Seasonal migration and child labour in agriculture
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BACKGROUND PAPER
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For the first time in a decade, child labour is on the increase, severely threatening the realization of the SDGs.

Of the estimated 160 million child labourers in the world in 2020, 70 percent are engaged in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, most in family operations, and there will be no elimination of child labour if small-scale farmers and fishers are not mobilized and supported.

Agricultural work is often an entry point into child labour, and children working in agriculture are generally very young. Agriculture accounts for 76.6 percent of all child labour in the age group 5-11 years and for 75.8 percent in the age group 12-14 years.

Young people between 15 and 17 years of age are particularly vulnerable to hazardous work, though they may legally join the work force in non-hazardous work. Stepping up the protection of young workers in agriculture must be an urgent priority if the world is to realize the Sustainable Development target 8.7.

For younger children below the age of 14 to 15 years, ensuring that alternatives to child labour are in place for the children and their families is essential. This includes first and foremost ensuring that all children, including children in remote rural areas and children on the move, have access to free, good quality compulsory education.
Children on the move, including migrant workers’ children, are often subject to multiple vulnerabilities that increase their risk of child labour, and especially hazardous and other worst forms of child labour, such as forced labour and child trafficking.

Children whose families migrate seasonally for work in agriculture are often not included in research on child labour and migration, which tends to focus more on permanent migration. **Seasonal migration, however, is closely associated with child labour** in many agricultural supply chains.

**A regulation, policy and programme priority must be the development** and implementation of channels for the safe, fair and organized recruitment of seasonal agricultural workers. This must include not only having decent working conditions for adult workers, but also protecting their children from child labour and ensuring children’s access to education during migration.

To enable the adoption and implementation of policies and integrated programmes **to prevent child labour in seasonal migration, more research is an urgent priority.** A stronger knowledge base would allow for better policies and programmes.
What is at stake?

Agricultural production relies heavily on migrant labour across geographies and production systems, from large-scale plantations growing food crops for global supply chains to small-scale pastoralist families following their herds to new pastures depending on seasons. Much of the migration is seasonal, filling peak labour demands, such as during harvest. Hence, stable agri-food systems that can contribute to fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 on zero hunger are intrinsically intertwined with migrant workers’ lives and working conditions.

Seasonal migration is adopted by rural households to diversify their livelihoods and adapt to the seasonality of agriculture and climate, as well as political and economic changes. Seasonal migration is a form of temporary migration and occurs when migrants move for employment purposes for part of the year. But there is limited literature on the phenomenon and its implications for child labour in the agricultural sector. It is, however, well documented that migration, including seasonal migration, is often an important positive contribution to the family economy and well-being. For example, remittances can play an important role in funding education, housing and other basic needs. Moreover, seasonal migration may allow families to earn an income...
during the agricultural off season. Hence, it is important to stress that safe and fair migration can be an important and positive contribution to livelihoods and skills development, among others. Migration also generally contributes positively to the economy in destination areas by filling gaps in labour supply and tax payments by migrant workers, among others (Koczan et al., 2021; ILO, 2015).

While migration can provide families with new opportunities, it can also pose challenges to children migrating with their parents or left behind. Seasonal agricultural migration often occurs informally and remains invisible. Migrant children often supplement adult family members’ labour and see their access to education constrained, and children in migrant families are at significantly higher risk of child labour than other children in the destination area (Braam, 2019).

Box 1: Different forms of migration

Migration can be split into internal and international (cross border) migration. These two types of migration can further split into the following four types of migration:

▶ **Permanent**: when the migrant stays at his or her new destination for more than one year.

▶ **Temporary**: when the migrant has a specific purpose and later returns to the area of origin or migrates to another area. Two of the most common examples are seasonal and circular migration.

▶ **Seasonal**: when the migrant moves for employment purposes based on seasonality (such as following the agricultural seasonal calendar) and therefore migrates for only part of the year.

▶ **Circular**: when the migrant moves repeatedly between countries or areas, whether temporarily or for long-term stays.

