



**Inter-Agency
Coordination
Turkey**

FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE 

Child Labour and Agricultural Livelihoods

Virtual Workshop Report

18 June 2020/ Zoom

Introduction:

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child states that, children should be protected from all kinds of exploitation and not be employed before a minimum age and it emphasizes that the child should not be forced to work in a job or profession that would prevent their education and development. Child labour violates the rights of children provided under the “UN Convention on the Rights of Child”. Today, globally, the majority of child labour is found in the agriculture sector with over 70% of children engaged in the child labour. Almost 108 million boys and girls are involved in child labour in crop production, livestock, forestry, fisheries or aquaculture; they are often working long hours and facing occupational hazards.

Food insecurity exposes children to different risks and negative coping mechanism. Child labour maintains a cycle of poverty for the children, their families and communities. Without education, these boys and girls are likely to remain poor. The incidence of child labour in agriculture violates the principles of decent work. By maintaining poverty, it undermines the efforts to reach sustainable food security and end hunger.

Some activities may help child development and may help children to acquire important livelihood skills and contribute to their survival and food security. But Children’s work should not jeopardize any of their other rights including the right to education”. Gender roles and dynamics should be taken into consideration and analyzed because girls and boys may face different risks based on gender and age.

To address the child labour issue in agriculture sector, the Food Security and Agriculture (FSA) sector organized a workshop on “Child Labour and Agricultural Livelihoods”. The training was organized through a virtual workshop due to the current teleworking arrangements on 18th of June 2020.

Scope and objectives:

FSA sector recognizes the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic is posing on rural livelihoods, and as conditions are likely to persist, it may further put children at risk of child labour. The workshop proposed to discuss Child Labour in seasonal agricultural works, among Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) and in host communities. It also offered an opportunity to the participants to discuss and identify important factors in agricultural livelihood programmes, in order to address the child labour issue during these programmes, and reinforce existing initiatives for both refugees and host communities. The aim of the training was to discuss the child labour situation in agricultural livelihood programmes in Turkey by bringing together all actors and relevant Ministries on-board.

Specific objectives of the training were:

- Inform the participants about existing policies and frameworks around child labour and analyze the existing legislations and reforms in this context.
- Identify important factors in agricultural livelihood programmes, in order to address the child labour issue during these programmes.
- Reinforce existing initiatives for both refugees and host communities while paying attention to child labour issue.
- Find ways for multi-sectoral approaches to combat child labour
- Provide recommendations to develop, introduce and improve the policies and systems to combat child labour in Agriculture sector.

Participants:

FAO, as the coordinator of the FSA sector, supports the integration of child labour considerations into national policies and rural development strategies. Under its wider effort to eliminate child labour in agriculture, it also promotes strengthening and diversification of the incomes of rural families so that they have the means to send their children to school rather than work.

The workshop gathered around 60 participants from UN agencies and National and International Organizations. Ministry of Family Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) also participated and contributed to the workshop.

Workshop Sessions:

The FSA Sector Coordinator and spokespersons from the MoFLSS facilitated the workshop and MoAF joined to present and elaborate on policies and laws that regulate child work in Turkey. Due to nature, duration and time constraint, a Q&A and discussion session was kept after the presentations.

Session 1: Laws, Policies and Programmes Regulating Children’s work and Aiming to Combat Child Labour in Turkey

Ms. Elif Bor, Specialist Labour, Employment Policies Department of MoFLSS provided background information on the child labour under Turkish labour Laws and the efforts put by the ministry since 1990 in introducing the Policies on Elimination of child labour since then the incidence of child labour has decreased from 15.2% to 4.4%.

She mainly focused on informing the participants about child labour in Turkish Labour Law, efforts in elimination of CL, and National Employment Strategy (2017-2023).

The National Employment Strategy is the guide of the employment policy in Turkey, it includes 4 main policy pillars aiming to solve structural problems in the labour market in 7 sectors including the agriculture sector. A comprehensive strategy includes eliminating poverty, increasing the quality and accessibility of education and increasing awareness about CL laws. Under the action plan related to Strengthening linkages between Employment and Social Protection in the Agriculture sector, there are specific measures focusing on combatting CL, and these measures focus on improving working and living conditions of seasonal agriculture workers, institutional capacity building, development of vocational skills, summer schools, social/sports activities and Awareness Raising.

She also touched upon the challenges in agriculture sector and the problems faced by the seasonal agriculture workers, while mentioning that they are aiming to overcome these obstacles together with the relevant institutions (The Provincial Directorate of Labour and Employment Agency, The Provincial Directorate of Social Security Institution) through monitoring and detecting the child labour and ensuring that children’s families have access to the public services they need and organizing activities to improve social awareness and sensitivity related to the subject.

There was a short briefing on the measures taken by the ministry during COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the sustainability of agriculture production.

Followed by the presentation of MoFLSS, Ms. Asli ÇAVUŞ gave a speech on behalf of the Department of Training and Publication of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) regarding the activates they implement in order to reduce child labour in agriculture sector.

Session 2, Part 1: Policies and frameworks on Child Labour in Agriculture (FAO).

Mr. Ercan Dansuk, the Social Protection Specialist of The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in his presentation, gave information about FAO's fourth policy document on child labour, which is launched in June 2020, and provided statistics showing the number of working children in Turkey as well as presented the vicious circle of poverty as root cause of child labour. Besides, he discussed four principles in FAO's approach; inclusiveness, social sustainability, integrated approach and collaboration. He stressed that despite the recent progress, agriculture is still the sector where by far the largest share of child labour is found and we can combat child labour through adopting holistic approaches and through cross sector collaborations. FAO is substantially increasing its work in this area, in collaboration with the ILO, in order to address this challenge.

Session 2, Part 2: Policies and frameworks on Child Labour in Agriculture (ILO).

Mr. Nejat Kocabay the Senior Program Officer from International Labour Organization (ILO) (co-chair Child Labour Technical Group), shared with the participants ILO's perspective on child labour and the inter-linked factors. He presented ILO's cycle of life; poverty, socio-economic factors and lack of livelihood opportunities, as main reasons behind child labour. He stressed on bringing the national legislation in line with international laws and conventions on child labour and the role of awareness raising on this subject across all the activities and programmes. He emphasized that the need to monitor the child labour in agriculture is highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the loss of livelihoods hence it puts additional responsibility on all humanitarian actors, local and national government to strictly monitor the incidence of child labour at field level.

Session 3: A Multi-Sectoral Programme to Combat Child Labour

Ms. Dilek Karagöz Küpeli from UNICEF (co-chair Child Labour Technical Group) started the session through a refresher to test the participants' knowledge on child labour issues and situation in Turkey. She presented statistics of the children engaged in child labour and disaggregated by age, gender and economic activity and revealed the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable families and their children including seasonal migratory agriculture workers. She shared the concerns about the families' ability to cope with the economic shocks resulting from COVID-19 and how they will resort to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour due to informal laborers' lack of access to social safety networks.

She elaborated on UNICEF's multi-sectoral strategy in Turkey towards the elimination of child labour, and the gender dynamics in CL and how it effects girls and boys differently. Other contributory factors are socio-economic and psychosocial. Under the strategy, she suggested having child-sensitive and comprehensive social policies; evidence based policy and programme to combat CL, besides introducing business practices upholding child rights and increasing families' resilience to depend less on CL

At the end, child labour toolkit, booklets and tools developed by CL technical group were shared with the participants.

Session 4: Seasonal migratory agricultural worker families and their children – prevention of child labour in agriculture

Ms. Sinem Bayraktar from Development Workshop Cooperative (DWC) briefed the participants on the findings of their studies and researches in agriculture sector. 32% of total children engaged in CL work in agriculture sector, 50% of agricultural labour is composed of children. She mentioned about the status of temporary tented settlements and worst forms of child labour. Role of intermediaries is critical in combating CL, and intermediaries should be formalized. There is need to look into existing legal and institutional frameworks and gaps around CL and occupational hazards. There is need for awareness raising, access to education, and evidence based advocacy in collaboration with UNICEF and other relevant actors.

The session focused on combating child labour, reducing poverty and deprivation, protecting and developing the natural environment, strengthening the position of women in society and supporting gender-balanced development, increasing cooperation for regional and international development, and designing and implementing sustainable development unites.

Session 5: Combating Child Labour through Social Protection and Child Protection

Ms. Hatem Efe Keller the Protection Program manager from Support to Life (STL) spoke about STL's activities and observations regarding child labour and seasonal agriculture through their programming and projects on child protection through developing code of conduct to ensure all policies and procedures are in place to prevent harm to children, establishing a community center and children committees, and providing support to establish child labour prevention commissions in seasonal agriculture for elimination of CL. Projects including conditional cash transfers for education can help eliminate CL.

She shared the challenges faced by SuTP children that their field teams have identified which included lack of access to education services, language barriers, socio-economic factors and exclusion from the social security schemes. These challenges can be addressed through improved coordinated efforts between local actors while designing their programmes. Some suggestions included advocacy for CL laws at local levels, awareness raising for all stakeholders, women empowerment, child participation, improved living conditions and private sector engagement to create livelihood opportunities for the families.

Session 6: Socio-economic factors resulting in Child Labour in Agriculture

Ms. Imren Arslanoglu Assistant Livelihoods Officer from UNHCR summarized the factors leading to child labour highlighting loss of livelihood and social norms as two of the main factors resulting in CL and UNHCR's approach to strengthen the nexus through working on securing individuals' basic needs, supporting transitioning from aid-dependency to self-reliance, strengthening access to livelihoods opportunities and supporting employment and entrepreneurship.

UNHCR observed multiple needs and stressed on job creation, on the job training opportunities, language courses, awareness about work regulations, informal employment and market needs assessment.

Between 2017 to 2019, UNHCR and FAO had a joint agriculture program that provided theoretical and on the job training for over 2700 beneficiaries. In 2020 they aim to continue engaging in agriculture sector by collaboration with FAO. Ms. Imren also briefly addressed the risks faced by informal workers in Turkey.

Q&A and discussion session:

The partners discussed the reasons behind CL in agriculture sector and they agreed upon working in parallel and engaging at different levels in order to ensure that different dynamics of factors causing CL are covered and to make the families more resilient against economic shocks and social norms.

In response to a question DG Labour, Mr. Ibrahim Demircan gave a comprehensive overview of the reasons behind CL in agriculture sector, and informed the participants that the ministry is well aware of this issue and has been combating child labour at all fronts, he further informed that the ministry is planning to establish units at district level to monitor CL incidents. He further ensured that the ministry is putting its efforts to eliminate child labour by 2023.

Conclusion and recommendations:

The workshop was a fruitful opportunity for all participants to know more about the child labour in seasonal agricultural works in Turkey and about the situation of the seasonal workers during covid-19 pandemic.

Following are the main recommendations that resulted from the discussions during the workshop:

- **Need to scale up efforts and coordination:** mainstream child labour in agriculture and food security policies and programmes, more social protection, involve influential partners such as development banks and the private sector as well as including child labour prevention in large scale agriculture and food security programmes. Including improved multi-sectoral coordination for multi-sectoral programming to combat CL, including engagement with education sector and MHPSS technical group;
- **Awareness raising about CL laws and regulations** among all stakeholders at national and local levels, as part of the regular programming. Within field level programmes, there is a strong importance of including an **area-based approach**, which includes **awareness raising and building resilience**
- **Power balance:** Need to make a fundamental shift in the power balance of the food supply chain. This includes giving farmers and rural workers more negotiation power to negotiate their terms and conditions and more balance of resources down the supply chain so that farmers get a better price, decent work and living conditions.
- **Role of Intermediaries and small holders:** The COVID-19 will have very detrimental effects on farmers, which is likely to exacerbate the number of children in child labour.

- Agricultural stakeholders, including smallholders and intermediaries, can play a positive role in eliminating child labour in agriculture.
- **Local level ownership and leadership:** It is important to have a local level authority responsible to monitor these activities in agriculture, this can be achieved through enhanced coordination between MoAF and MoFLSS;
 - **Monitoring needs to be strengthened:** more resources for labour inspectors for better monitoring and enforcement of child labour legislation at local level.
 - **Social protection schemes:** Social assistance schemes to be more inclusive to cover SAW especially during COVID-19 pandemic, it requires further coordination and collaboration between MoFLSS and MoAF;
 - **Evidence based programming:** More data and evidence on the involvement of children in hazardous tasks in agriculture - a pre-requisite to effective action and lasting behavioral changes.

We are already seeing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in agriculture where rural children are no longer in school so they naturally accompany their parents in the field or are put to work in order to supplement labour needs and income during these challenging times. COVID-19 pandemic presents strong challenges for rural livelihoods and conditions are likely to persist, which may push further children into child labour. Immediate coordinated action is required to address acute livelihoods losses that complement long-term strategies on addressing child labour in agriculture.