



TÜRK
KIZILAY

THE EFFECTS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION ON CHILD LABOR

THE SITUATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN TÜRKİYE

2024



DEPARTMENT OF MIGRATION PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION



TÜRK
KIZILAY

"We would like to express our sincere thanks to the staff of the Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers Protection and Cohesion Program who contributed to this research with their valuable experience and insights."

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Abbreviations

EU: European Union
ASHB: Ministry of Family and Social Services
UN: United Nations
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
CFS: Child-Friendly Space
PMM: Presidency of Migration Management
DGMM: Directorate General of Migration Management
IFRC: International Federation of Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies
ILO: International Labour Organization
MNE: Ministry of National Education
SYDV: Social Cooperation and Solidarity Foundation
TLS: Turkish Language Association
CC: Community Center
CMPC: Community-Based Migration Programs
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
FIPL: Foreigners and International Protection Law

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The Effects of Irregular Migration on Child Labor: The Situation of Migrant Children in Türkiye

Abstract

This study aims to identify irregular migration mobility within the concept of migration, its sub-causes and consequences, its risks for host and origin countries, and to research its effects in Türkiye, one of the largest irregular migration routes in the world, with a special focus on migrant children.

In this migration mobility which has a dynamic and political agenda-driven character, the number of not only forced migrants but also the smugglers who take advantage of desperation of these people has been increasing day by day. This rising trend of the irregular migration flows calls for tightening mechanisms to combat irregular migration on a global scale. In this context, it has become important to reinforce further the legal measures to better protect displaced migrants and border security.

As the research methodology, a combination of methods were used. For the fieldwork part of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted and recorded with professional staff in the field of child protection and access to education at TRCS Community Centers in the selected provinces. In addition, the research included a questionnaire on migrant child labor and irregular migration, which was administered to all Protection and Cohesion Program field staff via the Kobotoolbox platform. Following the questionnaire responses and the semi-structured interviews with sample group, the qualitative research method was followed by interpreting the observations and experiences. Further, evaluations were made in light of quantitative data on vulnerability risks and case intervention stages, collected from the Case Software of Community Centers, contributing to the research. A literature review was also conducted in order to gain insight from the current data and academic research on irregular migration and child protection in the world and in Türkiye.

This research will identify the rights violations and potential risks which children in irregular-migrant households without registered identification are exposed to, and evaluate their impact on child labor.

Keywords: Migration, Irregular Migration, Child Protection, Child Neglect, Child Labor

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration mobility means geographical mobility of people, either voluntarily or forced. According to the definition of the Turkish Language Association (TDK),

"...Migration is the act of individuals or communities moving from one country to another country, from one settlement to another settlement for economic, social, political reasons..." (TDK, 2024)[1]

What makes the concept of migration a deeper phenomenon beyond a mere relocation is the effects of both its sub-causes and the variability of its implications on the social cohesion. "International Migration", a type of migration, means the movement of people to another country, leading to temporary or permanent resettlement (Bratram D., Poros, M. V., & Monforte, P. 2017). International migration is also a mobility that has implications on economic, political and sociocultural dynamics. The political and sociocultural effects of migration in destination and origin countries vary with the sub-causes of migration (voluntarily or forced).

“

Due to the multi-layered nature of the concept of migration, it would be unrealistic to analyze it in a rigid framework and to ignore its nature which changes and evolves as world and country-based dynamics change. Although it is possible to categorize migration types according to a few basic indicators, it is very difficult to properly categorize and analyze some migration movements due to their unforeseeable and irregular natures. The Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) Law No. 6458 is a legal framework that aims to ensure migration take place in a regular and planned manner and regulates the entry, exit, residence and work permits of foreigners in Türkiye.

[1]<https://sozluk.gov.tr/>

Due to its geographical location, Türkiye has historically been on the migration route as both a transit and destination country. In the last decade, Türkiye has experienced intense migration waves caused by the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis. In addition to migration flows from Syria, involving millions of people, there have recently been migration flows to Türkiye following large-scale humanitarian crises, i.e. Taliban Crisis in Afghanistan and Russian Aggression in Ukraine. It is important to strengthen mechanisms to combat irregular migration in Türkiye, which is a destination and transit country for displaced migrants, particularly from Syria and Afghanistan. Cooperation and coordination between destination, transit and origin countries is essential in the combat against irregular migration. In order to make migration mobility controlled and secure, the public authorities, especially the Ministry of Interior and the Presidency of Migration Management, use collaboration and tracking systems at national and international level.

Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) defines irregular migration as:

"...For destination countries, irregular migration includes people who have arrived at the country illegally or those who have arrived legally but not left within the legal exit periods; for origin countries, people who have crossed the borders of the country without following legal procedures. For transit countries, they are the people who have entered the country legally or illegally from an origin country in order to reach a destination country, and temporarily stayed in and left the country..." (GIB, 2023)

The Turkish Red Crescent Society has a 155-year long history in the national and international humanitarian aid activities. Directorate of Migration Services, established in 2014 under Turkish Red Crescent Immigration and Refugee Services, provides support to migrants at the human dignity-based quality and standards in line with the principles and values of the International Red Crescent Red Cross Movement in accordance with the role of Turkish Red Crescent as an assistant of the state. Migration Services has three departments: Migration Operations, Migrant Protection and Migration Programs Development and Coordination.

Migration Programs Development and Coordination implements and includes "Kızılaykart" Cash-Based Support Programs and Community-Based Migration Programs (CBMP). Kızılaykart is currently the world's largest cash-based social safety net, actively providing support to vulnerable migrants.

Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers, which were initially established to provide emergency protection interventions to those forced to cross the Syrian border due to the war, have transformed into more dynamic, inclusive structures that can develop different intervention mechanisms and include local capacity. Professional staff of protection and cohesion, health and psychosocial support, socio-economic empowerment, child protection programs at the community centers has been developing protective and remedial interventions for vulnerable people of both host and migrant communities. One of the most important intervention contents of the Protection and Social Cohesion Program is "Child Protection". Case intervention mechanisms are being developed to end the vulnerabilities of children at risk of protection. Child labor is the most prevalent case, especially among migrant children, which requires protective interventions. Identification, awareness raising, internal and external referrals, official reporting and tracking are systematically implemented at community centers to combat child labor.

