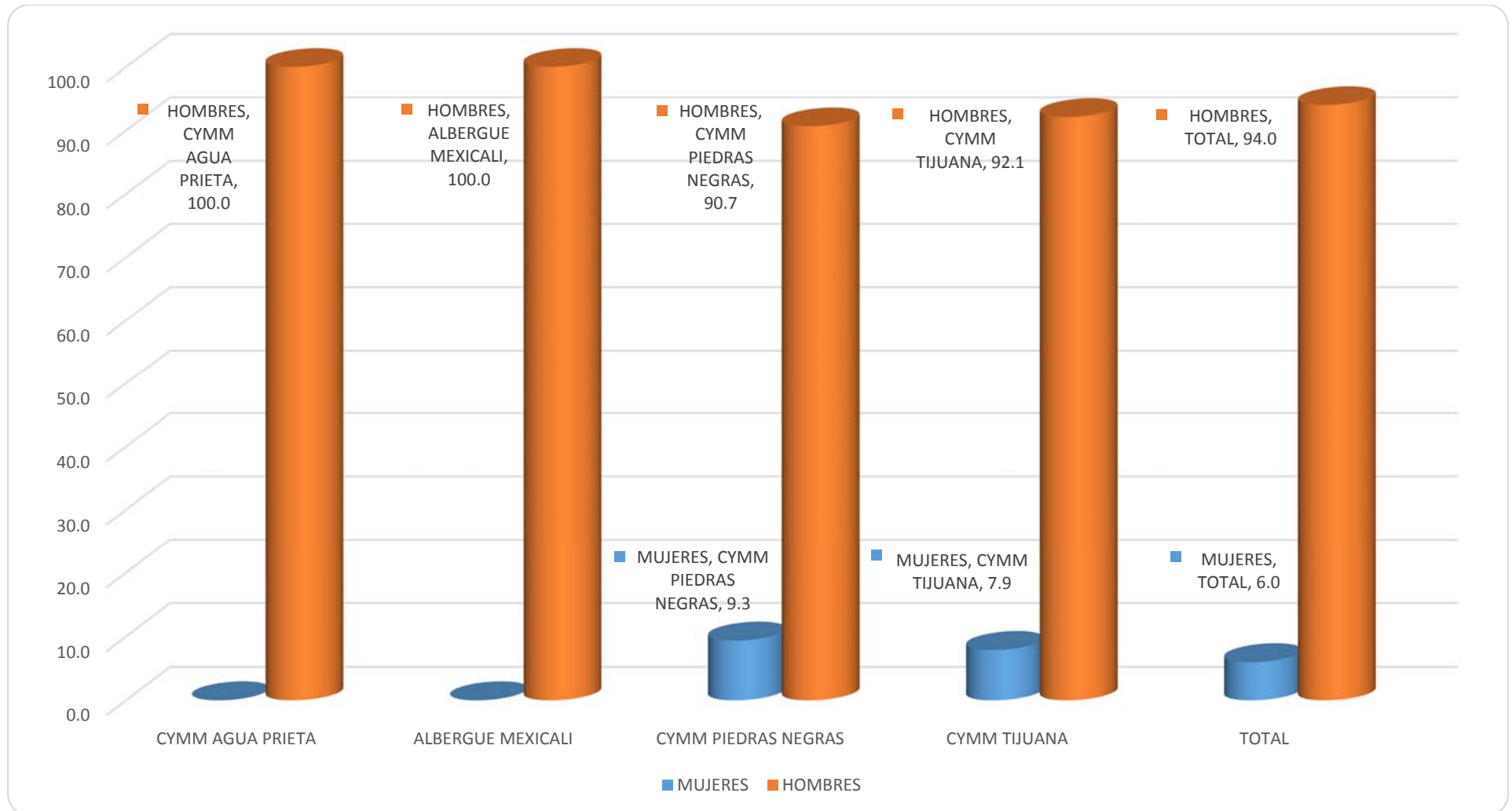
Given the complexity of the issue and the fact that there is a clear “human rights, humanitarian, human development, and refugee crisis” happening—one with an especially serious impact on children and adolescents at or near the U.S.-Mexico border—it is essential to take a regional approach to migration, particularly as it affects children. In this context, the most important factors to take into consideration are the right to family unity and the best interests of the child or adolescent. That requires the Mexican government (as a sending and transit country) and the United States government (as the destination country) to work together with the active participation of Central American governments and relevant civil society organizations.

Recommendations are included in full at the end of this book. For the full set of recommendations, please visit <http://cgrs.uchastings.edu/Childhood-Migration-HumanRights>.

⁷⁷ Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) (December 30, 2013) “Derechos humanos de los migrantes y otras personas en el contexto de la movilidad humana en México Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos.” Available at <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/migrantes/docs/pdf/Informe-Migrantes-Mexico-2013.pdf>.