Furthermore, the migration discourse traditionally distinguishes between:

▶ **Voluntary migration**: a migratory movement in which the decision to move is undertaken on a voluntary basis.

▶ **Forced migration**: a migratory movement in which there is an element of coercion, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or human-made causes.

Source: FAO, 2019

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1 For the purposes of the present paper, child labour is defined in line with the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) as work that is likely to harm the health, safety and morals of children or work that prevents children from attending compulsory education. The present paper uses 14/15 years as the general minimum age for full-time employment, provided the young worker has completed compulsory basic education and the work is non-hazardous, in line with Convention No. 138. It is also recognized in the present paper that children can perform non-hazardous, light work for a limited number of hours alongside attending education from the age of 12/13 years. Child labour is different from work as part of socialization, which refers to children assisting with age-appropriate tasks in a safe environment outside their education and thereby learning skills and responsibilities.
Child labour undermines the development of sustainable food systems and agricultural supply chains by depriving children of their health and education and perpetuating intergenerational poverty. Therefore, the connections between seasonal migration and child labour in agriculture need to be explored further to ensure sustainable agri-food systems that can provide both stable food supplies and decent living and working conditions for all agricultural workers in line with the SDGs.

The present paper explores these links in order to advance the conversation on child labour and seasonal migration relating to agriculture. It draws on the much larger body of literature on global migration trends and patterns and the protection of children on the move. However, the focus is on child labour and seasonal migration in agriculture; internal and interregional migration patterns and child labour are therefore addressed as a priority, but the present paper also draws on the larger body of literature on international migration. Moreover, the paper focuses on seasonal migrations in farming, fisheries and aquaculture, and food processing operations.

2 For more information on child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, see the background paper on child labour in fisheries and aquaculture in the present series.

3 Migration related to pastoralism and child labour is analysed in more detail in the background paper on child labour in livestock farming in the present series.
The most recent global estimates on child labour indicate that worldwide 70 percent of all child labour takes place in agriculture (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). Of all child labourers in the sector, 43 percent are involved in hazardous work.
Migration from, to and between rural areas is an important component of both internal and international migration. About 3.4 billion people live in rural areas (UNDESA, 2019) and it is estimated that by 2050 3.1 billion people will remain in rural areas, relying on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods.

In 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide reached nearly 272 million (UNDESA, 2019), while internal migrants were estimated at 1 billion people in developing countries. Migration is thus an important livelihood strategy for rural households.

(FAO, 2018)

In some cases, seasonal migration is one of the only means to overcome the shortfalls of seasonal agricultural income and employment. It is closely linked to agricultural calendars, following seasonal weather patterns or harvest seasons (FAO, 2018).
The most recent global estimates on child labour indicate that worldwide 70 percent of all child labour takes place in agriculture (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). Of all child labourers in the sector, 43 percent are involved in hazardous work, meaning their health and safety is at immediate risk. Hazardous work is a particular concern for young people between the ages of 15 and 17 years.

Family-run operations, including family farms, dominate, but children also work on plantations and in the processing, transportation and marketing of produce. Children are engaged mostly in low-skilled, labour-intensive agricultural tasks and in domestic chores (ILO and UNICEF, 2021) and child labour is closely associated with certain forms of production such as contract farming and piece-rate systems on plantations (FAO, 2020). Children in migrant families are significantly more vulnerable to child labour than other children and the circumstances associated with movement shape both their education participation and their work experiences (IOM, 2013; van de Glind, 2010).

In Guatemala, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a study with the Hanns. R. Neumann foundation in Central America to assess the situation of child labour during the coffee harvesting season. The study focused on the Huehuetenango Department with a sample of 100 families: 40 seasonal migrants and 60 permanent residents. The migrant families in the study migrated with their children to rural areas during the coffee harvesting season (December–March). In total, 190 boys, girls and adolescents, of which 83 were migrant children, participated in the study. The study found that 72 percent of children and adolescents from migrant families were involved in child labour, compared to 38 percent of children and adolescents from non-migrant families. Migrant children reported being involved in the coffee fields to support family incomes. Sixty-nine percent had not completed primary education, compared to 31 percent of resident children. Migrant girls reported having to learn household duties and supporting work in coffee production, while boys reported having major responsibilities working in the coffee fields (FAO, forthcoming).

Apart from the study in Guatemala, evidence related to child labour and migration tends to focus on situations of permanent migration (often internationally) and there is limited evidence related to child labour in seasonal migration. Yet, over the past decade, important knowledge efforts on child labour in seasonal migration and the negative impact on children’s education participation have been undertaken through global research on migration and child labour in all sectors, and on seasonal migration and education (see, for example, Macours and Vakis, 2010; Koseleci and Understanding Children’s Work, 2011; Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2013; APM Reports, 2019).

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4 Agriculture in the context of child labour refers to agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries operations, as well as the post-harvest handling and marketing of produce.

5 For more information on young workers and hazardous work, see the background paper on youth employment and child labour in agriculture in the present series.
Children can be affected by seasonal migration in different ways. Child migrants can fall into different categories, namely: (a) unaccompanied migrant children; (b) children left behind by migrant parents; and (c) children who migrate with their families (Braam, 2019).

Unaccompanied migrant children leave their home in search of employment opportunities, especially during peak harvest seasons for cash crops, and may support family members in addition to themselves. They are often affected by the absence of protection and support from their families and they are especially vulnerable to trafficking. For instance, the cottonseed sector in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka employs a substantial number of unaccompanied children as young as 8 years old, recruited by agents for cotton pollination for three to four months every year (July–October) (Braam, 2019).

Children left behind can benefit from having migrant parents but also face challenges. On the one hand, remittances sent back by migrant parents have a positive impact on school attendance and well-being. On the other hand, children left behind may need to compensate for the loss of labour by taking over additional productive and care responsibilities, especially when there are additional dependent members of the family to take care of. Family and community relationships in villages of origin also influence whether children left behind end up in child labour. Depending on the relationship between migrant parents and the extended family, neighbours or community members, the child could receive more or less supervision during parents’ absence, which could significantly affect their education and well-being (Braam, 2019).

Children migrating with their families can end up in child labour in agriculture due to economic necessity and limited access to education. For many families working in agriculture, children’s work represents an essential contribution to the families’ livelihoods. Children are usually not employed directly by companies, but rather work to help their families meet quotas and production targets (Braam, 2019). For instance, in Guatemala families bring their children to the plantations in order to maximize daily productivity during the coffee harvest. In both the finca and the small grower’s community, children are expected to contribute to the survival of the family (IREWOC Foundation, 2008). Depending on the agriculture context, sets of tasks may be specifically delineated for children. Moreover, when families arrive at destination areas and have limited job opportunities, it can be easier for children to work as they are often perceived as less likely to be targeted by law enforcement and are usually recruited through intermediaries (Braam, 2019).
The vulnerability of children in seasonal migration has several root causes. Generally, seasonal migrant workers often face precarious employment and decent work deficits with high levels of informality, poor working and living conditions, high risks of falling prey to illegal gang masters, human trafficking, violence (including sexual violence), discrimination and abuse, and limited access to social services. These decent work deficits are often related to the informality of the employment, and the migration process increases the vulnerability of migrant children. Often, informal migration is facilitated by intermediaries (recruitment agents) that operate informally or even illegally, recruiting migrant workers for low-skill, low-paying jobs in agriculture, fisheries and food processing. Intermediaries may target vulnerable children, such as refugee children, for recruitment into (seasonal) agricultural labour specifically (AUB and Lebanon, Ministry of Labour, 2019; Mortimer, 2016).

They recruit children to fill labour supply gaps in an informal agricultural sector and an unorganized labour market in crop farming. This undermines fair recruitment processes in and of itself. It is also worth noting that recruitment agents have been documented facilitating human trafficking and forced labour in, for example, industrial fishing, and the latest global estimates on forced labour (ILO, Walk Free and IOM, 2017) show that 44 percent of forced labour occurs in connection with migration.
The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has made migrant workers even more vulnerable, as harvests have been disrupted and workers have been kept in close, unsanitary facilities and not afforded the protections needed to halt the spread of the virus.

Migration is often driven by multidimensional poverty. Migrant families embark on migration to escape income poverty and economic shocks (such as natural disasters undermining livelihoods, including from the impacts of climate change) and to improve employment and income prospects in general (ESCAP, undated). Adding to poverty-driven migration is often conflict, social unrest and insecurity, not least when children migrate alone in a bid to escape violence or civil strife, among others (IOM, 2019). This means that children in migrant families, including families migrating seasonally for agricultural work, often face multiple, intersectional vulnerabilities that make them more vulnerable to child labour, including hazardous child labour and other worst forms of child labour such as forced labour (Braam, 2019).

Limited access to education also contributes to the risk of child labour. Research shows that migrant children are less likely than local children to attend school. Even when parents are not economically dependent on children’s contributions, the lack of access or inability to afford childcare services leaves parents no alternative but to bring children to the field, where they can be exposed to hazardous conditions and child labour (ILO, 2017; van de Glind, 2010). Where children attend school, seasonal migration can also have detrimental impacts on school attendance. Indeed, migrant children are far less likely than local children to attend school regularly. For instance, in Ghana, the school dropout rates of migrant child labourers in seasonal agriculture are among the highest in the country because long working hours leave

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) warned in 2020 that the pandemic could drive up the child labour prevalence as a result of school closures and lost income due to measures imposed to contain the virus (ILO and UNICEF, 2020), and cases of child labour in low-income families resulting from COVID-19 have been documented in such countries as Ghana, Nepal and Uganda (HRW, 2021).

The low levels of the realization of rights and the generally vulnerable position of migrant workers impact their children as well. Migrant workers’ children may be stigmatized and face limitations to their access to health care and other services, often because they lack documentation such as birth certificates (The Asia Foundation and ILO, 2015).
but research and documentation focuses on migration in sectors dominated by women, such as domestic service, rather than agriculture (ESCAP, undated; Tittensor and Mansouri, 2017). However, a limited number of studies on women’s seasonal migration in agriculture are available (ECLAC, ILO and FAO, 2012a; ECLAC, ILO and FAO, 2012b). Women’s seasonal migration may impact children’s risk of child labour in different ways, depending on whether children are left behind in rural areas and replacing women’s labour contribution, or if girls accompany their mothers to new destinations to help increase the earnings. But women’s seasonal migration in agriculture and its potential negative impact on child labour needs to be researched more to draw conclusions.

As with all other forms of child labour, limited awareness and social norms may also contribute to child labour among seasonal migrant workers in agriculture. Social norms held by both migrant workers and/or their employers may normalize child labour in migrant worker communities (FAO, 2020). These social norms may interplay with the social norms that underpin the general vulnerabilities that migrant workers face.

Child labour and seasonal migration in agriculture can thus best be described as highly complex and driven by multiple dynamic and interrelated causes. However, the specific drivers and causes are poorly understood, as internal seasonal migration and child labour is often overlooked in the wider body of literature on child labour and migration.

The gender dimensions of these dynamics are important to understand, but more evidence is needed in relation to seasonal migration and child labour in agriculture specifically. Both men and women migrate. Evidence indicates that women migrate independently in many parts of the world but research and documentation focuses on migration in sectors dominated by women, such as domestic service, rather than agriculture (ESCAP, undated; Tittensor and Mansouri, 2017). However, a limited number of studies on women’s seasonal migration in agriculture are available (ECLAC, ILO and FAO, 2012a; ECLAC, ILO and FAO, 2012b). Women’s seasonal migration may impact children’s risk of child labour in different ways, depending on whether children are left behind in rural areas and replacing women’s labour contribution, or if girls accompany their mothers to new destinations to help increase the earnings. But women’s seasonal migration in agriculture and its potential negative impact on child labour needs to be researched more to draw conclusions.