Child labor is very common in migrant families, either irregular or regular. In this families, children are not only deprived of access to formal education, social assistance, health and other services mainly due to identity problems, but also exposed to the risks such as being the breadwinner of the household, being employed in conditions beyond their physical and mental development, and early marriage.

[1] Kızılaykart was first introduced for Turkish citizens in 2011 and continued with emergency food support to Syrians who were forced to flee their country in March 2011 due to the civil conflict in Syria. Having then made a part of In-Camp Food Support Program in 2012 to meet the basic needs of vulnerable groups, Kızılaykart transformed into a platform hosting five ongoing programs/projects on different topics as of 2021.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Aim of the Study

This study aims to identify the effects and risks of irregular migration mobility within the concept of migration and to analyze child labor, which is today one of the most prominent effects of irregular migration in Türkiye and has become widespread among migrant children.

2.2. Methodology of Research

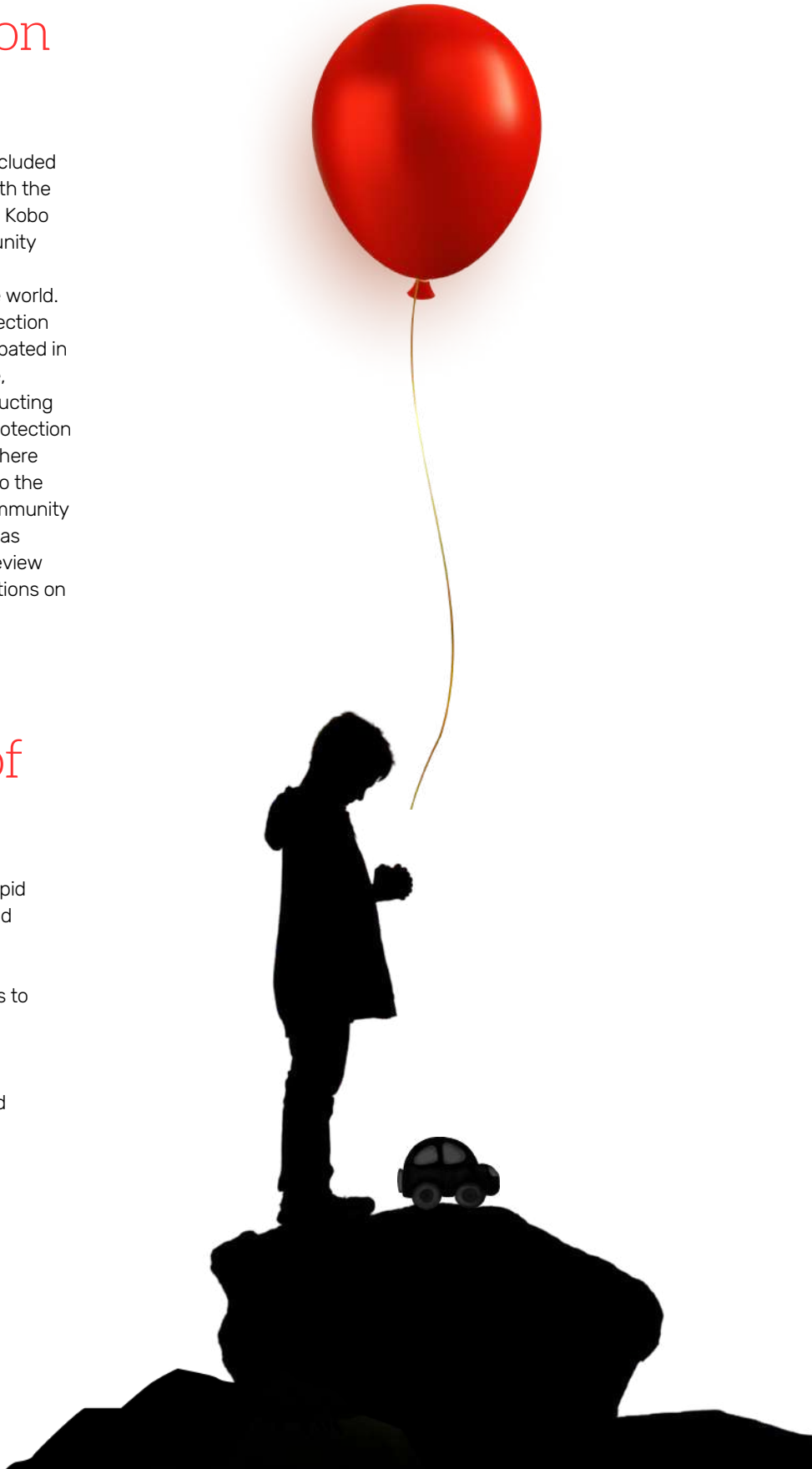
As the research methodology, a combination of methods were used. For the fieldwork part of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted and recorded with professional staff in the field of child protection and access to education at TRCS Community Centers in the selected provinces. In addition, the research included a questionnaire on migrant child labor and irregular migration, which was administered to 58 persons, being the Protection and Cohesion Program field staff, via the Kobotoolbox platform. Following the questionnaire responses and the semi-structured interviews with sample group, the qualitative research method was followed by interpreting the observations and experiences. Further, evaluations were made in light of quantitative data on protection needs and case intervention stages, collected from the Case Software of Community Centers. A literature review was also conducted in order to gain insight from the current data and academic research on irregular migration and child protection in the world and in Türkiye.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools of the research included semi-structured focus group interviews with the sample group, questionnaire responses via Kobo ToolBox platform, outputs of TRCS Community Centers Software, references from current publications and websites from around the world. 58 people from 20 community center protection and cohesion teams in 19 provinces participated in the survey. In addition to the questionnaire, qualitative findings were obtained by conducting one-to-one focus group interviews with protection and integration staff from five provinces where migrant child labor is prevalent according to the case software. Outputs from the TRCS Community Centers Case Software were also included as supporting quantitative data. A literature review was made on the current data and publications on migration and child labor.

2.4. Limitations of Research

The main limitation of the research is the rapid change in migration dynamics in Türkiye and the world, and the lack of up-to-date data releases, especially for migrant children. Another limitation is related to the obstacles to follow up the cases, as identified at the community centers, relating to the persons without a formal identification due to the constantly changing registered address and other details.