Gráfico 1

Diferenciación por sexo de los NNA atendidos por organizaciones civiles en cuatro ciudades de la Frontera Norte de México, durante septiembre y octubre de 2013.



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de: Albergue del Desierto de Mexicali, Baja California y Casas YMCA para Menores Migrantes (CYMM) de Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, Septiembre y Octubre de 2013. Nota: los datos están expresados en porcentajes.

Explanation/Translation of Graphic

Graph 1: Children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities of the northern border of Mexico in September and October 2013, disaggregated by sex. (Percentages)

Color-coded key

Girls, YMCA Piedras Negras, 9.3

Girls, YMCA Tijuana, 7.9%

Girls, TOTAL, 6.0%

Boys, YMCA Agua Prieta, 100%

Boys, Mexicali Shelter 100%

Boys, YMCA Piedras Negras 90.7%

BOYS, YMCA Tijuana 92.1%

TOTAL 94%

YMCA AGUA PRIETA

MEXICALI SHELTER

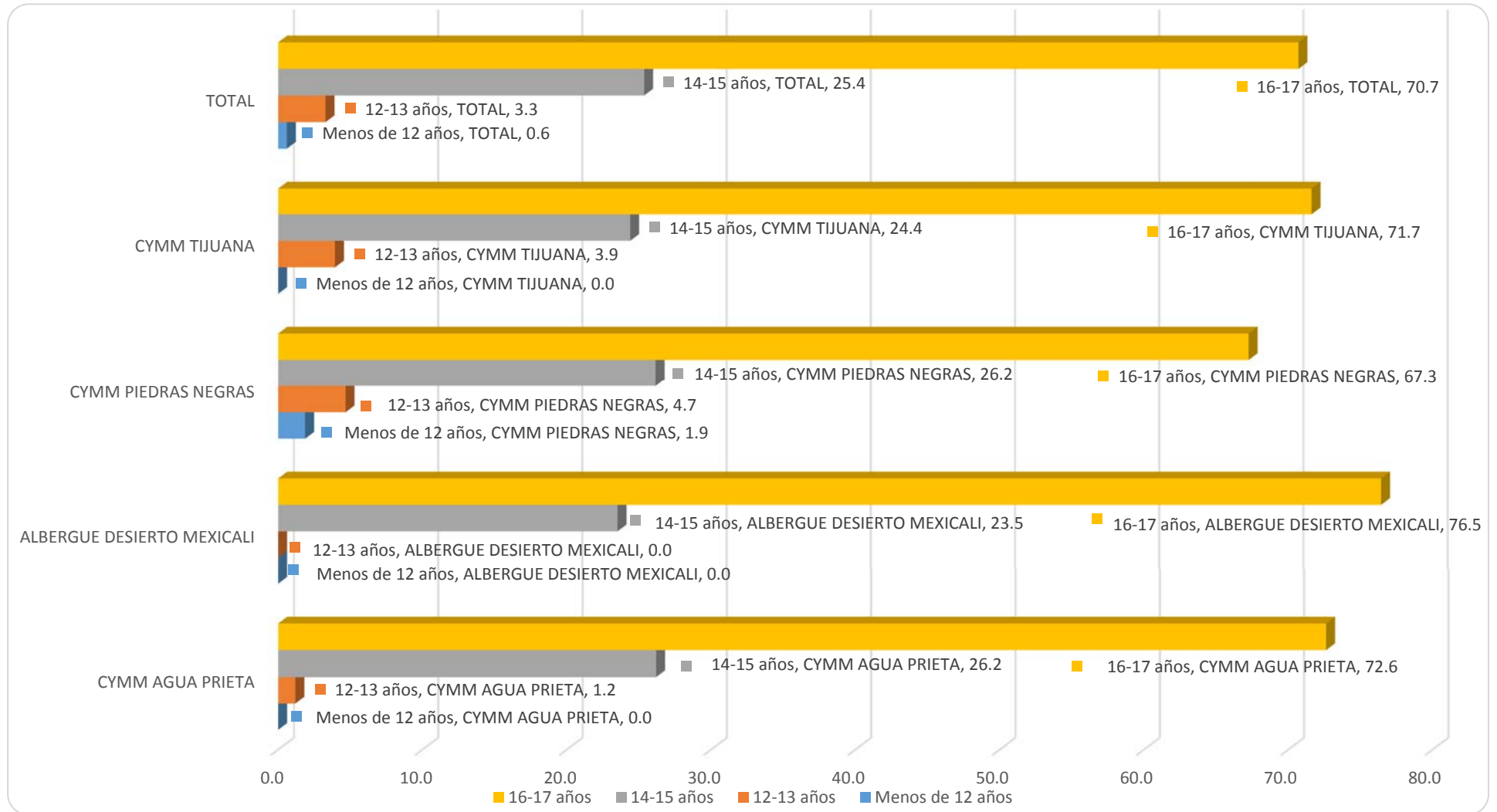
YMCA PIEDRAS NEGRAS

YMCA TIJUANA

TOTAL

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from: The Desert Shelter of Mexicali, Baja California and YMCA Houses for Migrant Youth of Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, September and October, 2013. Note: information expressed in percentages.