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The inclusion of migrant workers and their children in wage and social security policies and response programmes is particularly important in times of crisis, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown. (ILO and UNICEF, 2020).
As discussed, there is a limited understanding of, and a lack of literature that explores, the link between seasonal migration and child labour in the different sub-sectors of agriculture. It is crucial to generate and disseminate evidence on the characteristics of seasonal migration for agricultural work which represent complex drivers for child labour, such as the poor working conditions and the piece rate remuneration system, or the lack of official and organized channel for seasonal migration. Likewise, it is important to generate more on the engagement of children in seasonal migration work in agriculture. Moreover, documenting and understanding what the interventions that effectively protect children in those contexts are in order to inform policy formulation would help make a difference. Hence, building the knowledge base on seasonal migration and child labour is a key strategy for governments, farmers’ associations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and international organizations to strengthen programming and policy development in order to prevent and eliminate child labour in seasonal migration.

Although many countries have signed the ILO conventions on international labour standards and the United Nations conventions on the rights of migrant workers, compliance at the country level is difficult because of the lack of
complementary public policies that address migrants’ vulnerabilities. Moreover, the low rate of ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which is one of the core human rights conventions and which specifically protects the human rights of migrant workers and their families. Mechanisms need to be put in place to protect and uphold migrant workers’ rights and to promote the fundamental principles and rights at work, such as the preservation of the health and safety of all workers, including vulnerable workers (such as seasonal migrants and young workers). The mechanisms need to support the application of core human rights treaties, international labour standards and national employment and labour laws also in remote rural areas and in recruitment processes, including in the regulation and control of intermediaries. This would take evidence-based policy development, capacity development to implement policies and enforce legislation, notably through labour inspection, and continued advocacy and support by civil society organizations and international partners for the adoption and implementation of labour standards to protect migrant workers and to ensure the protection of young workers, among others (Yeshanew, 2018).\(^6\)

A key element of the protection of migrant workers is private sector actors including corporate social responsibility, human rights due diligence and related actions in their business strategies in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The private sector can play a vital role in the fight against child labour in agriculture. This requires that child labour, the protection of migrant workers’ rights and other labour rights issues are not an optional add-on to business strategies.

Rather, corporate human rights due diligence and safeguards must be an integral part of business strategies in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.\(^7\) This would entail actions such as assessing the risk of child labour in business operations and supply chains, putting in place measures to prevent and remedy child labour, and reporting on what

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\(^6\) For more information on the protection of young workers, including ensuring safe environments and controlling risks to occupational health and safety, see the background paper on youth employment and child labour in agriculture in the present series.

\(^7\) For more information on the integration of child labour safeguards, including ensuring safe environments and controlling risks to occupational health and safety, see the background paper on the integration of child labour safeguards in agricultural investment programmes in the present series.
the company does to mitigate the risk of child labour and to support children and families where child labour is found, among other things. Such measures would also entail changing business models and supply chain structures (such as low piece rates for seasonal harvest workers) that incentivize child labour to models that incentivize other practices. Human rights due diligence and reporting is increasingly a requirement under national legislation in several countries, such as in Dutch legislation on child labour in supply chains (Hoff, 2019). In addition, the European Union is adopting new regulations on mandatory environmental and human rights due diligence (European Parliament, 2021). While businesses have the responsibility for due diligence and putting in place measures, they do not need to address all issues alone. The case study from the Turkish hazelnut industry in box 3 is an example of how businesses can engage in collaborative efforts with civil society, governments and international organizations to tackle child labour in agricultural supply chains.

While businesses have responsibility for their own operations and supply chains, governments are responsible for adopting and implementing the right combination of policies (or the right policy mix) that would create an environment where the protection of children and young workers and the elimination of child labour is possible (ILO, IOM, OECD and UNICEF, 2019).

Central to the right policy mix is the expansion of social protection measures in rural origin communities to reduce the necessity of seasonal migration and/or improve the likelihood that families would be able to migrate seasonally through safe and fair migration channels and hence diversify their incomes. Social protection can also address several economic and non-economic drivers of child labour among migrant communities working in agriculture by promoting economic inclusion, which would reduce the need for smallholder family labourers to send their children to work, including for (unaccompanied) seasonal migration. Replacing children’s income through cash transfer schemes is particularly effective towards preventing child labour and promoting education when they are tied to school attendance and accompanied by awareness-raising on child labour (FAO, 2020).
In addition to expanding social protection in origin communities, improving the wage and social security policies that directly affect seasonal agricultural workers is essential. Due to the informality of seasonal agricultural work, seasonal migrant workers often do not receive social protection such as maternity benefits, health care and housing. Education and training opportunities for both the migrant workers and their children are also constrained (IOM, 2019; IOM, 2013). Providing on-site services, notably education services for children and young people, is an effective way to protect seasonal migrant workers’ children from child labour, as the two cases (sugar in Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and hazelnuts in Turkey) in boxes 2 and 3 demonstrate. The inclusion of migrant workers and their children in wage and social security policies and response programmes is particularly important in times of crisis, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown (ILO and UNICEF, 2020).
Flexible, mobile and quality education options for migrant workers’ children is on the whole the backbone of a coherent response to child labour in seasonal migration. A lack of education facilities close to destination sites and in rural areas in general, an inability to transfer certificates and a lack of identity cards are among the main challenges faced by migrant children. In order to improve access to affordable education, policymakers need to put in place mechanisms that allow migrant children to (temporarily) join local school systems or have access to (non-formal) education on farms. The provision of school facilities close to or at the worksite, childhood programmes in the community-based centres where migratory agricultural workers are accommodated and language support services are a few examples. Free childcare services provided during work hours would prevent parents from being forced to take their children to the fields. This type of approach can be established and sustained through collaboration between employers, workers and local government departments. Moreover, access to early childhood education is an important strategy to ensure that migrant children enrol in primary education (Houser, 2018; Nicolai, Wales and Aiaazzi, 2017; Schelling, Weibel and Bonfoh, 2008).

Migrant workers’ children may also face constraints in accessing education due to stigma and reluctance on the part of host communities to “share services” with migrant workers, poor awareness among education providers and resource constraints in schools. While government policies stipulating free and equal access to education for all children are essential, additional initiatives to build trust and mutual acceptance and to mobilize local resources may be needed. For example, Thailand has in place an education-for-all policy that defines the right to education for all children, regardless of their nationality, migration status and so forth. This includes, notably, the right to education for children of non-registered migrant workers, both seasonal and permanent. To implement this policy, the local education office in Samut Sakhon, a major seafood processing hub with many migrant workers, has worked with local non-governmental organizations (Labour Protection Network and Raks Thai Foundation), a seafood business (Thai Union) and international organizations (ILO and UNESCO), among others, to support local schools in integrating migrant workers’ children through care centres. Thai Union supports the construction of facilities and other physical infrastructure, local non-governmental organizations provide technical support, children receive bridging education and language training that allow them to gradually integrate into mainstream education. The programme also supports after-school facilities and activities open

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8 For more information on flexible education systems, see the background paper on child labour in livestock keeping in the present series. The paper includes examples of flexible, mobile education, such as tent schools, in pastoralist communities.
to all children in the school. Local children therefore also benefit from the programme and children from all groups establish relations. Some of the centres have been sustained for a decade and have led to increased school participation for migrant workers’ children (UNICEF, 2019).

The example from Thailand also illustrates the importance of **community mobilization** to the elimination of child labour in seasonal migration. Community mobilization programmes are essential in creating consensus in destination areas that the children of migrant workers have as much a right to equal opportunities as do other children. Resident and migrant families must be part of the solution by participating in policy dialogue and decision-making processes and acting as agents of development for their own communities.

Given the interconnected nature and complexity of the drivers and impacts of seasonal migration on children, public policy responses and development actors’ interventions require an **interdisciplinary and integrated response**. Linkages between migration, child labour prevention, education, social protection, and agricultural and rural development policies and programmes are necessary to respond adequately to challenges. Several countries are adopting an integrated approach, targeting school-aged migrant children, with a focus on education, decent
employment, social protection and health programmes. For instance, the Government of Mexico is implementing the Farm Workers Assistance programme to prevent child labour on farms, to motivate children aged 6–14 years of seasonal migrant workers to attend school, and to improve access to health services. The programme is implemented during the farming season in areas that attract seasonal migrant workers. The Government is also providing grants for food and subsidies for school uniforms, supporting health care and monitoring for families, offering a food bank and food supplements, and organizing cultural activities involving dances, songs, stories and playgroups (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, 2011).

An integrated approach to prevent child labour in agriculture and provide services to at-risk children and their families requires institutional capacity development. Integrated approaches require a wide range of stakeholders at national and local levels, including government officials, the private sector, producers, employers, workers and rural communities in destination areas, to work together. Often, some stakeholders will know about agricultural production while others may know about labour laws or child protection. Therefore, training to make sure all those involved understand core concepts across their respective disciplines may be a useful investment.

To sum up, child labour in seasonal migration in agriculture can be eliminated through the adoption of policies that create an environment conducive to promoting safe and fair migration, both internationally and internally, to prevent child labour and protect young workers. The policy priorities to protect migrant workers and to address child labour are similar in that they need to address common underlying drivers such as unsafe migration practices, poverty and vulnerability, and limited access to social services. In addition to putting in place the right policy mix, multiple actors, including governments, producers, workers, employers, businesses, non-governmental organizations and international organizations, need to come together to implement comprehensive, integrated initiatives that protect migrant workers and ensure that their children do not engage in child labour in both sending and destination areas. These initiatives need to be based on solid evidence and target seasonal migration specifically to ensure that children in seasonal migration are not left behind.
About 60 percent of the sugar cane harvesters in Bolivia (Plurinational State of) are seasonal migrant workers from extremely poor areas of the country, who work in the sugar cane fields from April to November. Sugarcane harvesting, which is very labour intensive, as most of the heavy harvesting work is done manually, is associated with seasonal labour migration in many producing countries.

It is estimated that since 2008 the sugarcane harvest has mobilized almost 10,000 children and adolescents. The work undertaken by children and adolescents in sugar cane harvesting is considered to be in the category of the worst forms of child labour. They work under high temperatures and are involved in burning, cutting (with machetes), de-topping, stacking, and loading sugar cane. Also, they are often involved in the application of agro-chemicals.

The Bolivian Ministry of Labour is working with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) along with local civil society organizations to eliminate child labour in sugarcane harvesting by improving access to education in the harvesting areas, implementing more child labour inspections and raising awareness and knowledge at the local level. Awareness raising includes outreach to farm worker families, including seasonal migrant workers’ families, to raise awareness on what constitutes child labour and hazardous child labour. The focus is not only on farm work, but also on domestic chores as many girls are prevented from attending education and perform long hours of domestic chores at an early age to free their mothers’ time for work in the plantations. Moreover, the project supported the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements covering a prohibition of child labour and improved working and living conditions for migrant families.

The initiative also includes the establishment of school gardens that can be used for learning purposes and that provide students with school feeding. The school gardens are a key element in ensuring that children enrol in and attend school rather than going to the fields.

Box 3: Addressing child labour in Turkey’s hazelnut production

Turkey has identified child labour in seasonal agriculture as one of the worst forms of child labour and aims to eliminate it by 2023. Turkey has launched *An Integrated Model for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Seasonal Agriculture in Hazelnut Harvesting* to be implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. Although in decline, child labour remains prevalent in seasonal hazelnut harvesting. Hazelnut production involves mainly manual work and production is heavily reliant on seasonal hired labour. Every year, the start of the summer harvest (August to mid-September) is marked by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of seasonal migrant workers and their families who contribute to the harvesting of 75% of the global hazelnut production. Children alongside their parents are involved in the hazelnut harvesting in order to secure the subsistence of their families and regularly conduct dangerous work, for instance carrying heavy loads up and down steep hillsides under high temperatures, with detrimental and lifetime health consequences.