3. MIGRATION AND CHILD LABOR

3.1. Definition of Child Labor

The most common sub-cause of child labor, which is one of the obstacles for children to access to the basic human rights, is poverty. A mindset develops that partially or completely deprives the child from education and even, increasing cost of education make it more common for the child to work instead (Bau, N., Rotemberg, M., Shah, M., & Steinberg, B. 2020). Child labor is a fact that needs to be combated, as it is fueled by the low level of welfare of children and their caregivers, lack of access to adequate livelihoods, and lack of respect for children's basic human rights. .

From an historical point of view, the "Industrial Revolution" is a period in which countries took high-scale initiatives for production-oriented development, and children were considered one of the means of production, and child labor was seen as legitimate. The Industrial Revolution increased the incentive for all members of the family to be involved in production regardless of age and gender (Atatanır, 2022). Over time, social orders that normalized the use of child labor tended to ignore their vital needs such as health, shelter, nutrition and education.

Today, children's rights are included in the action plans of many organizations that advocate for the observance of the rights to life on a global scale, particularly United Nations (UN) agencies. One of the most visible violations of children's rights is child labor. Ending child labor through both information and awareness raising and legal sanctions is one of the priority agendas of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines child labor as:

"... work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous or harmful to children,
- interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely, or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work..."(ILO, 2021)



Child labor is one of the major violations of rights that interferes with the physical and mental development of the child. In order to combat child labor, which is directly and indirectly affected by child poverty, it is important to adopt social policies that will provide supports to increase the welfare of the child and his/her family and strengthen their socioeconomic existence (ILO & UNICEF, 2022). Therefore, in households with child labor, the socioeconomic self-sufficiency and personal skills of household members, including the child, need to be improved. It is important to extend the inclusiveness of policies to combat child labor and to improve the situations that may directly or indirectly affect children.

“

It is essential for healthy communities that children live and grow into adulthood in conditions suitable for their physical and mental development. Although poverty is the most common reason for child labor, there are many sub-causes including, but not limited to, cultural perceptions and habits, health problems of adults in the household, and businesses that prioritize child labor. These sub-causes are influenced by social dynamics, local and global agendas and policies, and the historical framework.



3.2. Forced Migration and Child Labor

The number of forcibly displaced people in the world increased rapidly to over 110 million in 2023 (UNHCR, 2023). The high number of people who have been forcibly displaced due to reasons such as war, conflict, natural disasters, other climate crisis disasters, hunger, etc. shows the severity of humanitarian crises that the origin countries have been facing and are needed to be combated.



Children under the age of 18 makes up

**40% of
(43.4 millions)**

The high number of children exposed to the risks of forced migration as well as severity of the risks they may be exposed to during and after the migration are also alarming.

Today, Türkiye (3.4 million), Iran (3.4 million), Germany (2.5 million), Colombia (2.5 million) and Pakistan (2.1 million) are the top five countries with the highest number of forced migrants in the world (UNHCR, 2023) . The number of forcibly displaced people in Türkiye has increased rapidly over the last 11 years, especially after the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis. Its location as both a neighboring country and a transit country on the European border has made it inevitable to be affected by this massive migration mobility. Regime Revolution in Afghanistan and the Russian Aggression in Ukraine, despite not of the same scale as Syria, have also led Türkiye to host other mass forced migrations in recent years, Given the high number of migrant children in Türkiye, the international and national cooperation and legal regulations is indispensable to protect these children.



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The legal framework of Türkiye and international conventions that protect children against rights violations also include migrant children. All over the world, the protection of the best interests of children, regardless of their ethnic origin and other characteristics, is covered by international conventions. It is quite common for children in families affected by forced migration to be exposed to neglect in terms of taking household responsibilities (taking care of family members at home), providing for the household, and basic needs (nutrition, hygiene, education, privacy, safety, self-care).

[1] <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

Age Range	Boys	Girls	Total
0-4 Age	204.108	191.366	395.474
5-9 Age	275.742	259.997	535.739
10-14 Age	187.878	178.54	366.426
15-18 Age	126.25	116.54	242.795

Figure 1: Age ranges and number of Syrian children in Türkiye (January, 2024)



According to January 2024 data from the Presidency of Migration Management, in Türkiye between:

3.181.022
registered Syrian refugees

the number of Syrian child is:

1.540.434
(Even this figure which does not include informal migrant children, the number is extremely high.)

The legal framework of Türkiye and international conventions that protect children against rights violations also include migrant children. All over the world, the protection of the best interests of children, regardless of their ethnic origin and other characteristics, is covered by international conventions. It is quite common for children in families affected by forced migration to be exposed to neglect in terms of taking household responsibilities (taking care of family members at home), providing for the household, and basic needs (nutrition, hygiene, education, privacy, safety, self-care). According to Dayioğlu, Kırdar and Koç : The tendency of children, who migrated while attending the basic education in the origin country, to not attend education in their destination country is mainly caused by the reasons such as not wanting to attend classes along with younger peers, language barrier, non-adaptation to the new education system, and non-adjustment to the relocation, besides poverty. This points out that the school adaptation of children under the age of 8 who will be schooled for the first time in the destination country may be higher than that of children of older ages (Dayioğlu, M., Kırdar, M.G., Koç İ. 2023) . While even violations of the rights of adult migrant workers are considered as an important factor in the analysis of informal and low cost labor, it is clear that migrant children should be approached in a much more vulnerable context.

3.3. Activities of Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers to Combat Child Labor

Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers, which were launched to develop emergency protection interventions for those displaced by the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis, started their activities under the supervision and coordination of the Turkish Red Crescent Society, with funding support from the IFRC (International Federation of Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies) and the EU (European Union). The community centers, which started their activities in Şanlıurfa in 2015, now provide multidimensional protection and social cohesion, socioeconomic empowerment, child protection program, psychosocial support activities to both host and migrant communities with 20 community centers in 19 provinces.

In the nine years since the community centers were first established, they have not only increased in number, but have moved beyond emergency protection interventions to offer long-term empowerment programs for both migrant and host communities. Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers work with local institutions and organizations to carry out counselling, guidance and intervention activities. There are 812,015 beneficiaries currently registered in the community centers' software. Monitoring and evaluation activities are meticulously maintained and reported.

The "*Protection and Cohesion Program*", which carries out field work under the Community-Based Migration Programs Coordination, aims to develop remedial interventions that will end or minimize risk factors for individuals and communities at risk of protection needs. Case identification and interventions that suit the protection needs of migrants without up-to-date identity records are developed on the basis of individual applications and counselling, field visits and needs assessments, internal and external referrals.