Gráfico 2
Rangos de edad de los NNA atendidos por organizaciones civiles en cuatro ciudades de la Frontera Norte de México, durante septiembre y octubre de 2013



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de: Albergue del Desierto de Mexicali, Baja California y Casas YMCA para Menores Migrantes (CYMM) de Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California. Septiembre y Octubre de 2013. Nota: los datos están expresados en porcentajes.

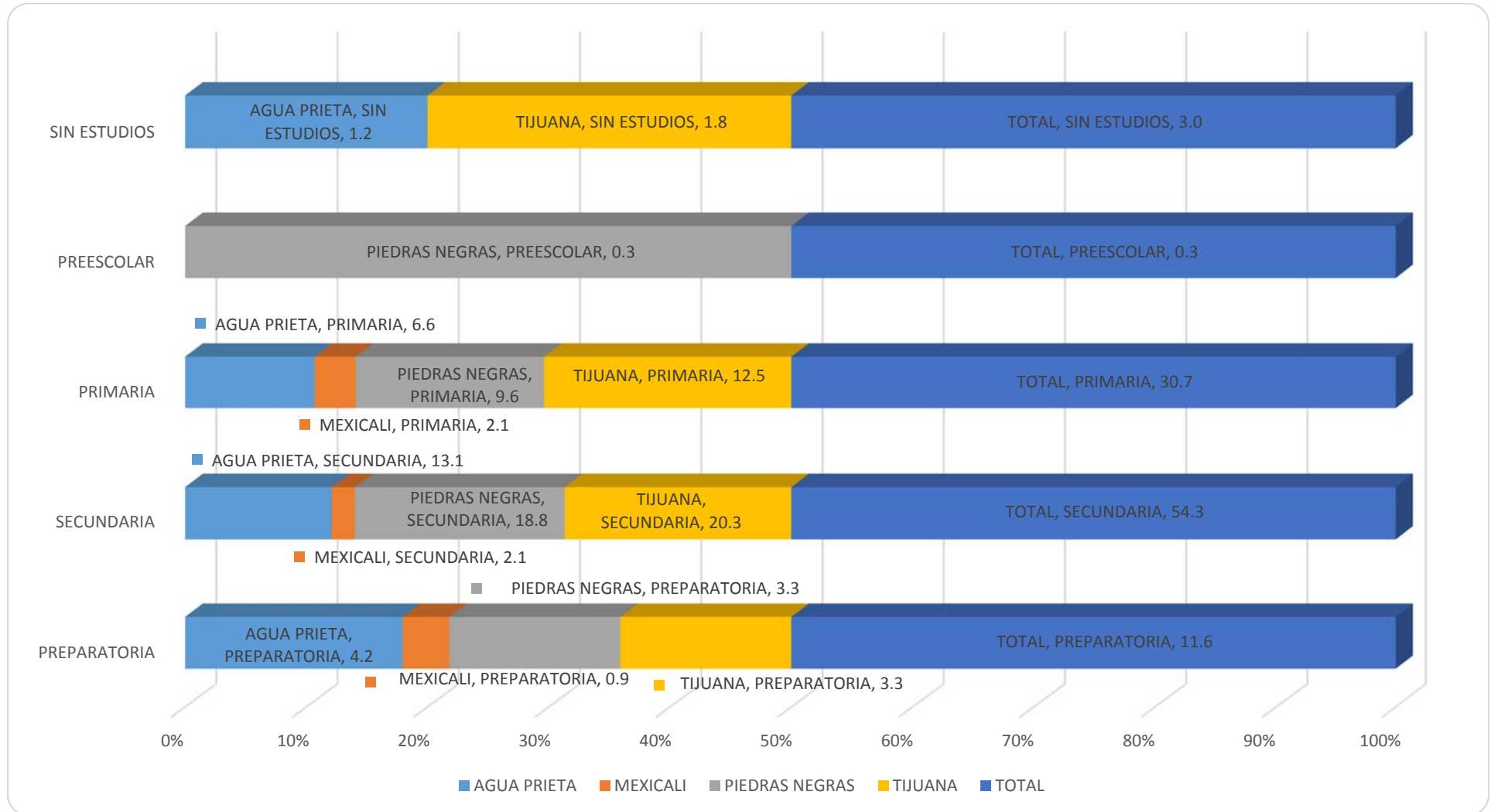
Explanation/Translation of Graphic

Graph 2: Age ranges of children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities on the northern border of Mexico in September and October 2013. (Percentages)