Since 2013, the Turkish Government has received support from ILO and Ferrero for a project aimed at eliminating child labour in hazelnut production. The project has supported education provision for children in hazelnut growing communities, including seasonal migrant workers’ children. The project also supports capacity development for stakeholders in the hazelnut growing areas and nationally, for example through facilitating sharing of experiences.

The Government’s initiative is also supported by the Rainforest Alliance, which also seeks to provide education alternatives to children in the hazelnut producing communities. Hazelnut harvesting often coincides with school holidays with children ending up working due to the lack of activities. Therefore, Durak Hazelnut, the District Governor, and the rainforest Alliance organised summer school for children in the area in an effort to prevent them from engaging in hazardous activities during harvest. The Rainforest Alliance has representatives in the hazelnut growing areas and an established working relationship with local governments. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, they were able to work with the health department to ensure that protective measures for migrant workers were also included in new COVID-19 regulations.

The Fair Labor Association (FLA), with Balsu Gida (Balsu) and Olam Progida (Olam), two of Nestlé’s main suppliers, also implemented a project in hazelnut growing areas in Turkey, aiming to prevent child labour. This project that took place between 2016 and 2017, conducted research with hazelnut farmers and communities and undertook outreach activities to inform seasonal migrant workers about their rights and link migrant families with off-site day care facilities.

Sources: Caobisco, (2021); Fair Labor Association, (2021); Rainforest Alliance, (2020); European Food Agency, (2020).
First and foremost, it is recommended that governments, international organizations, businesses, migrant workers’ organizations, non-governmental organizations and others undertake **research on child labour in seasonal migration in agriculture as a matter of priority.** Though there is a significant knowledge base on the protection of migrant workers’ rights, children on the move and child labour, very little research has been undertaken on seasonal migration in agriculture and the links to child labour. A better knowledge base would pave the way for evidence-based policy formulation and programming. This includes, not least, producing reliable estimates on child labour and seasonal migration. Failing to develop a solid evidence base may lead to children in seasonal migrant families remaining invisible, and therefore seriously left behind, when development policies are formulated and implemented.

Research should also include identifying the dynamics of different **policy mixes** and the ways in which recruitment and migration policies, **education policies and social protection policies** impact children in seasonal migration and their families and how these policies may contribute to the prevention and elimination of child labour in seasonal migration. This would enable the adoption of policies in which the particular needs of children who migrate seasonally are considered. Moreover, the results of the research would feed into the implementation of integrated programmes and interventions that address the multiple and complex underlying drivers of child labour in seasonal migration.
For integrated initiatives to become reality, multiple actors must come together and collaborate across different disciplines, such as agricultural development, education and social protection, and through different means, such as migration management, labour inspection and local government. Moreover, sustainable solutions need to be identified and implemented with migrant worker communities (in both areas of origin and areas of destination) and destination area communities. In both cases, these activities would entail empowering children and young people in the concerned communities to participate in the decision-making processes.\(^9\)

The implementation of the right policy mix and the integrated initiatives needs to be supported by awareness-raising and capacity development on child labour in seasonal migration in agriculture. It is recommended that international organizations, research institutions and local, national and international businesses and civil society organizations (such as migrant workers associations, youth groups and local non-governmental organizations), as well as agricultural employers, facilitate labour inspections during peak agricultural seasons, raise awareness in both migrant worker and destination area communities, undertake monitoring and so forth. Such support would include international and local businesses performing due diligence and incentivizing business practices and production systems that do not drive child labour, in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

\(^9\) In the present series, for more information on youth empowerment, see the background paper on youth employment and child labour in agriculture.
References


References


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