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In the nine years since the community centers were first established, they have not only increased in number, but have moved beyond emergency protection interventions to offer long-term empowerment programs for both migrant and host communities



In the "Child Protection and Access to Education" activities, one of the components of the Protection and Cohesion Program, preventive and resolving interventions are developed against all forms of neglect and abuse against children. In Türkiye, it is a legal obligation for school-age migrant children to attend compulsory primary and secondary education just as all children. Interventions such as household visits, awareness trainings and seminars, and outreach through communication tools are the most common field activities of community centers to raise awareness among migrant families who do not fulfill this obligation. For children who are identified as absent from education and whose protection risks are determined according to their sub-causes, cooperation with competent institutions, especially the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) Directorates and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), is carried out and reporting is made. While reporting is made about cases such as children's equivalency exams, registration procedures, absenteeism, multifaceted case management interventions are developed to detect the cases that are exposed to protection risk in children's households and surroundings. For example, support is provided to other adults and children in a family, who is visited due to the interrupted education of the children, according to the identified protection risk. Youth Advisory Committees are established in youth-friendly areas to promote social engagement and involvement of adolescents in decision-making mechanisms. Youth Advisory Committees are designed with an emphasis on social diversity; for example, in the region where the committee is located, adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 determine the agenda and are supported in their responsibility for services. Programs such as the structured psychosocial support program, psychological well-being program, psychological resilience development program for children and young people within the Children's Programs aim to strengthen the psychological resilience of children and young people, recognize their support mechanisms and discover their strengths.

“

Child labor is one of the most common risks encountered at community centers in interventions that have been made to protect migrant children. It is common all over the world for migrant children to become breadwinners, to drop out of school and to be used as an informal source of low cost labor. According to the case software system of community centers, the top five provinces with the highest number of child workers were İstanbul, Gaziantep, Adana, İzmir and Kahramanmaraş.

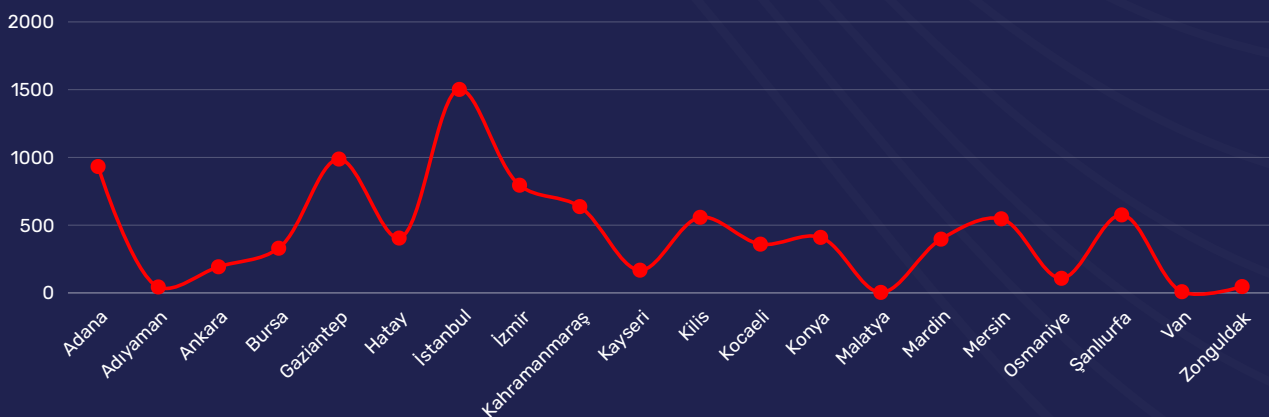


Figure 2: Number of Child Workers Registered in Case Software in the Regions where Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers are located

According to the case software system of community centers, the top five provinces with the highest number of child workers were İstanbul, Gaziantep, Adana, İzmir and Kahramanmaraş. The common characteristics of these provinces are the density of workshops, the fact that they are in the metropolitan category, and that they are the provinces with the highest number of the migrant population has settled. (In provinces without community centers, case recording is made through community centers in neighboring provinces).

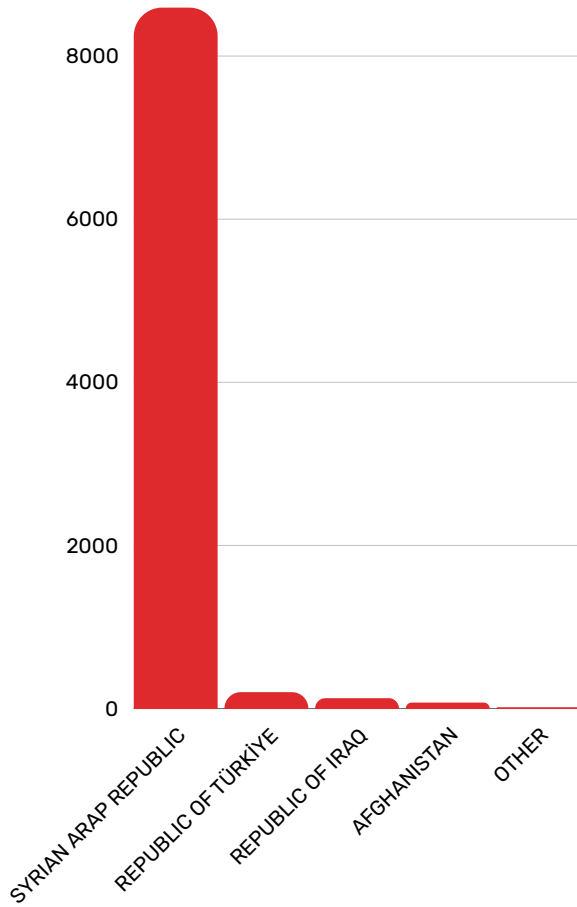


Figure 3: Nationality-Based Distribution of Child Workers Recorded in Community Centers Case Software

Although the rate of child labor among unregistered migrants is very high, it is not reflected in statistics. Therefore, combating irregular migration and the official registration of migrants is an important step in the fight against child labor. Migrants without registered identity are provided with counseling and referral support at community centers. The Presidency of Migration Management is the institution that will inform them of their registration status and assess their suitability for issuing an identity card.