	Color-coded key:
TOTAL	16-17 years old, TOTAL, 70.7
	14-15 years old, TOTAL, 25.4
	12-13 years old, TOTAL, 3.3
	Under 12 years of age, TOTAL, 0.6
YMCA TIJUANA	16-17 years old, YMCA TIJUANA, 71.7
	14-15 years old, YMCA TIJUANA, 24.4
	12-13 years old, YMCA TIJUANA, 3.9
	Under 12 years of age, YMCA TIJUANA, 0.0
YMCA PIEDRAS NEGRAS	16-17 years old, YMCA PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 67.3
	14-15 years old, YMCA PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 26.2
	12-13 years old, YMCA PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 4.7
	Under 12 years of age, YMCA PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 1.9
MEXICALI DESERT SHELTER	16-17 years old, MEXICALI SHELTER, 76.5
	14-15 years old, MEXICALI SHELTER, 23.5
	12-13 years old, MEXICALI SHELTER, 0.0
	Under 12 years of age, MEXICALI SHELTER, 0.0
YMCA AGUAS PRIETAS	16-17 years old, AGUAS PRIETAS, 72.6
	14-15 years old, AGUAS PRIETAS, 26.2
	12-13 years old, AGUAS PRIETAS, 1.2
	Under 12 years of age, AGUAS PRIETAS, 0.0
	16-17 yrs. old 14-15 yrs. old 12-13 yrs. old Under 12 yrs old

Source: Author’s elaboration based on data from: The Desert Shelter of Mexicali, Baja California and YMCA Houses for Migrant Youth of Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, September and October, 2013. Note: information expressed in percentages.

Gráfica 3
 Escolaridad de los NNA atendidos por organizaciones civiles en cuatro ciudades de la
 Frontera Norte de México durante septiembre y octubre de 2013.



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de: Albergue del Desierto de Mexicali, Baja California y Casas YMCA para Menores (CYMM) de Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California. Septiembre y Octubre de 2013. Nota: los datos están expresados en porcentajes.

Explanation/Translation of Graphic

Graph 3: Educational attainment levels of children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities on the northern border of Mexico, in September and October 2013. (Percentages)

Color-coded key:

NO SCHOOLING:

AGUA PRIETA, 1.2; TIJUANA, 1.8; TOTAL NO SCHOOLING 3

PRESCHOOL:

PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 0.3; TOTAL PRESCHOOL 0.3

PRIMARY SCHOOL:

AGUA PRIETA, 6.6; MEXICALI, 2.1; PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 9.6; TIJUANA, 12.5; TOTAL PRIMARY SCHOOL, 30.7

SECONDARY SCHOOL:

AGUA PRIETA, 13.1; MEXICALI, 7.1; PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 18.8; TIJUANA, 20.3; TOTAL SECONDARY SCHOOL, 54.3

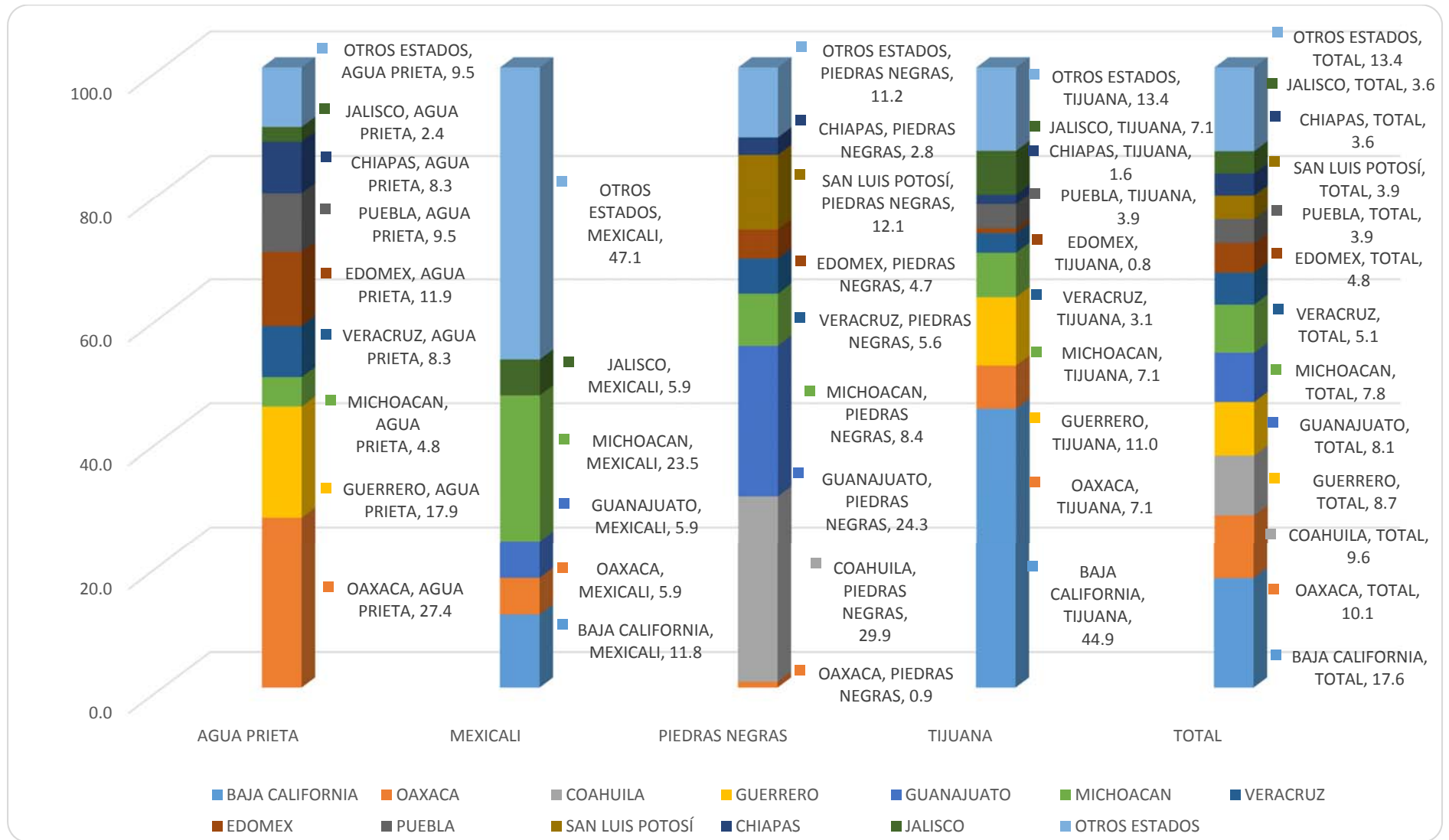
HIGH SCHOOL:

