

Study: Guatemala's tortilla industry depends on girls' labor

Few if any are paid the official minimum wage, and some are paid nothing at all. They usually have no time to study and already face discrimination as Indigenous women from rural villages, so tortilla shops become dead-end jobs.

Those are among the findings of a study by the Pan American Development Foundation, a branch of the Organization of American States, that surveyed conditions in 292 tortilla shops in Guatemala City and four other cities across the country.

The conditions in the emblematic shops are a sort of microcosm of the hardships that face many in Guatemala, a nation where the rural poverty rate is near 75%, nearly 1 million children or adolescents are in the labor force and many Indigenous youths migrate to the cities seeking money to help their families. The report found people 20 or younger – a few as young as 10 – working at 160 of the tortilla shops, and based its findings on interviews with 92 of them.