4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Gender and Age

According to the findings of the study, the boys make up the majority (78.2%) of migrant children who work to provide for the household. In migrant families with child labor, the boys are more likely than girls to work "or forced by their families to work". On the other hand, it is common for girls to carry out household works such as caring the elderly and sick at home and helping with household chores.

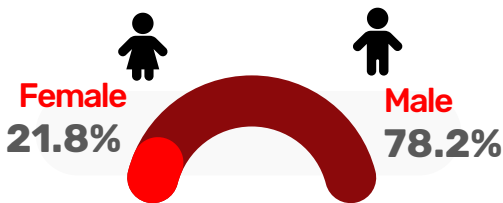


Figure 4: Gender-based Distribution of Child Workers in Community Centers Case Software System

In focus group discussions with professional field workers, it was reported that migrant child workers usually start working at the age of 10-11 and that the 15-17 age group makes up the largest share. The Community Centers' case software system also confirms this feedback. The majority of child workers are in the 15-17 age group. Children are usually employed in jobs that require physical labor, such as workshops, for daily or weekly wages. For this reason, as the child grows older and the piecework production/performance increases, the rates they receive also increase. Although the wages received by working children vary, they remain well below the minimum wage and are informal.

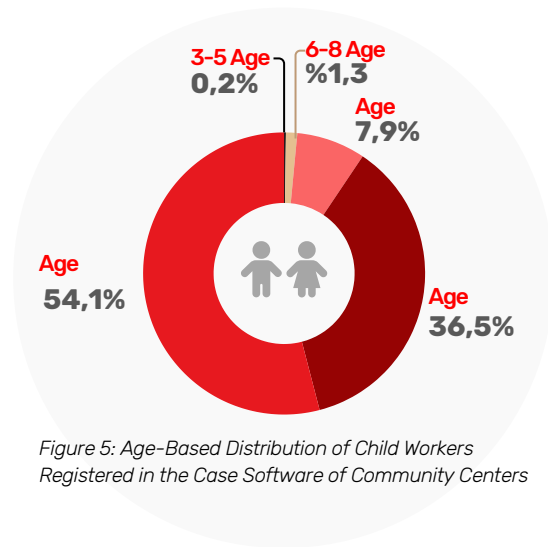
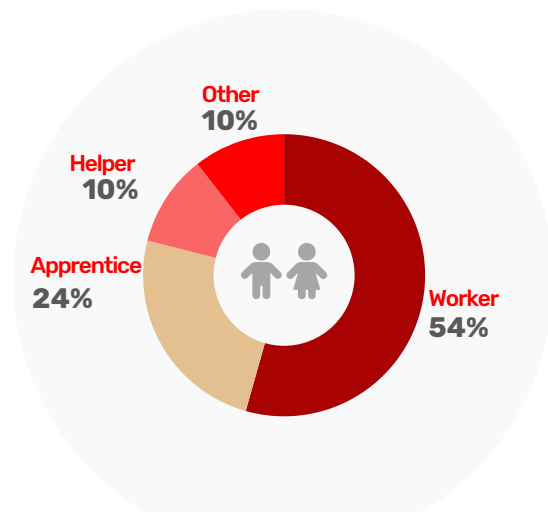


Figure 5: Age-Based Distribution of Child Workers Registered in the Case Software of Community Centers

4.2. Sectors and Work Titles

It is common for migrant child worker to be employed in a low-paid, informal and uninsured service and production sectors.



Şekil 6: Work titles of migrant child workers according to the research respondents

The respondents reported that the job titles of migrant children are generally laborer (54%), apprentice (24%), helper (10%) or other (middleman, intermediate personnel, service personnel...etc.). Their wages are paid on a daily or weekly basis. It is also quite common for migrant girls to work in the household, such as caring for siblings or the sick, or doing household chores. Children who work at home are overlooked because they, as a child labor, are not visible as much as those who work outside.

“

The clustering of children in a few sectors is mainly caused by reasons such as the adults in the family doing those jobs and the child starting to work in the same routine, it being easier to be employed informally, especially in jobs such as agricultural labor or local shop apprenticeships, employers preferring children due to lower wages, and children's ability work faster than adults. Among children who collect paper and recyclable materials, it is common to find those who do it as a second job, after school or as a support to family members.

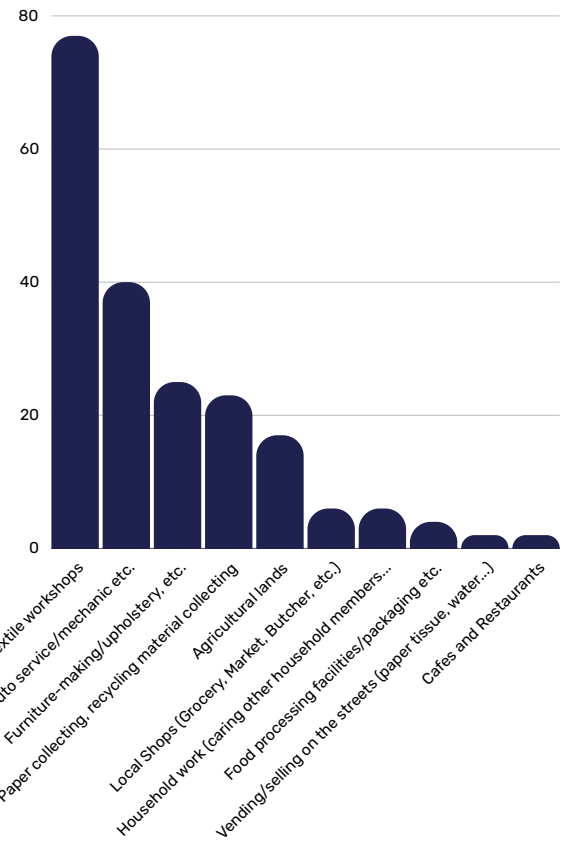


Figure 7: Most Common Sectors Migrant Children is Employed According to Research Respondents



Mobile teams (Mobile Child Friendly Spaces and Mobile Psychosocial Support Teams) of Community-Based Migration Programs work with seasonal permanent and mobile agricultural workers, especially during the summers. Child Friendly Space (CFS) and Psychosocial Support services are provided in more than 60 tent areas in provinces where seasonal permanent and mobile agricultural worker is common (Gaziantep, Adana, Mersin, Zonguldak etc.). The aim here is to ensure that children are directed to areas of activity where there is fun education and activities. TTGP Mobile teams work in these areas. The presence of Mobile CFSs and Mobile PSS teams, especially in hard-to-reach locations, is very important in terms of service accessibility. Community Based Migration Programs Coordination Protection and Cohesion Program: In 18 provinces and 19 community centers, they carry out identification, reporting and awareness-raising activities against employment of children, including for household works, in their regions..