AGUA PRIETA, 4.2; MEXICALI, 0.9; PIEDRAS NEGRAS, 3.3; TIJUANA, 3.3; TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL, 11.6

AGUA PRIETA; MEXICALI; PIEDRAS NEGRAS; TIJUANA; TOTAL

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from: The Desert Shelter of Mexicali, Baja California and YMCA Houses for Migrant Youth of Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, September and October, 2013. Note: information expressed in percentages.

Gráfico 4
Principales entidades mexicanas de los NNA atendidos por cuatro organizaciones civiles en la Frontera Norte de México, durante septiembre y octubre de 2013.



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de: Albergue del Desierto de Mexicali, Baja California y Casas YMCA para Menores (CYMM) de Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California. Septiembre y Octubre de 2013. Nota: los datos están expresados en porcentajes.

Explanation/Translation of Graphic

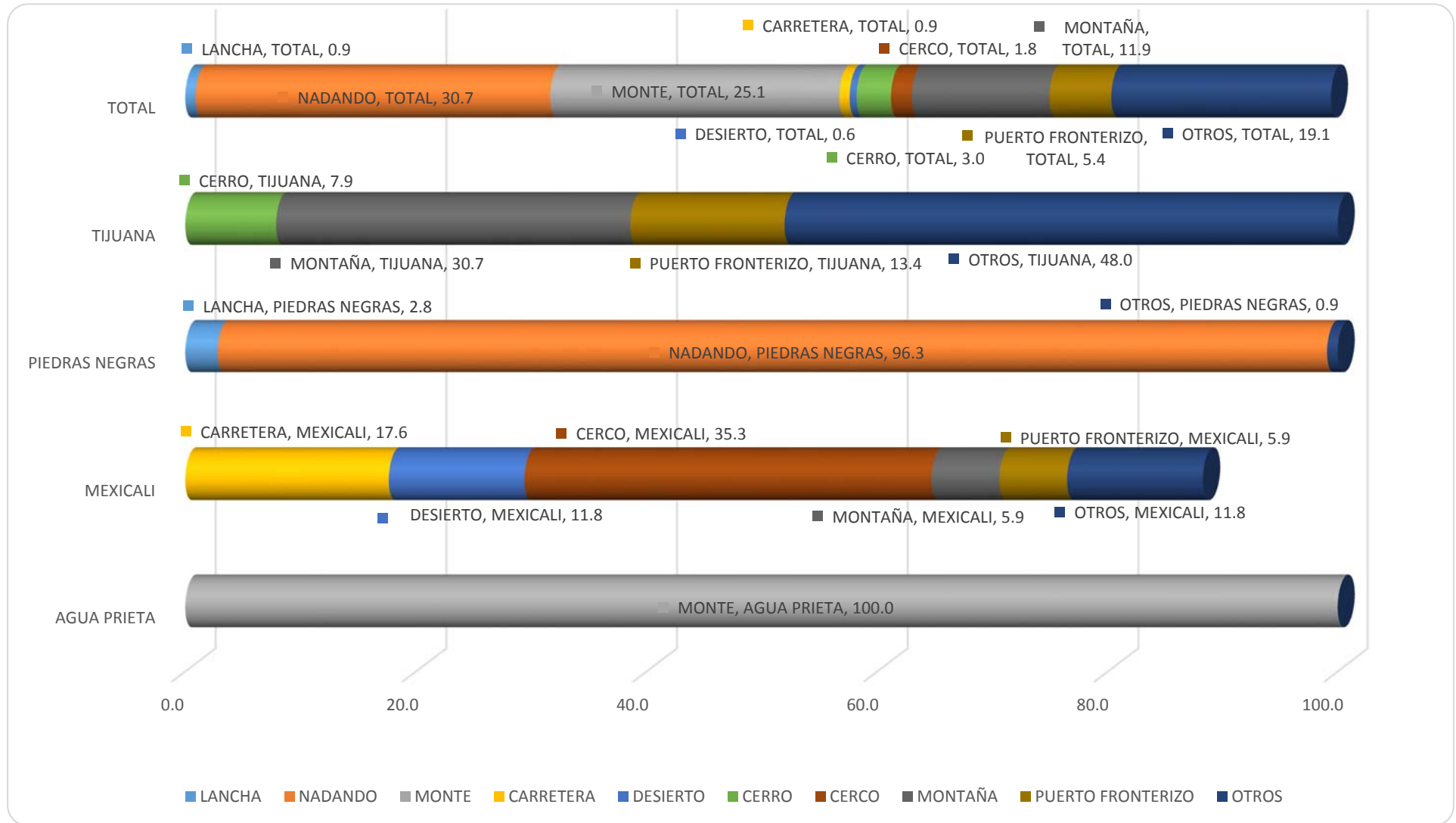
Graph 4: Home states in Mexico of children and adolescents served by four civil society organizations on the northern border of Mexico in September and October 2013. (Percentages)

