

The Tip of the Iceberg

Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers and Their Children

*The Study Report on the Effect of the Coronavirus
Pandemic on Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers,
Their Families, and on Child Labour*



Executive Summary

THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

THE STUDY REPORT ON THE EFFECT OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON SEASONAL MIGRANT AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND ON CHILD LABOUR

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INTRODUCTION

This executive summary of our study “The Tip of the Iceberg: Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers and Their Children” is a summary of “The Study Report on the Effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers and Their Families and on Child Labour” (2021). After the spread of the COVID-19/coronavirus across Türkiye in early 2020, several measures were taken to ensure the mobility of seasonal migrant agricultural workers and the deceleration of the coronavirus. These measures included support for temporary tent settlements for seasonal migrant agricultural workers from public organizations and municipalities and various national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although our study finds that 69 percent (152 out of 219 households) of respondents stated that they benefited from various services provided amid the coronavirus pandemic, 95 percent of these respondents indicated that they received service only ‘once’ during the course of the study from March 2020 to September 2020. Of those items provided once were masks (42.5 percent), gloves (25 percent), hand sanitizer (12.5 percent) and water and soap (10 percent).

As the larger study reveals, this lack of adequate and continual support and limited social protection mechanisms negatively affected the seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children. It led to an increase in child labour.¹ The following summary of the more extensive report highlights the adverse effects—economic, social, and psycho-social—of the COVID-19 pandemic upon this vulnerable group and makes recommendations to mitigate harm to the workers and their children for the future.

¹ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and ILO. (2020), COVID-19 and Child Labour: A time of crisis, a time to act
<https://data.unicef.org/resources/covid-19-and-child-labour-a-time-of-crisis-a-time-to-act/>

Overview of COVID-19 and conditions of seasonal migrant agricultural labour

The conditions for seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children have been a long-standing issue for Türkiye. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, like many other countries, Türkiye took steps to decelerate the coronavirus spread and protect its supply chain for necessary foodstuffs from agricultural sources. As a result, during the pandemic, the effects on seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children in Türkiye were twofold. First, to protect various aspects of its supply chain in production, processing-and-shipment and food security, seasonal migrant agricultural workers continued to work despite social distance practices and ‘stay home’ mandates. Described by both the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)² and the International Labour Organization (ILO)³ as the most vulnerable labour force, in many cases, seasonal migrant agricultural workers were excluded from restrictions against the spread of coronavirus. As a result, they could not benefit largely from those means of support provided. Second, the suspension of schools to protect populations and decelerate COVID-19 affected the children of seasonal migrant agricultural workers more than other communities of children because the children of seasonal migrant agricultural workers lacked the infrastructure and funds to participate in at-home schooling or educational activities. Since there was a suspension of school, more children became child labourers.

Most immediately, measures to decelerate the spread of the coronavirus had two main effects on the seasonal migrant agricultural workers, their families, and children. On the one hand, the effects of the pandemic on seasonal migrant agricultural workers were economic. Workers experienced an increase in their expenses and a decrease in their income. On the other hand, these economic effects, combined with restricted access to education for their children, led to more children having to participate in child labour either because of financial need or as an alternative to the suspension of schools. Furthermore, these two main effects, in combination with the complications of fear of the catching and spreading the coronavirus and poor living and hygiene conditions within the accommodations of the seasonal migrant workers, their families and children, increased stress and anxiety that led to additional psychological issues for them and their children.

In any case, because of the conditions during the coronavirus pandemic and the potential medium- and long-term adverse effects on this particularly vulnerable group, it is essential to establish how the variety of newly arising poverty and risk factors have coincided with one another on individuals, households, and this vulnerable community in Türkiye.

² FAO (2020), Social protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/fr/c/ca8561en/>

³ ILO (2020), ILO Sectoral Brief: COVID-19 and the impact on agriculture and food security. https://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/publications/WCMS_742023/lang--en/index.htm

General labour conditions, participants, and actors of the study

Based on Development Workshop surveys and current information in this field, while the actual number is unknown, roughly half a million persons per year are estimated to be on the road and away from home and involved in labour-intensive agricultural production every year in modern-day Türkiye.⁴ In most cases, the seasonal agricultural migration involves all family members, with all members of the family who are fit to work in fields or orchards. Moreover, to maximize household income, households that work intensively for six to eight months per year have their children at a certain age and become part of the agricultural labour sector. Therefore, active contribution by children to the seasonal agricultural production in the form of child labour is relatively common and has the greatest risk of an increase due to economic and social conditions related to the coronavirus pandemic.

There are three types of labour in agricultural production in Türkiye:

- self-employed and unpaid domestic workers
- local agricultural workers
- seasonal migrant agricultural workers.

Unpaid domestic workers are family members involved in agricultural production in an agricultural field or an orchard of their family. Agricultural workers are those who work in vegetable production, animal husbandry, beekeeping, forestry, or fishing production in the persons' hometowns to generate income, even if it is for one day and who do not do such labour or jobs regularly. Local agricultural workers leave home for work in the morning and return home regularly after completion of agricultural labour. Seasonal migrant agricultural workers leave their homes, travel to another settlement, and live there to do agricultural work. This report focuses on the seasonal migrant agricultural workers, their families, and children.

For this study, the seasonal migrant agricultural labour in Türkiye involves three main actors: employers (field/orchard owners, traders, private companies, large-scale food and seed companies), agricultural intermediaries and agricultural workers. Agricultural intermediaries are known as *elci* or *dayıbaşı*, who organize seasonal agricultural labour and bring labour supply and demand together. The working procedures of such intermediaries are governed by the Regulation on Job Intermediation in Agriculture⁵, and they shall obtain a certificate to serve as an agricultural intermediary. However, many agricultural intermediaries do not currently hold a certification. Furthermore, while agriculture was

⁴ Development Workshop Cooperative (2020) *Virus or Poverty? Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers and Their Children, and Vegetative Production*. <https://www.ka.org.tr/dosyalar/file/Yayinlar/Cocuk-Haklari/Raporlar/Virus-or-Poverty.pdf>

⁵ Official Gazette of Turkish Republic. *Legislation for Agricultural Intermediaries*. Date: 27.5.2010. Number:27593, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2010/05/20100527-4.htm>

included as a line of work under the first Labour Law in 2003, most agricultural workers are not covered by the law as it applies to agricultural businesses that employ 51 or more employees.⁶ With this being the case, the labour of almost all the seasonal agricultural workers is informal and precarious.