In the field survey of the research, 58 people from the protection and integration program field staff of community centers in all provinces participated in the field survey, while one-to-one focus group interviews were conducted with the professional protection staff of the five provinces (Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Adana, Gaziantep) where the incidence of migrant child workers is the highest.



In the fieldwork of the research, it was concluded that the sectoral capacity of the province in which migrant children workers, excluding household workers, reside affects their jobs. In the same province, jobs vary according to regional characteristics. The study areas are clustered according to the industrial and agricultural production capacities of the provinces.

There is a high concentration of migrant children working in shoe and handbag making in Şehitkamil and Şahinbey districts of Gaziantep, with seasonal agricultural fields in Araban, Islahiye and Nurdağı districts. Migrant child labor is common in furniture-making facilities, workshops and carpentry shops in the Siteler Industrial Region in Altındağ, Ankara, where migrant children are also encountered in the automotive service sector. The number of migrant children working in textile workshops in and around Adana center is quite high. Seasonal agricultural labor, including children of migrant families, is highly concentrated in Tarsus Tuzla Karataş, where Mersin and Adana meet. Migrant children working in industry in İzmir generally work in shoemaking shops in Bornova, textile workshops in Bayraklı, and the furniture making in Karabağlar. Since the industries in İstanbul are far away from the city center, there is a high concentration of migrant children working in the workshops rather than in industrial regions. In İstanbul, the workshops where migrant children are concentrated include textiles, shoemaking and bag-making. At the same time, in all provinces where community centers are located, there are migrant children working on the streets with their family members doing daily jobs such as scrap dealing, vending, selling paper tissue and collecting paper.



4.3. Main Household and Social Impacts on the Migrant Child Labor

4.3.1. Poverty

Poverty, which is known to be the most widespread and deepest root cause of child labor, has the same effect on migrant children. In particular, families who are affected from the forced migration have left behind their jobs and other sources of livelihood, educational continuity, properties, and work routines. The process of looking for and finding a job in their new settlements takes a long time and sometimes does not happen at all. According to the field survey, the reasons that have prevented migrant families from working at jobs that will bring regular income to their households mainly include the long-term dependence on social assistance, sectoral recessions due to the aggravated global and country-based economic crises, the pandemic, household responsibilities of single parents, health problems that arise during the war and on the migration route, social cohesion problems, ethnic exclusion, language barrier, low educational level. Particularly male children of families are likely to be forced to work or choose to do so themselves.

“

Poverty is the main factor that ubiquitously applies to all school-age migrant child workers. Other factors are shaped around the main factor of poverty. Meeting the physical and psychological needs of the child in the household is almost overlooked.

4.3.2. Low Awareness on the Educational Continuity

As a result of the fieldwork, surveys and one-to-one interviews, it is concluded that educational continuity of the children are commonly neglected, with boys, in particular, to undertake the household's livelihood from the age of 10-12. .

“

There is sometimes a habitual traditional attitude that boys work outside the household while girls taking care of household chores and other family members.

It is important to note that parents have low level of awareness on the fact that migrant children at school age must legally enroll in schools, as is found out while providing information on the issue during field visits to migrant families. .

According to the outputs of interviews and questionnaire with field staff of the community centers, the second most common reason for employment of migrant children is the low awareness of parents or caretakers about education and the importance of continuity of education (43.8%).

“

The widespread traditional practice of children contributing to the livelihoods of household, including household chores, after the age of 10 indirectly leads these children to be unaware of their rights..

4.3.3 Sociocultural Habits and Social Cohesion

In migrant families, sociocultural habits are also highly influential on the children undertaking the livelihood or household responsibilities.

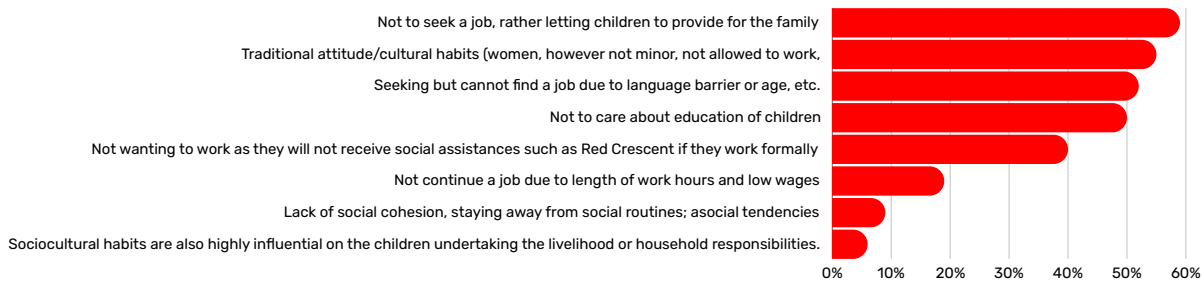


Figure 8: Sub-Reasons for Able-Adults (Parent, Caretaker, Sibling) to Not Having a Regular Job in Households with Child Labor

It is reported that it is common for adults in the household to work for a short periods of time and then quit because they cannot adapt to the working hours and work routines of Türkiye. Beneficiaries who find working hours too long and work start times too early have reported resistance to regular employment. For these reasons, it is common for children to work instead of adults who do not have a regular income-generating job.

Reported also is the prevalence of the attitude that encourages women and girls to engage in household works, denying them to seek and work outside the home. Especially in the single-female parent families, it is common for the male children of the family instead of the parent to work and provide for the livelihood.

It is common for migrant children to take considerably less time to learn a new language than adults. It is also common for adults in the household not to look for or find a job due to language barriers. For adults who are unable to communicate in Turkish, children in the household provide translation support at official procedures and in public spaces. Especially since women in the family spend more time at home, their level of learning and speaking Turkish relatively lags behind the others.

Another common occurrence is that employers do not employ migrants just because they are migrants, or, if any, employ them without social security and for lower wages. Even if the applicant is qualified for a job, they are sometimes not employed just because they are migrants. Another reason for inaccessibility to a job is that employers prefer children over adults in migrant families for lower wages and more overtime.