Color-coded key:

Otros Estados = Other States

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from: The Desert Shelter of Mexicali, Baja California and YMCA Houses for Migrant Youth of Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, September and October, 2013. Note: information expressed in percentages.

Gráfico 5
Lugar de cruce o donde fueron detenidos por la Border Patrol los NNA atendidos por organizaciones civiles en cuatro ciudades de la Frontera Norte de México, durante septiembre y octubre de 2013.



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de: Albergue del Desierto de Mexicali, Baja California y Casas YMCA para Menores (CYMM) de Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California. Septiembre y Octubre de 2013. Nota: los datos están expresados en porcentajes.

Explanation/Translation of Graphic

Graph 5: Place of border crossing or place of detention by Border Patrol of children and adolescents served by civil society organizations in four cities on the northern border of Mexico, September and October 2013

Color-coded key:

TOTAL

BOAT, 0.9; SWIMMING, 30.7; BRUSH, 25.1; ROAD, 0.9; DESERT, 0.6; HILLS, 3.0; FENCE, 1.8; MOUNTAINS, 11.9; BORDER PORT, 5.4; OTHERS, 19.1

TIJUANA

HILLS, 7.9; MOUNTAINS, 30.7; BORDER PORT, 13.4; OTHERS, 48.0

PIEDRAS NEGRAS

BOAT, 2.8; SWIMMING, 96.3; OTHER, 0.9

MEXICALI

ROAD, 17.6; DESERT, 11.8; FENCE, 35.3; MOUNTAIN, 5.9; BORDER PORT, 5.9; OTHER, 11.8

AGUA PRIETA

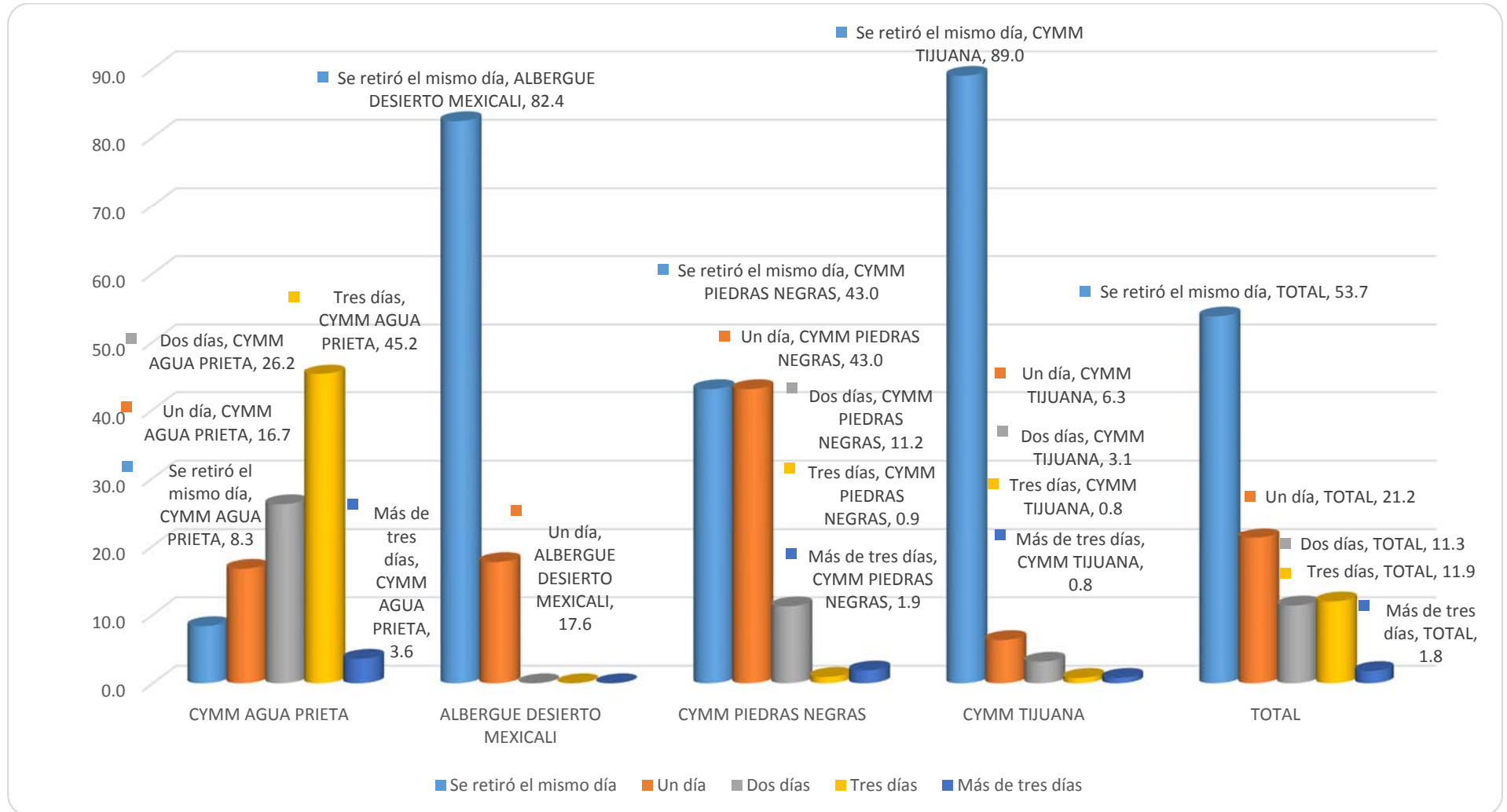
BRUSH, 100.0

Color-coded key:

BOAT; SWIMMING; BRUSH; ROAD; DESERT; HILLS; FENCE; MOUNTAINS; BORDER PORT; OTHER

Source: Author’s elaboration based on data from: The Desert Shelter of Mexicali, Baja California and YMCA Houses for Migrant Youth of Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, September and October, 2013. Note: information expressed in percentages.

Gráfico 6
 Tiempo de estancia en los albergues de los NNA atendidos por organizaciones civiles en cuatro ciudades de la Frontera Norte de México, durante septiembre y octubre de 2013.



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de: Albergue del Desierto de Mexicali, Baja California y Casas YMCA para Menores (CYMM) de Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California. Septiembre y Octubre de 2013.

Nota: los datos están expresados en porcentajes.

Explanation/Translation of Graphic

Graph 6: Length of time that children and adolescents stayed at shelters run by civil society organizations in four cities on the northern border of Mexico in September and October 2013. (Percentages)

Color-coded key:

AGUA PRIETA YMCA

8.3% left same day
 16.7% stayed 1 day
 26.2% stayed 2 days
 45.2% stayed 3 days
 3.6% more than 3 days

MEXICALI DESERT SHELTER

82.4% left same day
 17.6% stayed 1 day

PIEDRAS NEGRAS YMCA

43% left same day
 43% stayed 1 day
 11.2% stayed 2 days
 0.9% stayed 3 days
 1.9% stayed more than 3 days

TIJUANA YMCA

89% left same day
 6.3% stayed 1 day
 3.1% stayed 2 days
 0.8% more than 3 days
 0.8% stayed 3 days