Household and work conditions for seasonal migrant worker households

While the means of living accommodation varies from province to province, the seasonal migrant workers and their families usually stay in temporary tents acquired and established by their means with their provisions and supplies. The workers and their families live in tents that they place near the fields or the orchards or on land adjacent to the working fields or orchards where they work. Roadsides and environs of irrigation canals are also sites for household worker tents. Such areas pose various risks for seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children in terms of their safety.

As a rule, almost all workplaces and, thus, areas for household tents within the temporary tent settlements lack decent and adequate recreational areas for families and children. Electrical power is limited, and lighting is inadequate for safety. Furthermore, there are usually no dining halls, restrooms, wash basins, clean drinking and/or utility water. When the workers and members of their families need to use a toilet and take a shower are met through makeshift structures that the workers and their families build themselves. Many studies have found that waste of the tent households is rarely collected, disinfection services of environmental health are not provided, and the households do not have access to an adequate and functional wastewater system, which poses a risk for both workers and public health.⁷ In addition, occupational health and safety measures are not adopted in line with the nature of the work. Moreover, workers work 10-11 hours per day, seven days per week, if there is work to do and weather conditions are favorable.

During the study, from March 2020 to September 2020, temporary public accommodations were provided for some workers. However, the workers who could live within these public accommodations were limited. Therefore, most seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their families lived in the temporary tent settlements where the seasonal migrant agricultural workers provided their accommodations. Furthermore, while the tent settlements are labelled as 'temporary,' there is no way to know how many workers and their families maintain their tent households for the entire year. Generally, the living and working conditions were inhumane.

⁶ Development Workshop Cooperative (2018) Analysis of Legislative Gaps and Recommendations in the Context of Preventing Child Labour in Agriculture. <https://www.ka.org.tr/dosyalar/file/Yayinlar/Cocuk-Haklari/Raporlar/Analysis-of-Legislative-Gaps-and-Recommendations.pdf>

⁷ Development Workshop Cooperative (2018) Poverty, Migration and Child Labour: The Socio-Economic Profile Of Seasonal Agricultural Worker Households. <https://www.ka.org.tr/dosyalar/file/Yayinlar/Cocuk-Haklari/Raporlar/Poverty-Migration-and-Child-Labor-The-Socio-Economic-Profile-of-Seasonal-Agricultural-Worker-Households.pdf>

Overall state of child labour in Türkiye

The official figures on child labour in Türkiye have been published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) regularly since 1994. The four child labour surveys conducted in 1994, 2006, 2012 and 2019 are important to gain insight into the state of child labour in Türkiye.⁸ The last three surveys show that the number of cases of child labour was 890,000 in 2006, rising to 893,000 in 2012 and declining to 720,000 in 2019. On the one hand, the share of child labour in the agricultural and industrial sectors has declined. However, on the other hand, child labour has risen in the service sector, and children are now typically employed ‘based on salary or per diem’. The 2019 Child Labour Survey results were released on March 31, 2020.

The 2019 survey reveals that there are 720,000 working children aged 5–17 years, of which 79.7 percent are aged 15–17 years, 15.9 percent are 12–14 years, and 4.4 percent are aged 5–11 years. The figures do not include child labourers under international or temporary protection and protection-seeking Syrians and other nationals living in Türkiye⁹.

The fluctuation of the percentage of child labour in the agricultural sector, from 36.6 percent in 2006 to 44.8 percent in 2012 and 30.8 percent in 2019, indicates that the effects of Syrian refugees arriving in Türkiye on child labour should be assessed.¹⁰ Of the working children, 64.1 percent are aged 5–14 years and are employed in the agricultural sector. The reasons given for the employment of children are listed as follows: (1) “Contributing to economic activities” (35.9 percent), (2) “Learning how to do a job and acquire a profession” (34.4 percent), (3) “Contributing to household income” (23.2 percent) and (4) “Meeting their own needs” (6.4 percent).

Nevertheless, child labour is a major ongoing issue within the seasonal migrant agricultural sector. Although children’s right to education is violated as part of the seasonal migrant agricultural migration, and children become more vulnerable during migration, the Republic of Türkiye describes this form of child labour as one of the worst forms of child labour.¹¹ While the minimum age for employment is 18 years old, the extent of child labour in

8 TURKSTAT Child Labor Force Survey 2012 (April 2013). <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Cocuk-Isgucu-Anketi-Sonuclari-2012-13659>

9 Since 2011, many Syrian refugees, mostly women and children, have migrated to Türkiye. The children of these refugees who are granted Temporary Protection Status also face the risk of child labour not only in agriculture but also in manufacturing and service sectors. For more information, see The Rapid Evaluation Reports of Child Labour in Footwear and Furniture Manufacturing, published by the Development Workshop Cooperative in 2019 (Development Workshop Cooperative (2019a and 2019b). In addition, Syrian child workers working as seasonal migrant agricultural workers are mentioned in the report “Poverty, Migration and Child Labour: The Socio-Economic Profile of Seasonal Agricultural Worker Households” published by the Development Workshop Cooperative in 2019 (Development Workshop Cooperative, 2019)

10 Yalçın, S. (2016), Syrian Child Workers in Türkiye, Turkish Policy Quarterly, C.15, No.3; Harunoğulları, M. (2016), Syrian Refugee Child Labor and Their Problems: The Case of Kilis, Migration Journal, C.3, No.1, p. 29-63.

11 Ministry of Labor and Social Security (2017), National Program Against Child Labor. https://www.csgeb.gov.tr/media/1322/cocukisciligimucadele_2017_2023_tr.pdf

labour-intensive agricultural production gradually expands as the poverty of households increases.

Thus, economic conditions and unstable households that are transitory concerning migration based on the agricultural seasons lead to social issues for those children who manage to enroll in school and reduce those children's opportunity for retention in schools. Lack of education, the opportunity for full integration with peers in school, and financial challenges faced by the households of seasonal migrant workers pave the way for children of these agricultural workers to be employed in fields and orchards. Such labour leaves children out of school, and hard work and long working hours deprive them of healthy physical and psycho-social development. Since the integration of migrant workers such as Syrians who are under temporary protection is even less favorable, the migrant families who work in the agriculture sector face the same vulnerabilities as the Turkish households.

Child labour concerns over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic

The United Nations reports that 160 million children are subjected to child labour. Without mitigation measures, based on the potential increases because of the global coronavirus pandemic, the number of children in child labour could rise from 160 million in 2020 to 168.9 million by the end of 2022. Moreover, a joint statement by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and International Labour Organization (ILO) highlights the fact that the achievements made to prevent child labour across the world over the past twenty years face a major threat¹². What is even more striking is that the UNICEF-ILO report on Global statistics reports that most of these children who are engaged in child labour work in agricultural production.¹³

As the World Vision report indicates, the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on children will come to light over time and estimates that 85 million children will face physical, emotional, and sexual violence across the globe. The report also found that 177 countries have suspended school activities, and these actions have affected 73 percent of the students (1.5 billion children, according to the Human Rights Watch's report) across the world.¹⁴ Furthermore, as the World Vision report indicates, such actions as closing schools intended to protect children have ironically made them vulnerable to many risks.¹⁵ The warnings of

¹² UNICEF and ILO (2020), COVID-19 and Child Labour: A time of crisis, a time to act. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/covid-19-and-child-labour-a-time-of-crisis-a-time-to-act/>

¹³ HRW. "Why Covid-19 Choices Are Critical for Children". 24 April 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/24/why-covid-19-choices-are-critical-children>

¹⁴ World Vision. (2020), Covid-19 Aftershocks: A Perfect Storm: Millions More Children at Risk of Violence under Lockdown and into the 'New Normal'. https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Aftershocks%20FINAL%20VERSION_0.pdf

¹⁵ World Vision. (2020), Covid-19 Aftershocks: A Perfect Storm: Millions More Children at Risk of Violence under Lockdown and into the 'New Normal'. https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Aftershocks%20FINAL%20VERSION_0.pdf

ILO and UNICEF concerning child labour become even more relevant given that the World Bank estimates the financial crisis and contraction caused by the coronavirus pandemic will result in nearly 150 million people being forced over the poverty threshold by the end of 2021.¹⁶

The Study

Beginning in March 2020, the Development Workshop initiated domestic and international monitoring efforts and conducted surveys to gain insight into the situation across different regions. The data collected constituted significant inputs for this study. This study is intended to establish how and to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children from the social (access to social life, protection, and access to support and services), economic (income instability and household debt), educational (children's access to education and their attendance) and psycho-social (stress and anxiety) perspectives. The study focuses on gaining insight into how child labour, a significant problem in the seasonal agricultural sector in Türkiye, has been affected by the pandemic.

Seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children are a vulnerable community. They are at one of the highest risks for job security, food security, hygiene, healthcare and education and access to public services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, associated risks and health concerns increased the difficulties for this vulnerable community. The COVID-19 pandemic has made working, housing, and living conditions for seasonal migrant agricultural workers more challenging, and their children's access to education and social protection mechanisms is further limited. With an increase in expenses and decrease in income of households during the COVID-19 pandemic, households are more likely to experience economic shock and increased indebtedness; thus, the children of many households become a part of the agricultural labour sector. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are closed or limited, and as a result, the risk for child marriage and child labour grows. Thus, for children who have no educational access or who drop out of school, the children's livelihood capacity diminishes.¹⁷

Methodology

Using a mixed research method that combines qualitative and quantitative instruments, this study examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to September 2020 on the vulnerable Turkish and Syrian seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their

¹⁶ The World Bank. "COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021" 7 October 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021#:~:text=The%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic%20is>

¹⁷ UN (2020), Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children. <https://gdc.unicef.org/resource/uns-policy-brief-impact-covid-19-children>

children in the Adana and Mersin provinces in Türkiye. Moreover, the study proceeded in two phases. First, In the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, a communication platform was established to monitor the developments across Türkiye. Through desk review and by examining research that began in March 2020 that screened and monitored seasonal migrant agricultural labour activities in Türkiye and around the world, researchers focused on research that could provide background information on child labour. This information was utilized to design survey organs and in-depth interview questions to capture data to corroborate the desk reviews. Second, the study uses five data collection tools: (a) face-to-face questionnaires, (b) in-depth interviews (test group), (c) in-depth interviews (control group),(d) focus group meetings, and interviews with key informants and organization representatives.

The survey's general framework and methodological tools were developed based on the desk review and implemented in phase two. Official figures regarding seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their family members in Türkiye are highly limited. Therefore, the households and temporary settlements of tents included in the study were designated based on the purposive sampling and the budget and time frame of the study. As part of the study, face-to-face interviews were held in September 2020 with 159 Turkish and 60 Syrian households with children aged 5–17 years and lived in a total of 26 temporary tents in the towns of Adana and Mersin. In addition, 57 in-depth interviews were held with the parents, boy and girl children aged 14–17 years. Moreover, the study conducted four focus group interviews with a total of 20 boy and girl children aged 8–17 years who reside in temporary tents. In addition, the members of the households who could not go to work and stayed in their hometowns due to the pandemic were included in the survey as a control group. To this end, 20 people representing 15 households that reside in Viranşehir and Eyyübiye in Şanlıurfa participated in the in-depth interviews. In addition, 25 key informants and organization representatives (NGOs, public and professional institutions, and teachers) were interviewed as part of the study.

From the face-to-face questionnaire with 219 household representatives surveyed and collecting the demographic data of the 1,561 persons who live in these households, researchers were able to corroborate the desk reviews and establish the risks to seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children in the areas of social (access to social life, protection and access to support and services), economic (income instability and household debt), and educational (children's access to education and their attendance) factors. Meanwhile, the in-depth interviews provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the social and psycho-social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on a vulnerable group that experiences stress and anxiety even in the best conditions. In addition, the focus groups reveal cultural norms and expectations that contribute to ongoing and increased conditions of poverty and the continuation of child labour. For example, explaining 'child labour' as a cultural custom himself, one participant says, "We were working in the field when I was a

little child. Years passed. Now my children work in the field.” In addition, these in-depth interviews also reveal other cultural traditions such as ‘blood money’¹⁸ and ‘bridewealth’¹⁹ that are experienced as economic shocks and contribute to household and family indebtedness. For families and households already experiencing financial strain, having to pay ‘blood money’ or ‘bridewealth’ would register as an economic shock. In both instances, a family household would need additional debt when experiencing these economic shocks. As the face-to-face questionnaires and in-depth interviews reveal, economic hardship is prevalent before and during the time of the coronavirus pandemic.

Guiding the main questions of the study as they relate to the state of the seasonal migrant workers before and after the COVID-19 pandemic are six interrelated themes: (1) demographics of the households, (2) access to economic and social resources, support and public services, (3) changes in working and living conditions over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, (4) experiences of seasonal migrant workers and their children from mental health perspective under the pandemic conditions, (5) changes in access to education and attendance of seasonal migrant agricultural workers’ children before and after the COVID-19 pandemic and (6) child labour in seasonal agricultural work during the pandemic.

The research team conducted a pilot study in August 2020 to minimize response error or invalid data to test possible response formatting problems and avoid sensitive or biased language. The questionnaire was revised and finalized based on this pilot study before conducting the fieldwork. Before the study, an orientation was held to provide survey guidance for the field team to explain the study’s main purpose, clarify critical questions and coding, timeframe, survey filing and completing methods, tasks, and responsibilities, and working principles for conducting the research. The field team leader monitored this guidance during the fieldwork stage, and the questionnaires were completed under supervision and coordination. During the fieldwork, in-depth interviews, focus group meetings, and key informant/organization interviews were conducted by the research experts.

18 ‘Blood money’: a colloquial phrase used for the financial compensation paid to the victim or the family of a victim in the cases of intentional or accidental killing or injuring.

19 ‘Bridewealth’: payment made by a groom or his family to the family of the bride to ratify a marriage, which might be in money, property, or any other form.

Study Limitations

As official figures regarding the number of seasonal migrant agricultural workers in Türkiye are limited, it is quite challenging to design an entirely representative and random sample. With this being the case, the survey sampling strategy was designed based on purposeful sampling in consideration of the length and budgetary means of the study. One of the main limitations of the sampling is the poor capability of representation and generalization of the findings. To overcome this limitation, the survey was conducted using a mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative data. The confidentiality of the respondents and data privacy in the data collection phase were respected. The respondents were informed of the survey process and how the data would be used and that their participation was voluntary.

The field surveys were conducted based on the recommendations set forth in the Scientific Committee of the Ministry of Health on *Actions to be Taken to be Protected from COVID-19 in Provinces where Seasonal Agricultural Workers Travel to Work*. The persons interviewed in person were provided with a mask throughout the field survey. The field survey team underwent coronavirus antibody tests regularly. However, no survey could be conducted from September 3-17, 2020, in the temporary tent settlements in Tuzla (Adana/Karatas) and Tabaklar (Adana/Karatas), where cases of coronavirus infection were reported.

As the survey coincided with the high agricultural production season, the household members were interviewed during their breaks in the fields or at night. Two native speakers of Arabic pollsters were included in the field team. Parents granted permission for their children's participation in the study. To ensure children participants' comfort, before in-depth interviews with children, a short conversation took place, and children were informed about the purpose of the study, and they participated voluntarily. In addition, some warm-up games and ice-breaker questions were used to help children feel comfortable. The interviews with key informants and organization representatives were conducted via phone and online in compliance with restrictions against the coronavirus pandemic.

Key Findings

Demographics and household responses

The study includes 219 households participating in the questionnaire, with 159 Turkish nationals interviewed and 60 Syrian nationals under temporary protection being interviewed.²⁰ Of the respondents, 38.8 percent are men with an average age of 40; meanwhile,

20 The fieldwork of this study was usually carried out between 10 am and 7 pm. Because the adult male household members usually work on farms or gardens particularly until 5 pm, the respondents interviewed before this hour mostly consisted of those who do not work or stay at a temporary tent city for other reasons (health issues, child care, etc.) during the fieldwork hours. For this reason, female household representatives have a higher rate in gender distribution.

62.2 percent of respondents are women. Household members and children total 1561 persons, with 58 percent of these households including children aged 0–17 years.

For this study, family types can be understood based on household sizes. In the classical approach, the family types are based on the relativity between household members. In this framework, the family type is divided into two main categories as ‘extended family’ and ‘nuclear family’.²¹ This study uses ‘household’ as the unit of analysis and defines it as a structure that consists of people who live under the same roof, share the same food, and move together at the time of the study.²²

According to the definitions given above, 157 households (71.7 percent) are in a ‘nuclear family’ form consisting of parents and unmarried children. Among the ‘nuclear family’ form, 26.8 percent of these households are Syrian, and 73.2 percent are Turkish. The average number of children (aged 0–17 years) is 4.3 percent and 4.2 percent in Syrian and Turkish households, respectively. In 219 households, the rate of school-age children (aged 5–17 years) is 47.5 percent.

Average household sizes of seasonal migrant agricultural workers are above the general Türkiye average. Consistent with previous studies, this study shows that the average size of Turkish and Syrian households is seven persons. The smallest household comprises two persons, while the largest comprises 14 persons. The most encountered households are six, seven and eight persons. When all the households are considered, the average number of children aged 0–17 years per household is four.

Marital status of household members

Of the 219 households, 90.4 percent of the interviewed representatives are married. Among household members aged 18 years and above, 70.8 percent are married, and 26 percent are single. The rate of single members is 75.7 percent aged 18–24 years; 7 percent in the age group of persons aged 25–34 years; and zero percent in the age group of persons aged 35–44 years. The average age is 20 years old for single men and women, whereas the average is 38 years old for married women and 42 years old for married men. During the study, it was stated that two girls under 18 years of age were ‘married’ and one girl under 18 years of age was ‘divorced’. The two ‘married’ girls are 16 years of age, and the “divorced” girl is 17 years of age.

21 The extended family is considered vertical when multiple generations live together including parents, married and unmarried children, and grandchildren; horizontal when various degrees of relatives are incorporated into the nuclear family; and joint when different nuclear families live together. Nuclear family is the type that includes only the parents and unmarried children. (https://cdn-acikogretim.istanbul.edu.tr/auzefcontent/19_20_Bahar/sosyolojiye_giris_2/2/index.html retrieved November 1, 2020)

22 The ‘household’ definition used in the 2016 Family Structure Study conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute applies for this study as well: ‘Household is a unit that includes one or more people, related or not related, who live in the same residence, meet their basic needs together and are engaged in household services and management.’ (<https://tuikweb.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=21869> retrieved November 1, 2020)

Educational status of household members

As for the educational background of the persons interviewed as a representative of their households, illiteracy among women was 61.2 percent and illiteracy among men was 23.5 percent. The overall illiteracy rate was 46.6 percent of the household respondents. Of those who are elementary school graduates, 30.6 percent are men, and 10.4 percent are women. The attendance rate for secondary education and beyond is low among men and women. There are 742 children aged 5–17 (with 50.7 percent being boys and 49.3 percent being girls). Among the school-age children, 46.7 percent attend primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school; 21.5 percent have already dropped out of school, and 21.6 percent have never been enrolled in school. Forty-four percent or 160 of the school-aged children who have not been enrolled in school belong to Turkish households. Meanwhile, 56 percent of the school-aged children who have not been enrolled in school belong to Syrian households. Children who have not been enrolled in school are usually aged 5–9 years. Two of the primary reasons for not enrolling school-aged children in school are that the children are enrolled in school at a later age, and children have problems accessing school. The latter is particularly true for Syrian children.

The interviews with the household respondents revealed that the coronavirus pandemic affected enrolment and dropout rates of children. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, there may be a delay in enrolling children who will start primary school, especially. Nearly half of children aged 5–9 years, or 44.5 percent of 238 children, are primary school students. The data indicate that the school dropout rate of children aged 10–14 years increased to 20.5 percent, or 317 children in this age group. The rate of children in this age group defined as primary school students is 17.7 percent due to late school enrolment. Most children aged 10–14 years is 40.1 percent and attend lower secondary school. Nearly half of the children aged 15–17 years are ‘school dropouts’ at 49.3 percent. The educational level with the highest dropout rate is the lower secondary school at 25.7 percent. Attendance to upper secondary school education for those children aged 15–17 years old is very low at 15 percent. Based on the interviews, the educational status of children in Syrian households aged 5–17 years is more disadvantaged than their Turkish peers.

The Turkish household respondents indicate that seasonal migrant agricultural workers work on average for 17 years. The length of such employment for Syrian households is, on average, 5.5 years. Given that 60 percent of the Syrian households moved to Türkiye in 2014 and 2015, it is safe to say that most of the households have been employed for seasonal agricultural production starting from the early days of their settlement in the country. More than half of the household members work as seasonal migrant agricultural workers, and 21 percent of those 18 years old are unemployed.

Access to support during the pandemic and needs

Of the 219 households, 152 (69.9 percent) household respondents reported that they had been a beneficiary of various supports provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, these respondents reported that such support is not delivered to every tent settlement, and support is not distributed equally among seasonal agricultural workers. Respondents indicate that the cleaning and hygiene kits (82.9 percent) were the most common form of support delivered. However, only 10 percent of the respondents reported that they had been provided supplies to protect themselves from the coronavirus pandemic. The most common items are masks, gloves, hand sanitizers, water, and soap.

Respondents indicated some setbacks in accessing the services and support in response to COVID-19 support and services. The most common problem reported by the respondents was that the household members are usually working in fields when those supports and services are delivered to household tents. Some household respondents reported that agricultural intermediaries were contacted by authorities to deliver such support but that the intermediaries did not always distribute such support fairly. The study data finds that the seasonal migrant agricultural workers, especially Syrian seasonal migrant workers who have language limitations, do not have a mechanism to rely on other than social solidarity within their own families and that the agricultural intermediaries play a major role in linking such socially marginalized households to the outside world.

Of needs that are required as a result of the pandemic since March 2020, household respondents listed food assistance, cash assistance and job security in that order of importance. On the other hand, only eight of the 219 household respondents mentioned needs related to children's education. Moreover, when mentioned, children's education was at the bottom of the respondents' lists.

The economic effect of the coronavirus pandemic

The income generated by the seasonal migrant agricultural workers for their employment in fields and orchards has declined throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Sixty-five percent of the 219 household representatives reported that their income generated through seasonal agricultural labour has either 'declined' or 'vastly declined' and that there were no alternative means of income generation available to them. Moreover, with most of the state hospitals declared pandemic hospitals²³ in response to the coronavirus pandemic, those who needed treatment or medication for chronic health issues (such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease, and COPD) and those among the workers who would have been at high risk (such as the elderly, pregnant women and hematology or oncology patients) would have to take on medical costs themselves.

23 Turkish Medical Association Monitoring Committee (2020), Covid-19 Pandemic Sixth Month Assessment Report https://www.ttb.org.tr/yayin_goster.php?Guid=42ee49a2-fb2d-11ea-abf2-539a0e741e38

These ever-growing needs for treatment, medication and hygiene and the extreme hikes in food prices perceived by the seasonal migrant agricultural workers have caused their expenses to skyrocket in their household budget. More than half of 219 household members interviewed reported that their medical expenses have 'increased' or 'vastly increased' throughout the pandemic. As a result, the households initially spent their limited savings and then had to incur a debt. Fifty-seven percent of the 219 household representatives interviewed (125 households) reported that their state of indebtedness has changed because of the pandemic, and 95 percent of these households have seen their debt rise even further. The bank loans that many seasonal migrant agricultural workers used for the first time to cover loss of income have only partially subsidized their losses.

Moreover, the field survey reveals that some families had non-agricultural jobs before the COVID-19 pandemic but are now working as seasonal migrant agricultural workers and living in the tent settlements. Before the coronavirus pandemic, these families made a living from working in construction, factory, and other employment sectors. However, during the pandemic, these families borrowed money, moved their families to Adana to the tent settlement and started to work in the fields and gardens with their children to pay the money back. For example, one such family chose to work for a spouse's relative, an agricultural intermediary. The family admits they "do not feel safe" in the tent or the tent settlement but that they could not remain in the "city under the current circumstances." For this family and others like it, the in-depth interviews revealed that with a relative (agricultural intermediary) connection, seasonal migrant agricultural work provides a temporary safe area for the household. The families see this move as temporary; however, international examples show that economic crises result in permanent sociological changes in vulnerable groups.²⁴

In-depth interviews also reveal that the households of seasonal migrant agricultural workers typically incur debt in gold, and the Turkish Lira (TRY) equivalence of their debts incurred in gold before the pandemic has risen due to the rise in the price of gold. Most incur debt for transportation to the fields or orchards, food and other provisions. Eighty-eight percent of the households interviewed saw their food costs increase due to the pandemic. In-depth interviews revealed that for one family of seven, the household saw their food costs increase by fifty percent from the previous year.

The extreme burden of debt, limited access to financial resources, and the erosion of trust in future financial income have exacerbated the historical economic vulnerabilities of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers and crushed their spirit of resilience.

²⁴ Millar, K.M. (2018), *Reclaiming the discarded: Life and Labour on Rio's garbage dump*, Durham: Duke University Press, s.3-4. - For example, ethnographic research conducted in Jardim Gramacho, a large landfill located in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, shows that around two thousand freelance workers called 'catadores' who collect recyclable material there keep escaping and going back to the landfill life because of not having any alternatives during the cycle of economic growth and crisis.

Effect of the coronavirus pandemic on access to healthcare

Other than economic conditions with a potential increase in costs related to the coronavirus pandemic, the study also investigated access to healthcare systems and relevant services during the coronavirus. Respondents indicated problems accessing healthcare services due to the measures imposed in response to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, respondents indicated that households with insufficient financial resources to compensate for any losses of labour income preferred to delay medical care for fear of bringing the virus to their living environment.

When interviewed, respondents indicated that 60 percent or 131 households of the 219 households had no problems accessing healthcare services (treatment, physical examinations, and medicines). However, seasonal migrant agricultural worker households had not been receiving frequent access to services under normal conditions. During in-depth interviews, respondents indicated that they had “difficulty finding transportation,” “were not able to get an appointment,” did not “have money to buy medications” and were afraid to “bring the virus to the tent.”

According to interviews with organizations, the seasonal migrant agricultural workers living in temporary tent settlements had difficulty accessing healthcare services because there have been problems accessing Migrant Health Centres and primary healthcare services because of the coronavirus quarantine measures. In addition, workers are in the fields/gardens during the day during the centre’s operating hours.

Effect of the coronavirus pandemic on the access of children to education and their attendance

The seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their family members usually leave their place of residence in March and April to depart for another town where they would be employed, and thus hundreds of thousands of children who join their parents for agricultural work return to their school only a while after the start of the new school year. This form of life and employment results in children falling behind in school, and many children, including girls, face challenges of enrolment in school and/or regular attendance. The pandemic has made it more difficult for this community, and with the pandemic, there is a greater risk of an increase in cases of child labour in the long term.

The study results show that most of the children (nearly 70 percent, 152 households) in the households interviewed attended a school at least for a certain period before the advent of the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the children who attended a school faced challenges such as relocation to another school, peer bullying or academic failure due to seasonal migration. Of those children who had attended school before the pandemic, only 11 percent of the children were able to follow remote courses, while 29.8 percent of them were forced to work due to the challenges caused by the pandemic.

Relying on limited technological infrastructure and the absence of equipment, remote learning was more difficult, if not impossible, for the children of the tent settlements. The study reveals that the overall dynamics (electricity and internet infrastructure problems, among others) were not adequate to meet the basic requirements—equipment like television sets, computers, and smartphones—for remote learning during the coronavirus pandemic for the children of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers.

It is also evident that the remote learning experience, limited to the EBA TV (Education Information Network), is not adequate for the children to learn in a meaningful way. Additionally, it is considered a major setback to focus mainly on educational measures with a centralized approach while remaining limited in addressing the social and emotional support needs of vulnerable groups such as seasonal migrant agricultural workers in times of emergency and crisis. The parents interviewed were uneasy and reluctant to let their children go to school during the pandemic. When coupled with the lack of healthcare coverage, financial difficulties, and accommodation in tents, the risk of infection on the way to school becomes quite relevant for families with no alternative but to ‘working’ in deprivation and poverty. Therefore, 21 percent of the parents whose children attended a school before the pandemic were reluctant to allow those same children to go to school even if the face-to-face education resumed as they did not think they could cope if one of their children became infected or ill with the coronavirus.

The total exclusion of children from schools because of the coronavirus pandemic and the extended remote learning process will be a major problem for the next few years. This is estimated to increase the number of out-of-school children and cases of child labour.

Effect of the coronavirus pandemic on mental health

The qualitative and quantitative results of the survey corroborate the arguments in the literature that the effect of the pandemic on the mental health of seasonal migrant agricultural workers is a consequence of the interaction among the social, financial, and environmental factors. A multitude of uncertainties regarding the course of the coronavirus pandemic, lack of means to spend time with friends and family and insufficient information about the pandemic have led to various adverse consequences for the seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children in the context of psycho-social impact.

The main stress factors reported by the agricultural workers during the pandemic are financial challenges, changes in working conditions, fear of infection and challenges in accessing services. The stress factors regarding employment caused by the pandemic were listed as increased workload, lack of hygiene in the working environment, job insecurity and fear of unemployment. Similarly, inadequate security and hygiene measures taken in their working environment and physical working conditions, tough jobs, and job insecurity were also mentioned as stress factors for the children of the agricultural workers employed

in the fields. The most common feelings that the seasonal migrant agricultural workers have had throughout the coronavirus pandemic have been anxiety, a sense of victimization, and lack of power. In addition, the agricultural workers have commonly experienced a sense of hopelessness and despair. The study indicates that 75.8 percent of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers have felt nervous and/or angry.

Of those workers interviewed, 62.6 percent indicate that their mental health has worsened in the process. In response to how they cope with the problems reported in the in-depth interviews, the adult seasonal workers respond that “patience” is their means of coping, and the children respond that “silence” is their means of coping. These responses reveal increased emotional/psychological struggles that both adults and children have already experienced.

The rate of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers who had access to mental health services was quite low among those who stated their need to seek help from a mental health specialist throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Only 3.7 percent of the workers noted that they had seen a mental health specialist during the pandemic. However, 74 percent of the workers stated they had no idea how to seek help. The fear of stigmatization was a major concern during the in-depth interviews. The respondents’ concerns during the in-depth interviews reveal the fear of stigmatization, and respondents’ understanding of the social perspective on mental disorders affects the workers’ desire to seek and attempt to access services.

The financial challenges, lockdown in tents, sense of under-appreciation for their work and the sense of not belonging to the society they live in existed as psycho-social risk factors before the coronavirus pandemic. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, these psycho-social risk factors would only increase.

Effect of the coronavirus pandemic on child labour

The number of children in households interviewed was compared for the year 2019 and the year 2020 to understand the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on child labour as part of the survey. During the pandemic, a nearly 10 percent increase in child labour was reported. Of those 219 households that participated in this study, 32.4 percent of 219 households interviewed (71 households) reported that their children had started working upon the advent of the coronavirus pandemic. However, their dwindling income and growing expenses, coupled with the transition to remote learning and lack of infrastructure to follow the remote courses in their tents, made working in fields and orchards the sole option for their children who looked “old enough” to be employed.

Among the 219 households, 35.2 percent of the children aged 5–17 years who attended a school also worked as seasonal migrant agricultural workers. While the rate was lower

among elementary school students, it became higher at the next level of education. Most of the children working as agricultural workers were aged 15–17. Some of the households interviewed reported that their children aged 12 or 13 did not work because they were considered too weak or because it was not allowed by an agricultural intermediary and/or a field/orchard owner.

As for the reasons behind the employment of children, the responses such as “they need their children to make money” and “there is nothing else to do for their children” make up 84 percent of the responses. The most common answers to the other questions were as follows: “Having to work because of the low household income/contributing to household income” (37 percent), “failure to cover school expenses because of the low household income” (19 percent) and “having to do household chores” (sibling care, elderly care, or cooking) (9 percent).

Based on the figures, one can conclude that the lack of access to education is a determining factor for children’s employment even though the main reason is financial. Coupled with the social and financial problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the financial difficulties, and challenges in accessing education will potentially exacerbate the problem of child labour in seasonal agriculture in the medium- and long-term.

The in-depth interviews and responses of informants indicate that most members of the households and communities believe that their children will end up working as seasonal migrant agricultural workers just like their parents. The school attendance of their children is the first solution mentioned by the households to ensure their children would not have to work as seasonal agricultural workers. The parents reported that their children could break the cycle if financial support were provided for school attendance (public assistance or employment of their parents on a minimum salary, and if opportunities were offered for children to graduate and acquire a profession to help them find a non-precarious job. Given the likelihood that the coronavirus pandemic may sever the already-poor ties of vulnerable children with education, policies should be carefully adopted to boost such households’ trust in education.

The main consequence of the coronavirus pandemic is the exacerbation of the challenges that the seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children have faced for years. The working and living conditions of seasonal migrant agricultural work are incompatible with human dignity. Furthermore, challenges in accessing basic services such as education and healthcare and limited effective responses for social protection and inclusion are the problems that face the agricultural workers, their families and children and make their ability to cope much more difficult.

Key Recommendations

The findings of the study clearly show that the current living and working conditions of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children have been long ignored or remedied through partial solutions that have exacerbated their vulnerabilities to a healthcare crisis—the coronavirus pandemic. The challenges faced by the seasonal migrant agricultural workers concerning their (a) working conditions, (b) living conditions, and (c) children should be considered interrelated. To re-direct the programmes, projects and routine practices of the organizations that have roles and responsibilities in protecting this vulnerable group of seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children, best practices should include four interlinked processes: (i) realization, (ii) monitoring, (iii) supporting and (iv) empowerment.

Based on this general framework, this study report offers policy and practical recommendations in seven areas:

Effective use and monitoring of social protection and assistance mechanisms: The socio-economic measures in response to the pandemic included one-time cash assistance to households²⁵ a moratorium on loan payments for employers and shopkeepers, unemployment payments for employees, and a ban on layoffs for three months and short time pay. However, these actions cannot cover all the households in need of socio-economic support. There is a risk that informal workers, the self-employed and unpaid domestic workers, can hardly benefit from these measures. Moreover, this is true for seasonal migrant agricultural workers. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the seasonal migrant agricultural workers have been provided support from various organizations in addition to the social assistance they might have received. However, they are usually one-time support and sporadic. The main social assistance programmes are conditional cash transfers and healthcare support for children. Such programmes should be diversified and increased in numbers based on the vulnerabilities and poverty of the households. For those who are migrants, the status as a migrant poses a particular barrier to the delivery of some social assistance programmes. Advocacy actions should be an integral part of these programmes to deliver assistance through a diverse and easy set of options based on the mobility of the seasonal agricultural workers. Furthermore, public, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies should join their forces to introduce mechanisms that fit the nature of agricultural work.

²⁵ The Ministry of Family and Social Services has provided direct income support in three phases as a part of the Outbreak Social Support programme. The requesting households have been provided with TRY 1000 in the first two phases, and TRY 1100 in the final phase. The income support has been a one-time service in all three phases. Those whose application for any of the phases to receive it is approved are not eligible to be a beneficiary of any other phase. Only one of the applications has been provided with income support in cases where multiple members of the same household lodge an application (<https://www.sesob.org.tr/pandemi-sosyal-destek-programi-ile-1000-tl.html>). The effectiveness of the support is debatable for the seasonal migrant agricultural workers whose household size is above the average in Türkiye.

Organizing labour relations, occupational health, and safety in times of crisis and outbreak: Most of the labour force in agricultural production is informal and not governed under the labour law. In addition, occupational health and safety practices are not usually implemented. Therefore, informal workers of agricultural production are widely ineligible to exercise labour rights. The crisis and the outbreak have a further adverse effect on the working conditions. The risks and hazards concerning the occupational health and safety of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers who do precarious jobs under poor conditions and live in temporary tents should be analyzed. Their working and living conditions should be improved accordingly. Based on the analyses, in-cash and in-kind support should be provided, and the regular delivery of services should be ensured. Agricultural workers should be legally safeguarded against occupational accidents and diseases. The respective ministries and the parliament should take action to include and incorporate these workers into the social security regime. To this end, the capacity of the agricultural intermediaries should be improved, and they should play a role in more effective monitoring, supervision, and registration.

Safety and improvement of settlements and environmental protection: The seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children live largely in nylon or plastic canvas tents near a field/orchard or an irrigation canal and set up by their means. In addition, there are temporary means of accommodations provided by the public organizations. These tents and the sites of the tents are not fit for workers nor their children to live. The inadequacy of such habitation has become more evident, and the risks have grown due to the coronavirus pandemic. Considering the temporary tent settlements' climate and agricultural living conditions, the public and private sectors and professional bodies should jointly develop settlement models that offer all services through an inclusive method and set living standards befitting human dignity. Municipalities, provincial/district directorates of health and district governors' offices should act to regularly disinfect such settlements and provide them with basic services as part of the response to the coronavirus pandemic as if they were neighborhoods with residences.

Provision of education services: Seasonal migrant agricultural workers had major challenges about enrolment, attendance, and access to quality education for their children even before the advent of the coronavirus pandemic. It is evident that the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these challenges and caused children to be out of school more often. Throughout the pandemic, with a lack of infrastructure and equipment for learning, remote learning has not been quite possible for students living in temporary tent settlements. The infrastructure problems and lack of access to instruments are just a few limitations to remote learning. In this regard, children should be provided with instruments/equipment and services for access and continuous attendance to education. Children should be supported to catch up on coursework and individual courses that they have fallen behind during the coronavirus pandemic. These children should be readapted to

face-to-face education. In addition to academic support, children should also be provided with guidance services addressing their socio-emotional²⁶ needs, which the pandemic has worsened.

Increasing awareness-raising and briefing: The study's findings show that the Turkish seasonal migrant agricultural workers, especially Syrian workers, are not aware of their social rights and cannot exercise them. Raising awareness about the working and living conditions of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers is important to discourage prejudices about them and strengthen social inclusion. Educational content should be developed about social exclusion, and teachers and school administrators should be provided with training and awareness-raising activities. All of these actions should emphasize the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and how to respond to them.

Building organizational capacity and developing locally applicable coordination mechanisms: Many organizations and agencies have statutory roles and responsibilities concerning seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children. In addition, non-governmental organizations provide rights-based or assistance-based services voluntarily. The e-METIP database should be improved to register households regularly and document the mobility of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children to provide them with decent and cost-effective services. Mobilizing the local and national organizations (municipalities, MoNE, MoLSS, professional bodies, NGOs, and private sector) mandated to take action against child labour in seasonal agricultural production about planning, implementation, and monitoring actions, and building their organizational capacity should be prioritized. Furthermore, Digital platforms should be launched to improve the cooperation among the respective organizations and agencies to capitalize on digital transformation opportunities.

Cooperation with the private sector: This covers field and orchard owners, chambers of agriculture, agricultural intermediaries and their associations, companies that market products, chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of trade, companies that process and launch finished products and their professional bodies that are involved in the supply chain ranging from land and orchard production to the launch of finished products in markets. Therefore, the wages, living and working conditions of seasonal migrant agricultural workers should be improved in cooperation with the private sector. Especially as part of actions against child labour, safe environments should be created for children. Interventions for young people such as supporting them in acquiring a profession should be designed, piloted, adjusted as per the needs and duplicated in close cooperation with the private sector.

²⁶ Puerta, Maria Laura Sánchez, Alexandria Valerio, and Marcela Gutiérrez Bernal. "Definitions: What Are Socio-Emotional Skills?" In *Taking Stock of Programs to Develop Socioemotional Skills: A Systematic Review of Program Evidence*, 15-23. The World Bank, 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-0872-2_ch3



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