Also common is the peer bullying and discrimination in schools, and migrant children dropping out of school due to the tendency of ghettoization of the regions. Among those who choose not to attend school and drop out the school, boys, in particular, usually starts working. It is reported that parents are sometimes involved in prejudices and conflicts between host and migrant children at educational institutions. Children who feel marginalized at school are less likely to follow their courses and homework.

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According to the aforementioned findings of the research, social cohesion issues between migrant and host communities are directly or indirectly influential in increased levels of child labor.

4.3.4 Safety Violations against Children

Inadequate or non-existent occupational safety measures and children's inherent vulnerability to many forms of neglect and abuse in the workplaces are among the most prominent vulnerability risks. The lack of precautions against injuries from heavy machinery and cutting tools in workshops, informal and uninsured employment of children preventing them to access to the judiciary remedies for violations of their rights, and the employment of children in jobs beyond their physical and mental capacity make them psychologically more vulnerable. In workplaces without occupational safety measures, not only migrant children but workers of all ages and legal status are at risk. It is important to increase the frequency of inspections and penal sanctions against workplaces.

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Reported also is the prevalence of the attitude that encourages women and girls to engage in household works, denying them to seek and work outside the home. Especially in the single-female parent families, it is common for the male children of the family instead of the parent to work and provide for the livelihood.



4.4. The Relationship between Child Labor and Irregular Migration

It is common for children of irregular migrant families without valid temporary identification numbers to be directly or indirectly exposed to child labor. During the fieldwork of this research, there are common reports on the practices developed against the increasing irregular migration at national and global level during 2023 and their remarkable effects.

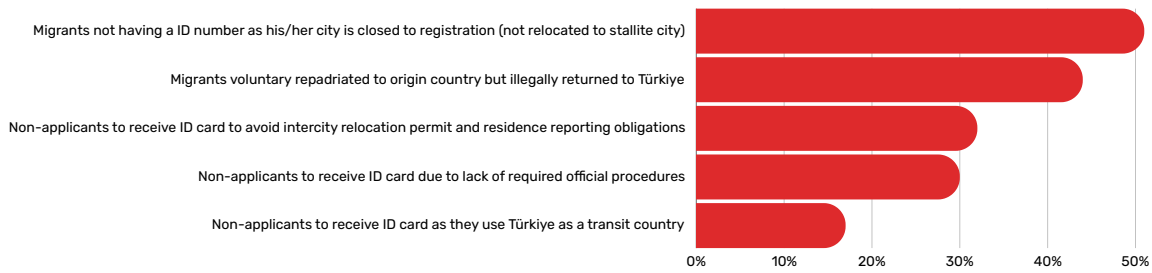


Figure 9: Major Categories of Irregular Migrants in Türkiye According to the Field Outputs of the Research

Official controls to ensure that migrants reside in the province where they are registered and receive public services have been increased as part of the fight against irregular migration. Therefore, it is reported that people who do not live in the province where they are registered or who do not have a valid ID number have become less mobile in urban areas to avoid controls. It is commonly observed that migrant families without registration cannot have access to many social assistant program, including Kızılaykart, and, therefore, to the basic needs such as food, as well as public services such as education and healthcare, and adults of the such families mostly remain in their homes or neighbors. In families facing poverty, especially male children work informally at unskilled jobs for low wages. The likelihood decreases for the field works of Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers and other organizations to identify school-age children of irregular migrant families, refer them to school or develop protection interventions for them. It is common for migrant families to not have a current, regular residential address or for those who rented a house, at least without a lease, to not share their address details. Especially in Çukurova Region and its surrounding, among migrant families who move around as mobile agricultural workers, it has become widespread for people who do not declare a current address because of fearing a restriction code to be added their identity card due to not being present at the declared address during an address investigation. On the other hand, the fact that addresses other than residential addresses are no longer officially recognized has also led to the tents not being able to register official residence. In the past, tent sites used to register through numbering, which is currently discontinued.

In addition to those who choose to be irregular migrants for the reasons mentioned above, there are also migrants, albeit fewer in number, who are not sufficiently aware of the legal sanctions and identity procedures. One of the protection intervention tools of Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers is to provide referral to institutions, information and follow-up support for those who have never started the application and completion of their identity processes.

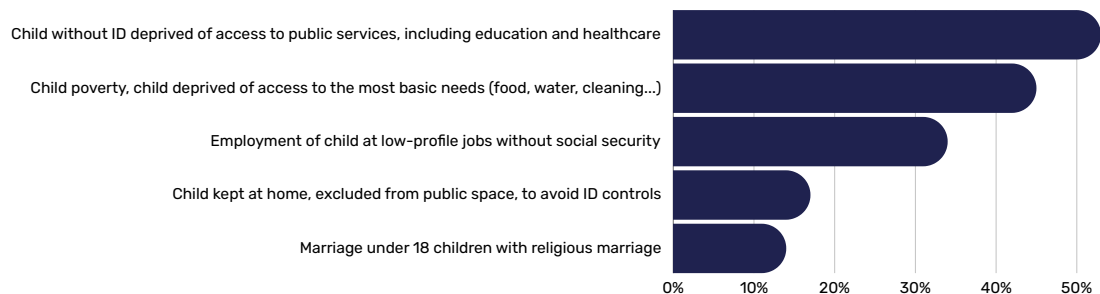


Figure 10: Risks of Irregular Migrant Children According to the Field Outputs of the Research

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Children of migrant families who do not have valid temporary identification numbers are exposed to risks that negatively affect their physical and mental development both inside and outside the household. The lack of access to basic public services for migrants makes it very difficult to identify violations of rights (violence, abuse, child marriage, child labor, etc.) that they are exposed to in the household or in the community and to develop protection interventions. It is understood that unregistered migration is one of the deepest obstacles for children to receive household and public support for their needs.