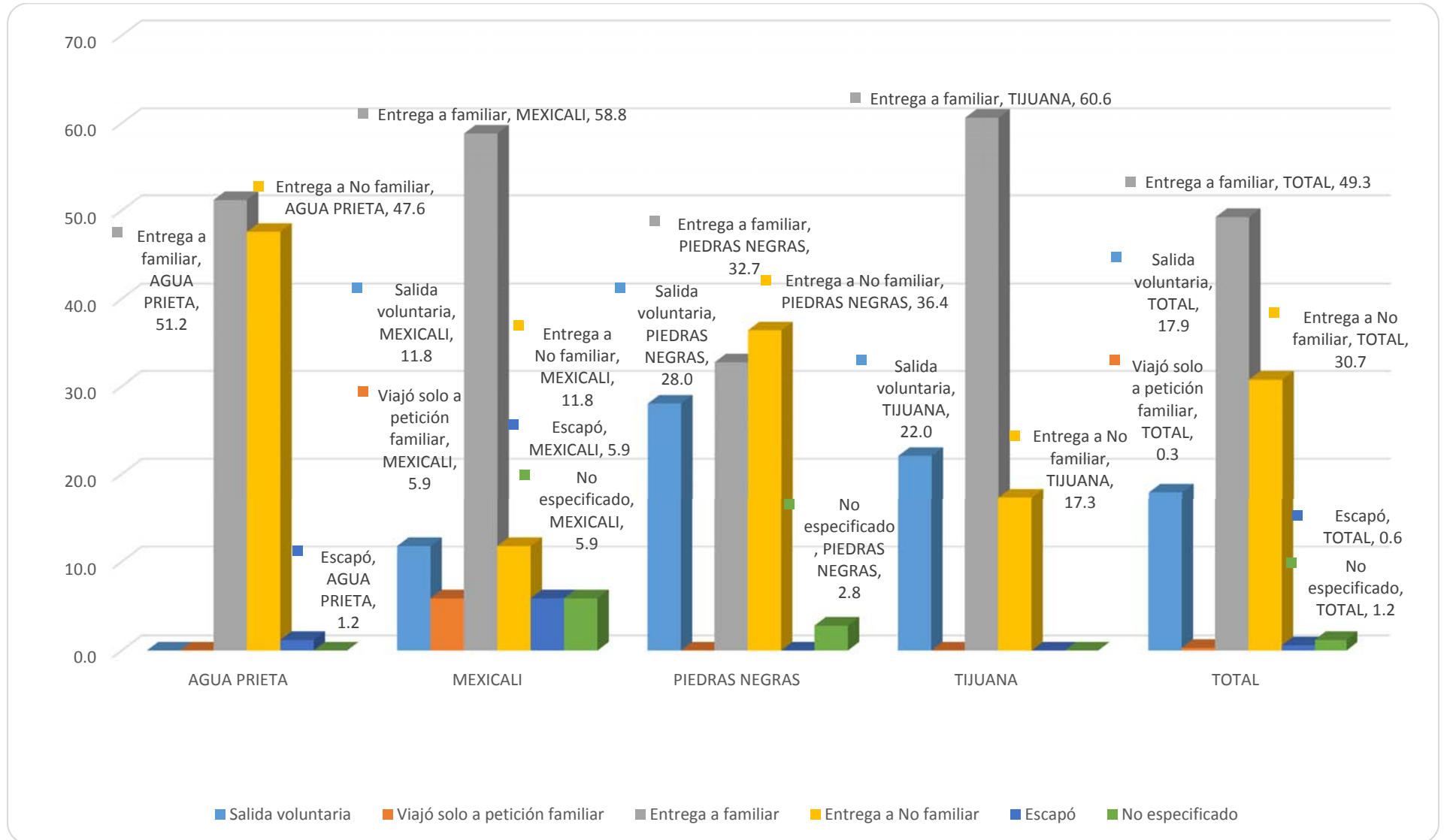
TOTAL

53.7% left same day
 21.2% stayed one day
 11.3% stayed 2 days
 11.9% stayed 3 days
 1.8% stayed more than 3 days

left the same day; stayed one day; stayed 2 days; stayed 3 days; stayed more than 3 days

Source: Author’s elaboration based on data from: The Desert Shelter of Mexicali, Baja California and YMCA Houses for Migrant Youth of Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, September and October, 2013. Note: information expressed in percentages.

Gráfico 7
Relación de parentesco de las personas que recibieron a los NNA a su salida de los albergues de organizaciones civiles en cuatro ciudades de la Frontera Norte de México, durante septiembre y octubre de 2013.



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de: Albergue del Desierto de Mexicali, Baja California y Casas YMCA para Menores (CYMM) de Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California. Septiembre y Octubre de 2013. Nota: los datos están expresados en porcentajes.

Graph 7

Family relationship of those who picked up the children and adolescents who were staying at shelters run by civil society organizations in four cities on the northern border of Mexico, September and October 2013. (Percentages)

Color-coded key:

AGUA PRIETA

51.2% picked up by family member

47.6% picked up by non-family

1.2% ran away

MEXICALI

11.8% voluntary departure

5.9% travelled alone at request of family

58.8% picked up by family member

11.8% picked up by non-family

5.9% ran away

5.9% not specified

PIEDRAS NEGRAS

28% voluntary departure

32.7% picked up by family member

36.4% picked up by non-family

2.8% not specified

TIJUANA

22% voluntary departure

60.6% picked up by family member

17.3% picked up by non-family

TOTAL

17.9% voluntary departure

0.3% travelled alone at request of family

49% picked up by family member

30.7% picked up by non-family

0.6% ran away

1.2% not specified

voluntary departure; travelled alone at request of family; picked up by family member; picked up by non-family; ran away; not specified

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from: The Desert Shelter of Mexicali, Baja California and YMCA Houses for Migrant Youth of Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Agua Prieta, Sonora; Tijuana, Baja California, September and October, 2013. Note: information expressed in percentages.