

Country Brief: Mexico

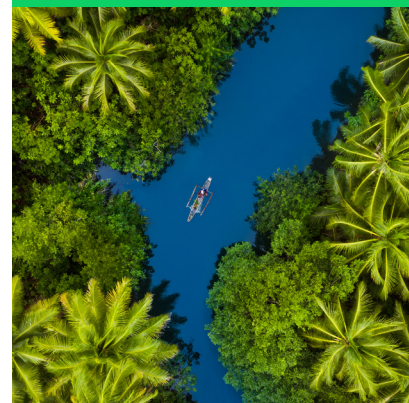
Mexico has strong environmental laws and growing climate policy ambition, but a persistent gap between legislation and implementation limits what young people can access. Climate education remains optional in schools and is treated as 'filler.' Curricula are disconnected from practical application, and graduates describe hitting a wall when they try to use what they learned. Rural and Indigenous communities in states like Chiapas face layered exclusion through geography, connectivity, language, and cultural norms that restrict women's autonomy. Finance barriers for women-led green enterprise are particularly acute. Institutional fragmentation means education, labour, and climate actors work in silos. Youth migration from rural areas is eroding traditional knowledge systems and community cohesion.

At a glance

- Mexican respondents in the global survey (n=21) included a notable rural and peri-urban share (around two in five). All rated green skills as important or very important for their future livelihoods.
- More than half perceived low demand for green jobs in Mexico, the most pessimistic perception among the five countries. Financial barriers and lack of local jobs were the top two challenges.
- Gender or cultural biases were cited as a barrier by one in three Mexican respondents, the highest proportion of any country, consistent with strong qualitative evidence on gendered exclusion.
- Women were identified as the group most at risk of being left behind (by nearly two in three respondents). Only two respondents considered current programmes inclusive.

Key Findings

- **Climate learning is marginal, theoretical, and disconnected from careers.** An educator described environmental topics as 'filler' rather than core learning (Educator, Mexico). A veterinary graduate reflected: 'In my first degree, this topic was never really discussed: in what way could what we're doing affect the environment?' (Youth, Mexico). It was observed at the Launchpads: 'We have strong environmental laws and curricula, but no jobs to match. We learn theory, but never how to build a project or secure funding.'
- **Rural and Indigenous youth face layered, compounding exclusion.** Youth ask: 'How are you going to find out about a call for applications if where you live there's no internet and you don't have a computer?' (Youth, Mexico). In Chiapas, a diarist described migration driven by agricultural decline: 'This decline is causing the migration of people to the north, abandoning their homes, their family and their traditions' (Youth diary, Mexico). In some communities there is no higher education beyond basic schooling.
- **Women face acute finance barriers and cultural constraints on participation.** A sector expert noted it is 'about 40% harder for a woman to seek funding or capital' (Sector Expert, Mexico). Cultural norms shape autonomy directly: 'Because that's what the family decides, not even the girls; by 15 they are already married' (Educator, Mexico). A diary entry described: 'Always has to be the brother. No autonomy. No independence' (Youth diary, Mexico). One in three Mexican respondents cited gender or cultural biases as a barrier, the highest of any country.
- **Communities distrust government programmes because trust has been broken.** Lisbeth observed at the Launchpads: 'Communities resist government programmes because trust has been broken too many times.' Nora Nino added: 'For youth from low-income families, it's not just lack of access; it's the belief that higher education isn't for them.' Arizbeth Figueroa identified the skills needed to rebuild trust: 'Leadership rooted in empathy, communication, decision-making, critical and systemic thinking, and self-confidence' (Youth, Mexico).



“When leaving the university I hit a wall with ‘And now how do I apply this?’”
 Youth diarist
 (Earth Sciences student), Mexico

Spotlight: Mapping land, recovering culture in Chiapas

A youth diarist from Chiapas used GIS tools to map her region’s climate vulnerabilities and in doing so uncovered the cultural significance of the land. She described a river as ‘a spiritual space very well preserved to carry traditions and offerings; knowing from their traditions’ (Youth diary, Mexico). A regional bioinputs facility was using the same materials of the region for restoring the territory, blending traditional practice with modern science. Her experience also exposed barriers: ‘Most specialised courses were costly, in another language, or hard to find’ (Youth diary, Mexico). And as a young woman in a technical field, she found that ‘many strategic spaces were dominated by older professionals who tended to dismiss youth ideas’ (Youth diary, Mexico).

Key Recommendations

Recommendation	Evidence basis	Who should act
Shift climate/ environment learning from optional to core.	Educator describes environmental topics as ‘filler.’ Graduates describe no practical application. Launchpad speakers confirm: ‘strong laws and curricula, but no jobs to match.’	Secretariat of Public Education (SEP); state education authorities; universities; teacher training colleges.
Establish regional development hubs aligned to local economic vocation.	Sector experts call for training tied to local industries. A sector expert urged: ‘We need to go directly to the communities, create development hubs based on the natural vocation of each region.’	Secretariat of Economy; state environment and economic development agencies; CONACYT; local enterprise networks.
Expand inclusion for rural and low-connectivity youth through offline-first design.	Youth describe digital and geographic exclusion. Diary evidence from Chiapas describes communities with no higher education. Peri-urban and rural respondents made up two in five of the Mexico sample.	SEP; Secretariat of Welfare (Bienestar); community intermediaries; NGOs with rural presence.
Strengthen women’s access to green enterprise finance and leadership.	Sector expert: ‘40% harder for women to seek funding.’ Early marriage and family control restrict girls’ autonomy. Women identified as most vulnerable group by Mexican respondents.	Nacional Financiera (NAFIN); INMUJERES; microfinance institutions; enterprise support agencies.
Reduce institutional silos through a single operational delivery mechanism.	Interviews describe fragmentation across education, labour, climate, and economic development actors. Laws exist without coordinated implementation.	Federal coordination bodies; SEMARNAT; SEP; Secretariat of Labour (STPS).
Protect Indigenous knowledge through ethical engagement and IP protocols.	Youth diary evidence on cultural knowledge embedded in land stewardship. There was a call for visibility of Indigenous success stories. Communities require benefit-sharing and consent.	SEMARNAT; National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI); programme funders; research institutions.

Source: Country survey respondents: n=21. Supplemented by key informant interviews, youth diaries, and Innovation Launchpad discussions.

“For youth from low-income families, it’s not just lack of access; it’s the belief that higher education isn’t for them.”
 Youth participant, Innovation Launchpad, Mexico