5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The most effective way to combat child labor is the fight against poverty. Risks inside and outside the household that may cause children to work in jobs that may harm their mental and physical development, interrupt their education, and restrict their rights and freedoms should be identified and ended with appropriate interventions.
- In single-parent migrant families, especially where the parent is female, especially, it is common for boys to work. Supportive social and in-kind assistance for single-parent households and activities to raise awareness on education should be increased.
- Migrant families take their children out of school due to the cost of uniforms, stationery and other school supplies and some of these children work. Meeting the school-age needs and expectations of children in migrant families without sufficient means of livelihood is important in combating child labor directly and indirectly.
- Children attending the school need access to balanced and adequate food in order to maintain their physical development in a healthy way. Poor households cannot afford the cost of preparing daily balanced meals for children. Adding nutritional support to children's school routine may also be one of the interventions to encourage school attendance.
- Inspections and penal sanctions against workplaces and workshops that employ migrant children informally should be tightened. Mechanisms to report workplaces which employ child labor without social security and without occupational safety measures in place so as to negatively affect their physical and mental development should be expanded. In workplaces which do not comply with occupational safety measures, not only migrant children but workers of all ages and legal status are at risk.
- It is reported that some of adults in the families with migrant children who do not continue their education and are forced to work, has not sought or, if any, could not find job due to the language barrier. In addition, there is also resistance to learning the language despite having been in Türkiye for years. To combat this, free language courses for adults in migrant families should be created and made accessible. Making language courses compulsory as well as free of charge is as important for tackling language barriers and resistance to language learning.
- In addition to migrant children working outside the home, it is also quite common for children to work within the household by performing household chores. It is especially common for migrant girls, even though they are of school age, to do household work such as sibling care, housework and patient care. It should be remembered that these children are also engaged in a form of labor, their needs are not met and their physical and mental development is neglected. Reporting mechanisms should be used and families should be made more aware of this form of child labor, which poses a protection risk and entails reporting obligation.
- Among migrant children, there are those who suspended their education due to peer bullying or lack of social cohesion, and those who seek employment. Educational activities that promote cooperation and collaboration between host and migrant children should be expanded. Parents should be made aware and guidance and coordination activities should be increased in order to avoid attitudes that support discriminatory tendencies for both groups.
- A significant proportion of migrant children take equivalence exams that result in them being placed in classes that are too low for their age. In particular, children of secondary school age who are placed in primary school refuse due to both peer bullying and cohesion problems. Awareness-raising activities on distance education opportunities, literacy and vocational skills courses for these children and their families should be increased.

- The majority of working migrant children acquire vocational skills in the workshops. Instead, apprentice training centers, craft schools and vocational skills courses in every province, especially in the 14-17 age group, should support the preparation of young people for work life by protecting their systematic and individual rights.
- It is important for local institutions and organizations ensure communication among them with respect to the situations that pose a risk of vulnerability for migrant children in the region and, if necessary, to act in coordination and develop social protection interventions that protect the rights and freedoms of the children. Field research and reporting on child labor sectors and socioeconomically low-income neighborhoods must be prioritized.
- Children in families without official identity documents remains excluded from services for basic needs such as education, health and social assistance. Since the socioeconomic resources of these families are limited and the institutional applications of the adults in the family are not valid, it is common for children in the household to be employed without identification or registration. The identification and reporting of these children, some of whom have never been included in education, becomes difficult. There is a need for specific arrangements to support irregular migrant children's access to education and other basic needs. Children need access to basic services, even if adults in the family lose or never receive their identity cards due to non-compliance with legislation. Events and organizations should be held to support access of children and parents in the families who do not have a valid ID document to access to public spaces in order to combat exclusion of children from public spaces, their asocial tendencies, and lack of their awareness on their rights and services.
- After the Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes on February 06 2023, it became difficult for migrant families to meet the increasing costs of living, especially after migrating to metropolitan cities such as Gaziantep, İstanbul and İzmir. The registration of children of disaster-affected families in the province of migration was carried out without any problems, but some families tended to force their children to work. Follow-ups should be increased to ensure that relocated families have necessary means to meet their basic needs and maintain school attendance of children of school age.
- Among migrant child workers, there are those who tend to continue the works of the adults in the family (father, brother, cousin...). Since the elders of the family usually work in low-paid and irregular jobs such as apprenticeships, paper collecting and informal labor, children continue this habit. In the fight against child labor, incentives should be increased for adults in the family to obtain work permits and to work formally, and it is also important to refer them to vocational skills courses and to refer them to jobs that can provide regular income .
- Seasonal agricultural labor is the most common job involving migrant children in some provinces. It is common for these children to stay with their families in tent sites. Tents and huts: are the areas where children are vulnerable to neglect and abuse, privacy and hygiene are not observed, as well as exposed to risks of epidemics and infections. Awareness should be raised among children and family members about the safety of children here, social service interventions should be developed and conditions that pose a risk to the rest of the family should be reported.
- In the low-security tent areas where seasonal agricultural worker families stay, the development of extra-circular activities and day care models to reduce the time they spend without caregivers will reduce the possibility of child neglect and labor exploitation of older children due to the household care and chores.
- It is important to develop cooperation with local authorities in areas with seasonal agricultural workers. There needs to be raised awareness on situations that pose a protection risk and a holistic approach to protection. Developing a network of sharing and coordination between security and supervision mechanisms that control tent settlements, institutions and organizations involved in field assessment studies, and academic researchers, especially on the situation of children, can increase the visibility of protection risks.
- Migrant children who works, including for household works, are also at high risk of being married in unofficial/religious marriages. Awareness should be raised that these children are subject to the laws that protect their rights and prohibit child marriage. Especially in the case of unregistered migrants, it is difficult to detect and monitor these situations. For this reason, in field assessment studies, emphasis should be placed on protection interventions and reporting mechanisms to be developed especially if children in the house are exposed to these risks. Adults in the family should be informed about the legal sanctions imposed on the child marriage.
- Current non-governmental organizations work largely with urban migrants, but a significant proportion of unregistered people live in rural areas and make a living from seasonal agriculture. In this case, case detection remains relatively low. Therefore, national-regional-local coordination activities should be ensured with the participation of public actors and action plans should be mapped. The outputs of the coordination activities should also be used in the development of policy recommendations.
- In the aftermath of the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis, the capacity of institutions, associations and non-governmental organizations to carry out remedial activities for migrants in Türkiye has increased considerably. It is especially important that field staff are competent in their field, have a good understanding of current legislation on migrants, and have developed empathy and communication skills. It is important for institutions and organizations to develop capacity strengthening and communication activities in cooperation in order to provide staff capacity to understand the root causes of child labor in migrant families and to develop intervention mechanisms.

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THE EFFECTS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION ON CHILD LABOR

THE SITUATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN TÜRKİYE

2024



DEPARTMENT OF MIGRATION PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION