



**Save the Children**  
إنقاذ الطفل

# **Voices from the Farms:**

## Understanding Child Labor in

# **Agricultural Sector**

**(Jordan Valley and Mafraq)**



**2025**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Save the Children Jordan extends its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the children and their caregivers for sharing their valuable experiences, opinions, and perspectives. Their insights have been invaluable in advocacy efforts in favor of child protection, particularly for children working in the waste scavenging sector. We also extend our thanks to Analyseize Research & Insights Group for their technical support in designing and implementing the study.

This study was conducted as part of the Work No Child Business (WNCB) alliance to prevent child labor.



## SUPPORTED BY

The Work No Child's Business project is implemented with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands



# ACRONYMS

CL	Child Labor
CSS	Children in Street Situations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOJ	Government of Jordan
ITS	Informal Tent Settlements
JD	Jordanian Dinars
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
MoL	Ministry of Labor
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCFA	National Council for Family Affairs
PSD	Public Security Directorate
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PWG	Protection Working Group
SCJ	Save the Children Jordan

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Save the Children Jordan conducted a comprehensive mixed-methods study on child labor in the agricultural sector in Jordan. This study assesses the multifaceted experiences of child laborers and their caregivers in areas in Mafraq and the Jordan Valley, focusing on demographics, family dynamics, financial situations, housing, and education. It identifies the root causes and drivers of child labor, including socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors, and evaluates the impact of social norms on these practices. The research also examines working conditions, hazards, and risks faced by child laborers working in the agricultural sector.

By conducting detailed case studies through the In-depth Interviews, the study provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to develop targeted interventions to combat child labor and improve the well-being of affected children.

The quantitative face-to-face interviews included child laborers and their caregivers from the same households. Among the children, 50.8% were from the Jordan Valley and 46.8% from Mafraq. The majority were male 61.1% and Syrian 53.2%, with most aged 12-17 years 84.2%. Nearly all were single 99.2%. Most caregivers were female 83.5% and primarily mothers 78%. 55.9% of the caregivers were Syrian and aged 38-50 years 60.6%, with a majority being married 89.8%.

The majority of families interviewed reported having large households, averaging 7.4 members, mostly comprised of minor children under 18. Few families reported elderly members or children with disabilities. Child marriage was also minimal. Most caregivers married at 18 or older 72.4%, and a majority of their children 90.6% were not married early. In-depth interviews revealed additional challenges, such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and unstable family environments, which contribute to the prevalence of child labor.

Most parents and legal guardians were employed in informal, unstable jobs, earning around 150 JD per month, leading to food insecurity and debt. Although many families needed aid, not all received it. Interestingly, caregivers often did not see their children as primary income earners, despite children reporting contributing to household finances. Female caregivers increasingly became primary providers due to cultural stigmas against men in agricultural work and issues like abandonment and medical conditions among men.

Many families lived in tents, with roughly half moving seasonally for work. Housing conditions highlighted a split between seasonal movers and those with more stable living arrangements. Families that moved seasonally often had children who dropped out of school or were illiterate.

The education situation among interviewed families reveals a significant trend: children engaged in agricultural labor in Mafraq, and the Jordan Valley are mostly not enrolled in formal schooling with 65.9% of children have dropped out and 15.9% attend other educational programs and only 18.3% are enrolled in public schools. Many caregivers themselves having completed only primary education.

Jordanian children are more likely to be enrolled in public schools 45.1% compared to Syrian children 19.8%, who more frequently participate in informal education 24.4%. Reasons for non-enrollment or drop out include financial difficulties, challenges with school curricula, frequent relocations, and distance from schools. Additionally, bullying and societal norms, especially affecting girls, contribute to high dropout rates.

Qualitative findings reveal that most child laborers are recruited through a “Shawish”- an informal community leader or labor broker; some being women who focus on recruitment and community leadership, while men often also supervise work. Shawish are typically involved in finding jobs, negotiating terms, and ensuring basic support for workers, including organizing transportation and handling payments. Despite some positive interactions, instances of verbal abuse and mistreatment have been reported, especially towards younger and more vulnerable children.

The study also highlights that children primarily enter the workforce due to financial necessity. While 73.8% of children report deciding to work independently, many do so to support their families, meet household needs, or due to caregivers’ inability to provide for basic expenses. Employment is predominantly found through parents or caregivers, with a higher percentage of Jordanian children securing jobs independently compared to Syrian children. Additionally, many children work exclusively in agriculture, often starting at a very young age. A few have diversified into other forms of work, but such instances are less common.

Most child laborers work on farms owned by others, with only a small percentage working on family or relative-owned farms. Many children either do not know their employers’ full names or only know their first names or the names of their supervisors. In terms of their relationship with employers, the majority of children report a positive experience, with respect being the most frequently mentioned aspect. However, a small minority describe their employers as harsh, unfair, or unkind.

Child laborers in agriculture predominantly engage in harvesting or picking plants. Other tasks include laying out crops and carrying heavy objects like sandbags and water, as well as climbing trees. Many children express discomfort with certain tasks, such as harvesting tomatoes specifically, or handling heavy crops. Some children prefer tasks with per-kilogram payment, like harvesting grape leaves, as it allows them to set their own work targets. Overall, agricultural work is perceived as physically exhausting and monotonous, with some children involved in hazardous activities like using sharp tools and climbing dangerous heights.

Most children work 5-9 hours a day, often all or six days a week. Despite legal restrictions on work hours and breaks, discrepancies exist between children’s and caregivers’ reports on working hours. Children may work until specific quotas are met and sometimes stay overnight at farms during peak periods. Breaks are generally observed, but Syrian children report more frequent breaks than their Jordanian counterparts.

Children face significant risks including exhaustion, physical pain, and injuries from tasks such as carrying heavy loads and using sharp tools. Encounters with animals, like snakes and scorpions, are common. Protective gear is seldom provided by employers, increasing risks of injuries, sunstroke and chemical burns. Additional dangers include harassment, unsafe transportation, and reliance on energy drinks and drugs like Captagon.

Children report experiencing various forms of abuse, including verbal and emotional abuse, primarily from employers. Physical abuse and neglect are less common but still present. Farm owners often fail to provide basic necessities like drinking water, leaving children to bring their own, though some farms offer minimal meals and tea. The overall environment reflects serious issues related to the mistreatment and neglect of child laborers in agriculture.

Most child laborers 96% receive payment, typically around 5 JDs per day. Wages and payment methods vary by farm and task, with differences in hourly rates and task-based pay. Many children, especially the youngest, are unaware of their exact earnings, and a significant portion 40.5% have their wages collected by parents or caregivers. Syrian children often face delayed or unpaid wages due to their illegal work status and reliance on intermediaries. This situation reveals widespread exploitation, with varying levels of control over wages by farm owners, intermediaries, and caregivers. Opinions on wage fairness are divided, with almost half considering it unfair.

The study reveals that while most parents 87.4% believe their children have not adopted harmful habits like smoking or drug use from their work environment, deeper analysis indicates concerning trends. Some children, as young as 12, have taken up smoking, though it's unclear if this is due to work or peer influence. There are also notable behavioral changes, including increased disrespect towards parents. According to interviewed children, caregivers and local community, drug use especially Captagon, is prevalent among child laborers, with reports of its use enabling extended work hours and leading to further drug and alcohol use.

Most children 79.4% report working in agriculture voluntarily, driven by a desire to support their families, though 20.6% work out of necessity despite their reluctance. A significant majority of parents 81.1% disapprove of their children working in agriculture, highlighting concerns about safety, with 67.8% viewing the work as dangerous. This widespread discontent underscores the perceived risks and dangers associated with child labor in the agricultural sector.

There is a substantial lack of awareness among both children and caregivers regarding child labor laws. Most children 70.6% are unaware of the legal working age, and a majority of caregivers 81.9% also lack knowledge about these laws. This gap in understanding raises concerns about the protection and rights of children engaged in labor.

A majority of respondents 82.5% reported not participating in activities organized by any organization, while 17.5% had taken part. Among those who participated, caregivers noted that 87.4% of children did not engage in organizational activities, and only 12.6% did. The organizations mentioned included Charitable and Development Associations, MoY's Youth Clubs, Makani centers, Quest scope, and Save the Children. For those involved, the most common attendance was 3-4 times a week 43.8%, with activities typically lasting one to two hours, and the most frequently reported activity type was language learning. Furthermore, a significant majority 87.3% expressed strong interest in participating in future activities. Desired activities included educational opportunities, artistic pursuits (e.g., drawing, sewing), sports and physical activities, and language learning, reflecting a broad eagerness to engage in diverse developmental and recreational activities.

# SECTION 1

## DESK REVIEW



### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term «Child Labour» is commonly defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, and dignity, posing a threat to their physical and mental development. According to the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) by the ILO, the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) are egregious violations of child rights and a blatant breach to human dignity. Such labor is typically inappropriate for their age, detrimental to their physical, psychological, and social well-being, and deprives them from attending school, forces them to leave school prematurely, or requires them to balance long hours of heavy work with their education<sup>1</sup>.

Child labor is primarily defined by the child's age, the type of work, the number of hours involved, and the work conditions and environment. The minimum age for employment is crucial in safeguarding children from all forms of labor and exploitation. It also considers the positive aspects of adolescents contributing to society in ways that do not hinder their development, health, and education. Work performed by children below the minimum age for employment is considered child labor. The ILO Convention No. 138 sets the minimum age at 15 years, and a minimum age of 13 years for light work that does not interfere with education and involves limited hours and light activities. In special circumstances, where a country's economy and educational facilities are underdeveloped, the minimum age is set at 14 years, and 12 years for light work<sup>2</sup>.

International standards prohibit all forms of hazardous work for children under 18. However, not all work done by children qualifies as child labor that must be eliminated. Work by children or adolescents above the minimum employment age, which does not harm their health, development, or education, is considered beneficial. This includes assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during holidays, as these activities contribute to their development, family welfare, and prepare them for adulthood<sup>3</sup>.

Economic hardship affects millions of families worldwide, often at the expense of children's safety. As of early 2020, around 160 million children were engaged in child labor, with 9 million more at risk due to COVID-19, nearly 1 in 10 children globally. Almost half of these children are in hazardous work that endangers their health and development. Children may be driven into work for various reasons, most often by financial challenges, such as poverty, illness of a caregiver, or job loss of a primary earner. The consequences are severe, including physical and mental harm, death, slavery, exploitation, and deprivation of education and healthcare, infringing on children's fundamental rights<sup>4</sup>.

Regardless of its cause, child labor exacerbates social inequality and discrimination, limiting access to education and harms a child's physical, mental and social growth.

<sup>1</sup>ILO: What is Child Labor: <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipec/what-child-labour>

<sup>2</sup>UNICEF: Legal Minimum Age for Admission to Employment: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/2751/file/PDF%20Minimum%20age%20for%20admission%20to%20employment.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>ILO: What is Child Labor: <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipec/what-child-labour>

<sup>4</sup>UNICEF: Child labor: <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour>

### 1.1.1 CHILD LABOR IN JORDAN

According to the last National Child Labor Survey conducted by the Department of Statistics (DOS) in 2016, which surveyed 20,000 families across Jordan's 12 governorates and the Zaatari camp, child labor rates in Jordan had doubled compared to pre-Syrian refugee crisis figures<sup>5</sup>. The study revealed that 75,982 children aged 5-17 were working, with 28% of them under the age of 14.<sup>6</sup> This marked a significant increase from 2007 when child labor was estimated at 29,225 children. The survey found that 60% of these children worked in hazardous environments, classified as dangerous, affecting 44,917 children. Most child laborers were employed in agriculture and retail trade, with approximately 80% being Jordanian and about 15% Syrian. Boys constituted nearly 90% of those involved in child labor.

Without a recent post COVID-19 national child labor survey, it is difficult to accurately estimate the current number of child laborers in Jordan as of 2024. However, the ILO has reported that the influx of refugees from Syria to Jordan has exacerbated the situation of child labor, in terms of both magnitude and complexity. Moreover,

experts from the NCFA have noted a significant increase in school dropouts following the pandemic, leading to a rise in child labor in Jordan<sup>7</sup>.

In 2023, the MoL inspection teams discovered a total of 507 child labor cases. They issued 242 violations and 259 warnings to employers who recruited children in violation of the law<sup>8</sup>.

### 1.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR IN JORDAN

Jordan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. Jordan was among the first countries to ratify international conventions protecting children from economic exploitation, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two protocols, as well as the ILO's Minimum Age Convention No. 138 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182. National legislation in Jordan aimed at combating child labor aligns fully with these international standards<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 1: Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor- Jordan**

1	ILO C. 138 Minimum Age
2	ALO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor
3	UN CRC
4	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict
5	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
6	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons

### 1.2.1 LAWS AND REGULATION ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor. In 2022, the Jordanians parliament adopted the Child Rights Law, which is designed to ensure the protection and promotion of children's rights in various aspects of their lives, including their right to identity, education, health, and protection from abuse and exploitation and right to participation. One of the key

provisions of the Child's Rights Law is the prohibition of child labor in hazardous conditions and regulation of permissible work, as well as special protections for vulnerable children, and the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing children's rights, as well as penalties for violations of children's rights and measures to hold violators accountable.

<sup>5</sup> Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Jordan has seen a significant influx of Syrian refugees. This has placed considerable strain on Jordan's resources and economy, leading to increased poverty and unemployment rates among both local population and the refugees.

<sup>6</sup> Child Labor Survey: 2016: [https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root\\_Storage/AR/EB\\_Info\\_Page/2016](https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/2016) المنسج الوطني لعمل الأطفال.pdf

<sup>7</sup> Jordan Times: May 2023: <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/experts-'hopeful'-over-updates-national-child-labour-strategy>

<sup>8</sup> Jordan News Agency: 28.2.2024: [https://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=57593&lang=en&name=en\\_news](https://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=57593&lang=en&name=en_news)

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Labor: [https://mol.gov.jo/EN/Pages/Child\\_Labor](https://mol.gov.jo/EN/Pages/Child_Labor)

The Jordanian labor law strictly prohibits employing children under the age of sixteen. To employ a juvenile who is sixteen years old in Jordan, certain conditions must be met according to the labor laws. Firstly, the juvenile must provide a certified copy of their birth certificate to prove their age. Additionally, they must obtain a certificate of health fitness from the Ministry of Health, ensuring they are physically capable of performing the required work. Written consent from the juvenile's guardian is also mandatory before they can start working. Furthermore, the work assigned to

the juvenile must not be hazardous, exhaustive, or harmful to their health, as specified by the Minister of Labour. The law forbids employing a child for more than six hours per day, mandates a minimum one-hour rest after four consecutive hours of work, and bans children from working on religious, weekly, and official holidays, as well as between 8 PM and 6 AM <sup>10</sup>. Importantly, the juvenile must be paid at least the minimum wage set by the labor laws. If labor inspectors find that these requirements are fulfilled, no action will be taken against the employer regarding the employment of juveniles<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 2: Laws and Regulations on Child Labor <sup>12</sup>**

Standard	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work (16 years)	Article 73 of Labor Code (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work (18 years)	Article 74 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Ministerial Order of 2011 (27,28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities prohibited for Children	Article 2 of the Ministerial Order of 2011 (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Article 3(a) and 3(b) of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Articles 3(a) and 8–11 of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Articles 298, 299, 306, 310, 311, 315, and 319 of the Penal Code; Articles 3(a) and 3(b) of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29,30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Article 8 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (31)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment (16 years)	Article 5(b) of the Military Service act; Article 13(b) of the Officer's Service Act (32,33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Article 3(a) of the National Service Act (34)
Child Rights Act of 2022 <sup>13</sup>	Article No. (17) of 2022
Compulsory Education Age (16 years)	Articles 7(a.2) and 10(b) of the Education Act (35)
Free Public Education	Article 10(a) of the Education Act; Article 20 of the Constitution (35,36)
Agricultural Workers Regulation	Article 6, adopted in 2021.

Employing children under the age of eighteen in hazardous work is prohibited in Jordan. The MoL has issued a decree specifying a comprehensive list of hazardous work across all sectors. This includes tasks that pose physical, psychosocial, moral, chemical, biological, and ergonomic hazards <sup>14</sup>.

In 2021, the government issued the Agricultural Workers Regulations No. 19, which includes an article prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 16 in the agriculture sector and prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 18 in hazardous tasks in the agriculture sector. It also issued corresponding instructions for labor inspection in the agricultural sector <sup>15</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Jordanian Labor Law: Articles 73, 74 and 75.

<sup>11</sup> MoL: Conditions for employing a juvenile of sixteen years old: [https://mol.gov.jo/EN/Pages/Child\\_Labor](https://mol.gov.jo/EN/Pages/Child_Labor)

<sup>12</sup> Child labor and forced labor report: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/jordan>

<sup>13</sup> <https://ncfa.org.jo/en/wrsht-hshd>

<sup>14</sup> Child Labour Occupational Safety and Health Guide in Arabic: [https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root\\_Storage/AR/EB\\_Info\\_Page](https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page)

<sup>15</sup> Bureau of International Labor Affairs: Page 686: [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2021/2021\\_TDA\\_Big\\_Book.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2021/2021_TDA_Big_Book.pdf)

Prohibited hazardous work includes driving tractors and operating machinery, working with pesticides and fertilizers, handling or harvesting poisonous plants, climbing trees or ladders, using sharp tools, and participating in manual harvesting. It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive. Other hazardous agricultural work includes any activity where the child is physically or morally abused, or exposed to direct sunlight or severe cold weather, which are detailed under other categories in the decree.

Furthermore, the government has established institutional mechanisms to enforce child labor laws and regulations. These include the Ministry of Labor's Central Inspection Directorate, the Public Security Directorate (PSD), the criminal investigation unit, and the Joint Anti-Trafficking Unit of the Ministry of Labour and the PSD.

## 1.2.2 COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government also established a key mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor, through:

- 1. The National Committee/ Task Force on Child Labor.** The roles of the committee is to formulate new policies, amend legislation as necessary and oversee the implementation of child labor policies. Led by MoL, members include three other ministries, plus international and civil society organizations. In 2022, the National Committee on Child Labor helped draft the National Strategy for the Reduction of Child Labor (2022-2030), which was approved along with an implementation plan, by the Cabinet in June <sup>16</sup> 2022.
- 2. National Committee to Combat Trafficking (NCCT)-** coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Justice, other members include representatives from 10 state agencies, including the Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU) which operates with the PSD and MoL, and is in charge of human trafficking investigations.
- 3. Protection Working Group (PWG)- established in 2014-** with 55 partners, supports a comprehensive and coordinated protection approach through its Protection Strategy. This strategy focuses on ensuring access to fundamental rights, expanding community

outreach and protection mechanisms, reducing the risks and consequences of gender-based violence strengthening child protection interventions and exploring resettlement options for those with special needs. In 2021, the PWG prioritized interventions to support the Jordanian government and refugee-hosting communities, aiming to mitigate socio-economic pressures from the refugee influx. The group also works on mainstreaming protection into the broader refugee response, advocating for the legal and physical safety of refugees, and coordinating with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) through the PWG Task Force (PWGTF) established in <sup>17</sup> 2020.

## 1.2.3 GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Policies related to child labor have also been established including:

- The National Strategy for the Reduction of Child Labor (18)2020-2030** outlines the roles and responsibilities of key government agencies, including the Ministries of Education, Labor, and Social Development, as well as NGOs and other stakeholders involved in addressing child labor. This strategy was approved in 2022, and the NCFA is responsible for monitoring and reporting the progress of the strategy and its work plan.
- The National Framework to Combat Child Labor (NCFL) and Manual on Applied Measures- adopted in 2011** was Jordan's first national initiative aimed at protecting working children. It served as a reference document outlining the foundation for addressing child labor cases and specifies the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, mainly the MoL, MoE, and MoSD. The framework promoted an integrated and comprehensive approach to support working children and their families, aiming to prevent children from engaging in labor and to reintegrate them into the education system <sup>19</sup>.
- Updated NCFA and Manual on Applied Measures in 2020-** the NCFA updated the National Framework for the Reduction of Child Labor and the Manual on Applied Measures. The update was conducted to adapt the framework to changes in the national legislation concerning child labor, specifically the amendments made to the Juvenile Law in 2014 and to the 2018 draft strategy for children in street situations <sup>20</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Jordan Times: <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/experts- 'hopeful'-over-updates-national-child-labour-strategy>

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR: Working group description: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/50>

<sup>18</sup> National Strategy: [https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root\\_Storage/AR/EB\\_Info\\_Page/الاستراتيجية\\_الوطنية\\_للمكافحة\\_عن\\_الاطفال.pdf](https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/الاستراتيجية_الوطنية_للمكافحة_عن_الاطفال.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> National Framework for Combating Child Labor: "The National Framework for Combating Child Labour in Arabic," [https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root\\_Storage/AR/EB\\_Info\\_Page/\\_الاطفال\\_لمكافحة\\_عمل\\_الاطفال.pdf](https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/_الاطفال_لمكافحة_عمل_الاطفال.pdf)

- The Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (2018-2022) integrated a refugee-focused humanitarian response with a strategic plan to enhance the resilience of local communities. The plan prioritized economic strengthening, education, and social protection<sup>21</sup>.
- The Agricultural Workers Regulation Article 6 (2021). In January 2021, Jordan adopted the agricultural workers regulations, Article 6, which is part of the broader effort to improve working conditions and rights for agricultural workers in Jordan, ensuring they have better protection and support in their employment. This article typically includes provisions about working conditions, safety measures and employee benefits. The article clearly stipulates the prohibition of child labor and regulations regarding the minimum age for employment in agriculture, as well as special protections and working conditions for young workers if employed.
- Article 33 of the Juvenile law of (2014) pertains to the treatment and legal procedures concerning juveniles who are in conflict with the law. The specific details of Article 33 focus on the protection and rehabilitative measures for juvenile offenders, emphasizing their treatment in a manner that promotes their reintegration into society. The law includes provisions that address the issue of child labor, ensuring that children are protected from exploitation and harmful working conditions, and provides a comprehensive framework for the protection and rehabilitation of child laborers <sup>22</sup>.
- The Juvenile Protection System (2024). Ten years after the 2014 Juvenile law was adopted, in May 2024, the Council of Ministers approved the Juvenile Protection System for 2024. This system aims to safeguard and care for working minors by regulating the MoSD's role and its interactions with institutions concerned with these minors. It also coordinates efforts among stakeholders, establishes appropriate procedures for handling working minors, and formulates case management plans. Additionally, it identifies cases of working juveniles and determines the necessary protection measures <sup>23</sup>.

In 2020, to encourage reporting child labor, the government developed a website and mobile APP for the public to report of child labor cases. These reports are logged into the National Child Labor Database. Two platforms are available for reporting child labor grievances: the “Hemayeh” platform at <https://hemayeh.jo/>, and the Ministry of Labor’s website <https://childlabor.mol.gov.jo/>.

## SECTION 1.3 CHILD LABOR IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Worldwide, 60 percent of all child laborers aged 5-17 work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, forestry, and livestock <sup>24</sup>. This amounts to approximately 98 million children. The majority of child laborers 67.5% are unpaid family members, with the percentage being even higher in agriculture, where children sometimes start working as early as ages 5 to 7. Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents, and occupational diseases.

About 59% of all children aged 5-17 involved in hazardous work are in agriculture. This work exposes them to numerous hazards such as toxic chemicals (pesticides and fertilizers), dangerous tools and machinery, heavy lifting, and long hours in hostile or unhealthy environments.

These factors disproportionately affect children due to their developing bodies and brains, and their inability to endure harsh conditions for extended periods. According to the 2016 child labor survey, an estimated 28% of children working in Jordan are employed in the agricultural sector, with over one in four of these children exposed to hazardous working conditions that impact their health and wellbeing. The study revealed that younger children are more likely to work in agriculture, with 56% of children aged 5-11 working in this sector compared to 37% of 12-14-year-olds and 16% of 15-17-year-olds <sup>25</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Jordan Times: Framework under revision: <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/national-framework-against-child-labour-under-revision>

<sup>21</sup> GoJ: Funding Status for Jordan Response Plan 2022: <http://www.jrp.gov.jo>

22) Go: <https://psd.gov/jo/media/ahjh11ar/3-1.pdf> PSD\_101\_R0-08463bc795ab2000a6921d2aedd6ddb35512f4e2091cb92ca77c0bfff03d9a95751ba1c8d-7c1625ab085c2cfc1430004ef4728fd8888769fc5bcd109ad38cfcff4b05b76659ab732160a20c781ba526c6e86b5bd6204126fd4707e0ebd

<sup>24</sup> ILO: Child Labor in Agriculture: <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour/ipec/sectors-and-topics/child-labor-in-agriculture/>

المسح الوطني لعمل الأطفال 2016: [https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root\\_Storage/AR/EB\\_Info\\_Page/2016.pdf](https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/2016.pdf)

## SECTION

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The 'Work: No Child's Business' (WNCB) alliance aims to prevent child labor (CL) and ensure children and youth have access to quality education and decent work in six countries with high CL prevalence: Côte d'Ivoire, India, Jordan, Mali, Uganda, and Viet Nam. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation, with schools closed during lockdowns and child labor becoming a coping strategy at the household level. In Jordan, child labor remains a significant concern, affecting children's well-being, education, and overall development. The exploitation of children's labor is observed in various sectors of the economy, with notable occurrences in the agriculture sector. The agriculture sector, where children often belong to marginalized or vulnerable communities, is a significant sector where child labor persists. The issue extends across various regions of Jordan, where socio-economic conditions and agricultural practices vary.

Save the Children Jordan commissioned Analyseize Research to conduct a mixed methods study on child labor working in the agriculture sector in Jordan. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of child labor working in agriculture in Mafraq and Jordan Valley-Shuneh, highlight unique challenges faced by children involved, identify gaps, and provide evidence-based recommendations for mitigating child labor and well-being in Jordan. The Objectives of the study include:

- Identify children's nationality, educational status, exposure to sexual abuse and other forms of abuse, and their overall wellbeing.
- Identify the root causes and drivers of child labor in the agriculture sector, considering socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors, and analyzing the impact of social norms on child labor practices.
- Examine the working conditions, hazards, and risks faced by children engaged in labor in the agriculture sector, including their ages, geographical location, wages, and health status.

- Analyze the impact of child Labour on the physical and psychological well-being, education, and overall development of children, with a particular focus on the agricultural context.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to develop targeted interventions and policies to combat child labor in the agriculture sector, addressing issues related to nationality, education, sexual abuse, and social norms, among others.

## 2.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study adopted a mixed methods approach whereby data was collected and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research methodologies included Syrian and Jordanian male and female child laborers, as well as their caregivers. The data collection for the study covered four areas East Amman and Rusaifeh, Mafraq and the Jordan Valley (including both Northern and Central Shuneh areas).

### 2.2.1 QUANTITATIVE SAMPLE SEGMENTATION

Face-to-face quantitative interviews were conducted with child laborers and their caregivers living in four targeted communities in Jordan (Mafraq and the Jordan Valley). Caregivers were sampled from within the same households as children. The research team collaborated with SCJ, as well as four community-based organizations in the targeted areas to identify the survey participants. The data collection took place during May 12-26, 2024.

**Table 3: Sample Design and Segmentation**

Agriculture Sector			<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>Children</b>	<b>Caregivers</b>	
Mafraq	61	59	120
Jordan Valley	65	61	126
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>246</b>

**The study included the following areas:**

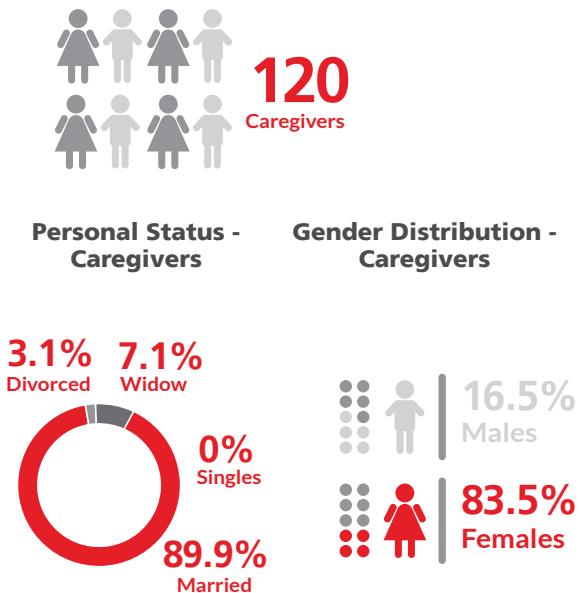
- **Jordan Valley:** Northern Shuneh: Kraimeh, Abu Seedo, Al Mashare, Zamaliah, Busailah, Shaikh Mohammad, Al Harawiya, Aj sourah, Tall Al Arbaeen, Waqqas, Manshiyah, Makyat. Central Shuneh: Dead Sea.
- **Mafraq:** Sabha Wa Subhiya, Abu Shahood Camp, Sabha Camp, Sabha Village, and four Informal Tent Settlements.

## 2.2.2 QUANTITATIVE SURVEY SAMPLE

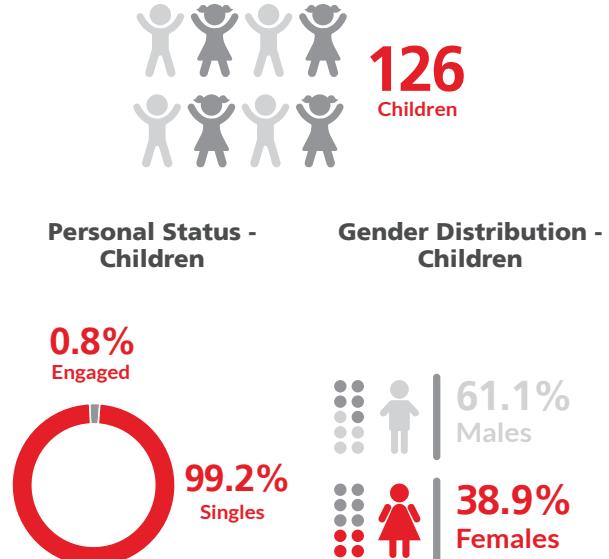
The survey was carried out with male and female child laborers in the targeted locations in the Jordan Valley and Mafraq areas. The sample included caregivers and children engaged in child labor. The total sample size of 246 included 120 caregivers and 126 children. The characteristics of the surveyed population are presented below.

Fig. 1 Survey Sample Description, Caregivers/ Children

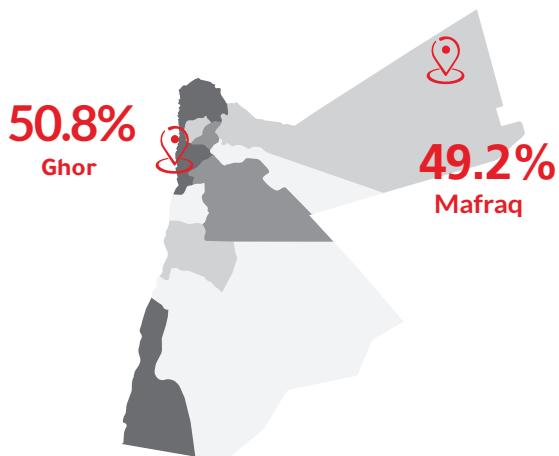
Completed Survey Responses - Caregivers



Completed Survey Responses - Children



Geographic Distribution



Nationalities



### 2.2.3 QUALITATIVE SAMPLE SEGMENTATION

The study team incorporated qualitative data collection via key informant interviews with a range of stakeholders.

A total of 38 Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted between February 26, 2024, and May 18, 2024. In-depth interviews with 10 male and female child laborers and 10 caregivers were conducted, 7 community-based organizations, 4 International Non-Governmental Organizations, 3 Government institutions (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Labor), as well as the National Council for Family Affairs. In addition, three interviews were conducted with community leaders from Informal Tent Settlements, as well as one farm manager. The KII discussion guide questions were designed to create an open-ended discussion to provide in-depth insights on some of the quantitative findings, as well as provide contextual information about child labor in Jordan. The full list of key informants interviewed, is included in Annex of the report.

	No. of Interviews
Child Laborers- Agriculture	10
Caregivers- Agriculture	10
Community Based Organizations	7
INGOs: UNICEF, OXFAM, Plan International, Helvetas	4
Government: MoE, MoSD, MoL	3
Official: National Council for Family Affairs	1
Community Leader (ITS)	2
Farm Manager	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>

As is common for qualitative research, the findings from this study do not necessarily represent the views of all Child Laborers, Caregivers or stakeholders. Quotes cited in this report were translated from Arabic and have been minimally edited to ensure clarity. As much as possible, the English translations preserve the original syntax, word choice, and grammar.

## 2.3 RESEARCH ETHICS, DATA PROCESSING AND QUALITY CONTROL

Analyseize is committed to maintaining the reliability, credibility, and integrity of all information. Significant effort was dedicated to providing insights with high integrity and honesty. Particular attention was given to the ethical concerns of working with children and their caregivers. Interviewers, the research team, and partners were mindful of issues that could cause distress to the children who participated in the study. Moreover, the training of the research team included child protection, child safeguarding, gender sensitivity, and research ethics. The data collection tools were designed to minimize discomfort, and all participants (both children and caregivers) were given the right to refuse to answer any question, or to end the interview at any time. Referral mechanisms for child protection, were in place for those requiring referrals or follow-up through SCJ. Furthermore, relevant ethical protocols from SCJ were followed, and the research scope and inception report were approved by SCJ. Principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent were applied, with caregivers providing consent for children's participation. Participation in the study was voluntary.

**Quality assurance processes outline below were adopted throughout the course of the study:**

**Quality Assurance:** Quality assurance procedures were strictly followed by the team, specifically during the design phase, data collection and analysis and employing interviewers with adequate experience. Quality assurance practices covered all survey stages (team selection, data collection, and data transcription and cleaning). Analyseize values commitment to integrity, translated into quality control and research ethics for the common cause and public good.

**Code of Research Practices:** Valuing work ethics, the research team compiled with the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing & Social Research Practices. The study respects the essential ethical guidelines concerning conducting research with the targeted population categories, ensuring that risks of potential harm to participants resulting from the data collection process were minimized and were outweighed by the potential benefits of the outcomes of the study. The research ethics mandate safeguarding of privacy, the right of refusal by potential respondents to engage, as well as the right of respondents to refuse to answer certain questions. The research team was trained to observe and commit to professional conduct and congenial behavior and did not engage in any dialogue outside the scope of the research objectives.

**Data Management Policy:** Respondent records are kept in an encrypted computerized database to preserve their confidentiality and privacy. For all data collected, the identifiers were removed and replaced by pseudonym. Those handling the data subsequently do so using pseudonyms. Transcriptions taken of the participant's interviews were sorted on encrypted and secure computers, and regularly backed up on computers and external hard drive and only analyzed within Analyseize web/server environment. The research team followed data protection policies in data storage and back-ups. The raw data was transcribed and translated into non-raw data for the purposes of analysis. In accordance with Analyseize Research Data Management Policy, raw data will be securely stored and then destroyed three years from collection (unless otherwise requested in writing by the SCJ).

# SECTION 3

## UNDERSTANDING CHILD LABORERS



### 3.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

The quantitative face-to-face interviews included child laborers and their caregivers; the caregivers were sampled from within the same households as children, subject to the willingness and availability of the caregiver to participate in the study.

Children Examining the demographic breakdown of the sample of child laborers, 50.8% were located in The Jordan Valley, while 46.8% were located in the governorate of Mafraq. The majority of the interviewed child laborers were male 61.1%, with a slightly higher representation of Syrian children 53.2% compared to Jordanian children 46.8%. In terms of age, most fell within the older brackets: 15-17 years 43.7% and 12-14 years 40.5%. Nearly all reported being single 99.2%, with only 0.8% indicating they were engaged.

Caregivers Among the caregivers interviewed the majority were female 83.5%, with a significant portion being the mothers of children 78%. Fathers 18.9%, while 3.1% were relative of the child. 55.9% of caregivers were of Syrian,

compared to Jordanians making up 44.1%. Regarding age distribution, most caregivers were within the 44-50 age range 34.6%, followed by those aged 38-43 26%. Additionally, a substantial majority of caregivers reported being married 89.8%.

### 3.1 FAMILY DYNAMICS

In general, examining the family dynamics, the majority reported having large families, with an average family size of 7.4 members per. Most families reported having predominantly minor children; under the age of 18, with the most common report being six children under 18. The demographics of household members skewed young, with a small minority reporting elderly members. There were almost no reports of child marriage, and minimal representation of caregivers with children with disabilities.

**Looking at the family dynamics the break down was as follows:**

**Table 4: Family Dynamic Breakdown - Caregivers**

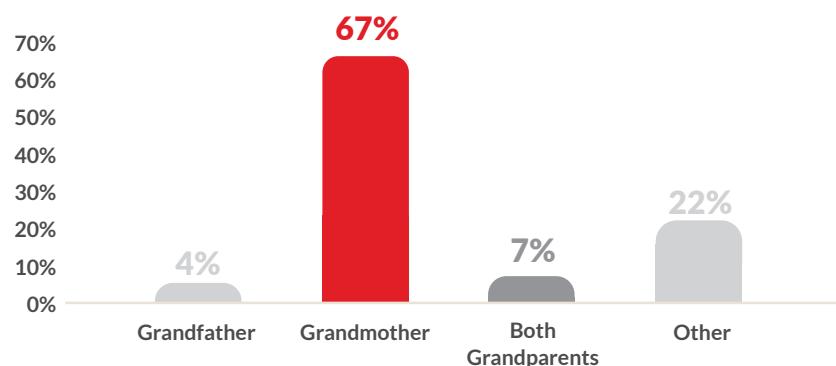
Family Members	Count	Percentage
7 Members	25	19.7%
8 Members	22	17.3%
6 Members	21	16.5%
10+ Members	17	13.4%
9 Members	15	11.8%
5 Members	11	8.7%
3 Members	7	5.5%
10 Members	5	3.9%
4 Members	3	2.4%
2 Members	1	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5: Children living at home under the age of 18 - Caregivers**

No. of children	Count	Percentage
6+ Children	32	25.2%
4 Children	27	21.3%
5 Children	23	18.1%
3 Children	17	13.4%
2 Children	15	11.8%
1 Child	13	10.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100%</b>

Regarding the elderly, the majority reported not having any elderly in the household 92.9%, while 7.1% reported that they did. Among those with elderly members, the majority indicated that the elderly person was the grandmother 72%.

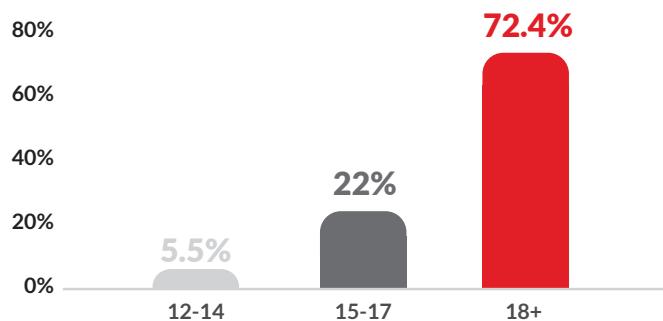
**Graph 1: Who is the elderly person? - Caregivers**



Examining the age at which caregivers got married, the majority reported getting married at a reasonable age, with 72.4% marrying at 18 years or older, followed by 22% who married between the ages of 15 and 17.

Examining the age at which caregivers got married, the majority reported getting married at a reasonable age, with 72.4% marrying at 18 years or older, followed by 22% who married between the ages of 15 and 17.

**Graph 2: How old were you when you were married? - Caregivers**



Regarding their children, when asked about early marriage, the majority reported that none of their children got married at a young age 90.6%, while 9.4% reported that they had a child who was married before they turned 18.

Regarding disabilities, the majority of caregivers interviewed reported not having children with physical disabilities 79.5%, while 20.5% reported having children with physical disabilities.

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the In-depth Interviews with Jordanian children and caregivers, further insights into the family dynamics and the challenges faced by these families were revealed. The discussions highlighted a range of issues, including domestic violence, child marriage, and substance abuse, which are prevalent in the households of some child laborers. These challenges underscore the complex and often harsh environments from which these children come, significantly impacting their well-being and development, and shedding light on the broader social issues contributing to child labor in Jordan.

One 13-year-old boy from the Jordan Valley shared that his older brother is in prison for drug possession and dealing, which has likely disrupted family dynamics and placed additional emotional and financial burdens on the household and on him specifically to join the workforce in the absence of his brother as a contributor to the household income. Another 15-year-old boy described a turbulent home life with divorced parents who have remarried. He and his siblings live with their father and a stepmother who treats them poorly. The father's addiction to drugs and alcohol exacerbates the situation, creating a chaotic

and unsafe environment at home. The situation led to his daughter falling victim to child marriage at the age of 14, orchestrated by the stepmother with the intention of getting rid of her. However, due to marital problems, the daughter returned home, adding to the household stress and instability.

A caregiver from the Jordan Valley recounted the harrowing experience of her daughter, who was forcibly married, subjected to severe domestic abuse, and ultimately divorced. The daughter endured significant trauma and now requires emotional support, reflecting the deep psychological scars left by such violent and coercive circumstances.

These narratives highlight the adverse conditions that often push children into labor. The presence of substance abuse, domestic violence, and unstable family structures can lead to neglect, emotional and physical abuse, and a lack of educational opportunities. Consequently, children in these environments often turn to labor as a means of survival, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and hardship.

Many families need aid, but not all receive it. Those who do often report receiving support from the UNHCR or their working children. Interestingly, caregivers assert that they do not primarily depend on their children for income, with most indicating that only one child is working to support the family. However, children provide a contrasting perspective, with the majority reporting that they do contribute to the household finances, although not as the primary breadwinners. Notably, the employment of these children tends to be more stable compared to that of their parents, with some holding permanent positions that offer a more consistent income. This discrepancy highlights a difference in perception between caregivers and children regarding the latter's role in the family's financial support.

**My brother who is 15 did not like working in the farm because he was unable to handle the orders and demands of the supervisors on the farm. So, I made him stay at home. My mother and I work, and we are the providers in our household. I took on this responsibility because I'm the eldest son.**

Male, 17 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Kraimeh)

**Me my father, mother and sister also works with us. We all work in the same farm.**

Male, 13 YO, Syrian- Mafraq

**My brother wouldn't let me work, I kept nagging because there is no one to spend on us, so he allowed me to work. I started working in the farm up here with him, we're collecting citrus fruit, and I package and stick the boxes.**

Male, 13 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDI's with children and caregivers engaged in agricultural work highlight several significant trends regarding gender roles and labor distribution. The findings point to a shifting landscape where women increasingly assume the role of primary providers, while men contribute less frequently and less significantly to household income. Several key observations emerge:

**When we were young, our parents divorced and both remarried. My four siblings and I live with our father and his wife, who is old and doesn't treat us well. My brother was just 5-6 months old when our mother left. My stepmother was very cruel and married off my sister at 15 to one of my father's friends who is 25. She is very unhappy and has returned to our father's house because of problems with her husband, which displeases my stepmother. Whenever I visited my mother in Irbid to get an allowance, my father and uncles would beat me up if they found out. They don't want me to see her, but I miss her and need the money she gives me for my siblings and me. My older brother doesn't go to school or work; he stays home all day with my sisters, stepmother, and father. My father is addicted to Captagon pills and alcohol. When he drinks, he gets drunk and passes out without a care.**

Male, 15, Jordanian, Jordan Valley (North)

## 3.2 FINANCIAL SITUATION

Examining the financial situation of the interviewed families reveals that the majority of parents and legal guardians do work, primarily in informal, unstable day labor positions. These jobs typically yield a low income, averaging around 150 JD per month. This instability and low-income result in food insecurity, with many families reporting inability to afford food sometimes. Consequently, they often rely on borrowing money, leading to debt and an inability to cover healthcare expenses, which adversely affects their overall quality of life. These findings were echoed by various caregivers throughout the in-depth interviews.

**We took some debt in order to purchase a car, and to repay our house loans and other expenses.**

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley

### Women as Primary Providers:

Women are increasingly becoming the main providers in their households, with more financial dependence on them. This shift is partly due to cultural stigmas that discourage men from engaging in agricultural work. As one female caregiver noted, "It's hard for a man's dignity to pick okra or tomatoes, but women are willing to do this work." This sentiment underscores the gendered perceptions of certain types of labor, which leave women to bear the economic burden of supporting their families. The necessity for women to engage in farm work highlights the resilience and adaptability of these women in the face of cultural and economic pressures.

“

**I am the primary caregiver of the household. With all due respect to my man, if I don't work and move, we won't survive. I asked him to let me, and my son go so that we can survive. But he refused.**

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

“

### Abandonment and Increased Responsibility for Women:

There are reports from interviewed caregivers, particularly Syrian women, that their husbands have abandoned the family and returned to Syria; in some cases, disappearing. This abandonment places additional pressure on women, who are left to work in agriculture alongside their children to sustain their families. This trend of abandonment not only increases the economic strain on women but also reflects the broader instability and disruption caused by ongoing conflicts and displacement.

### Medical Conditions Limiting Male Contribution:

A recurring observation from both children and women is that many fathers and husbands do not work due to medical conditions. The most common ailments include diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, joint pain, back pain, and nerve disorders. In a few cases, disabilities resulting from accidents are mentioned as reasons preventing men from working.

“

**My father can't work, that's why I need to. He is diabetic... he spends the entire day watching TV.**

Male, 8 YO Syrian, Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

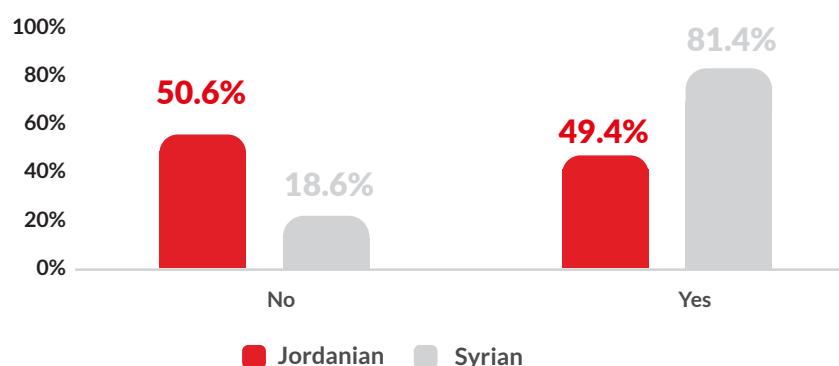
**My father hasn't worked in two years since he got sick.**

Male, 13 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“

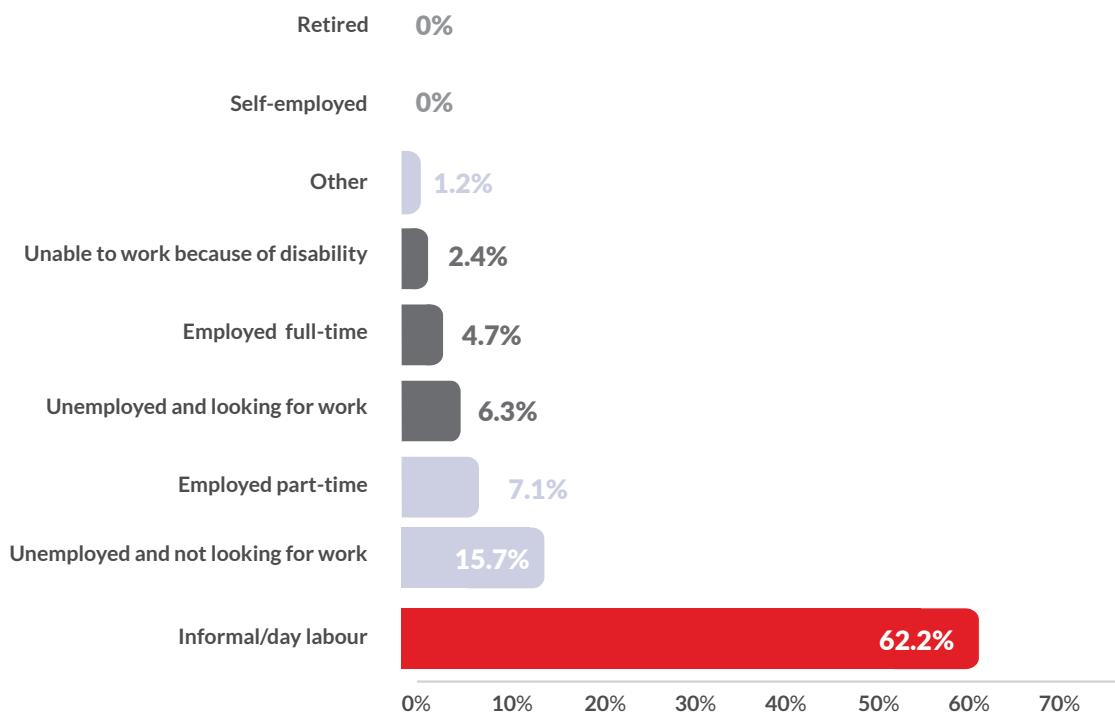
The majority of children 79.4% reported having parents or legal guardians who are employed. When the data was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Syrian children 81.4% reported that their parents are employed compared to Jordanian children 49.4%.

**Graph 3: Do your parents/ legal guardians work, by nationality.**



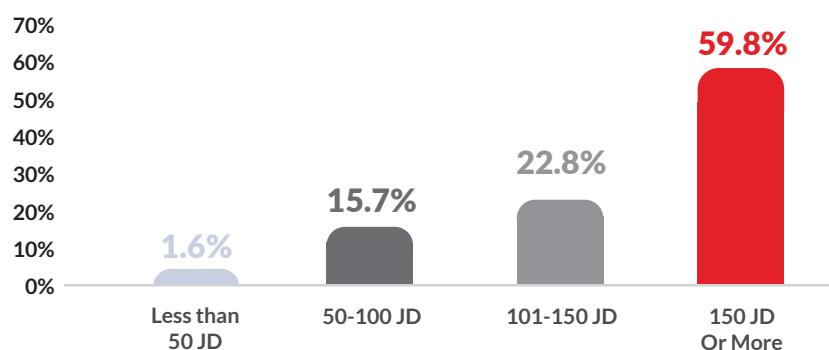
This is supported by caregivers' responses, with 71.7% stating they are currently working and 28.3% stating they are not. Given that the majority of caregivers interviewed were women, this aligns with qualitative findings suggesting an increased role for women in providing for their families, particularly in the agricultural sector. When asked about the nature of their work, a significant majority of caregivers 62.2% indicated that they are engaged in informal or day labor.

**Graph 4: What is your current employment situation? - Caregivers**



Regarding their monthly income, the majority of caregivers 59.8% reported earning 150 JD or more per month, followed by 22.8% who reported earning between 101-150 JD per month.

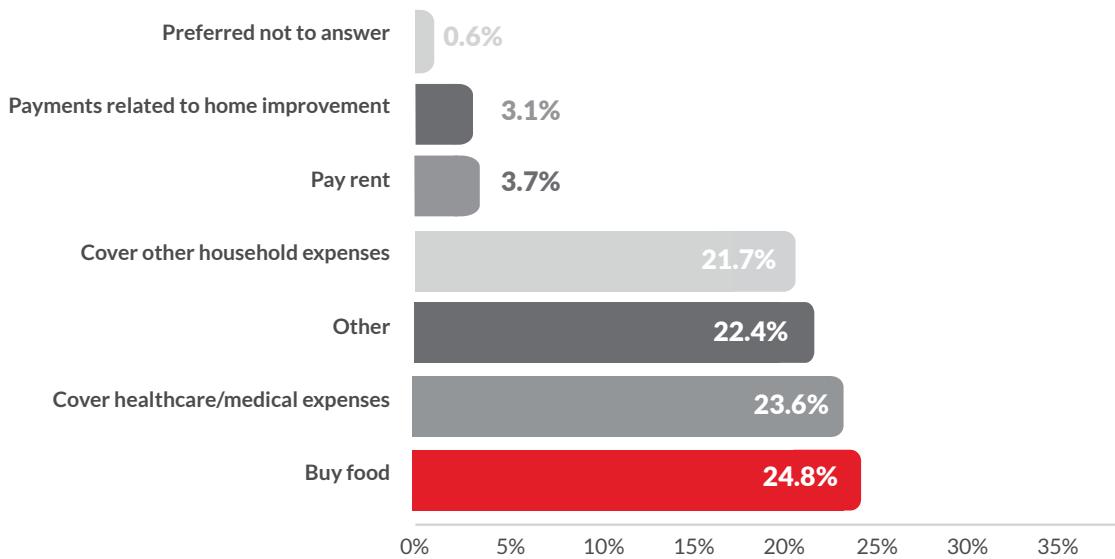
**Graph 5: What is your family's average household income per month? - Caregivers**



Regarding their security, the majority of interviewed caregivers reported experiencing times in the past 7 days when they did not have enough food or money to buy food, with 77.2% indicating this issue while 22.8% did not. Their vulnerability was further highlighted when asked about debt, with 95.3% of caregivers stating that their households owed debts, and only 4.7% reporting no debts. Most caregivers reported debt amounts up to 1,000 JD or more.

When asked to specify the reasons for incurring this debt, the most common response was to buy food 24.8%, followed closely by covering healthcare or medical expenses 23.6%.

**Graph 6: What was your reason for borrowing money? - Caregivers**

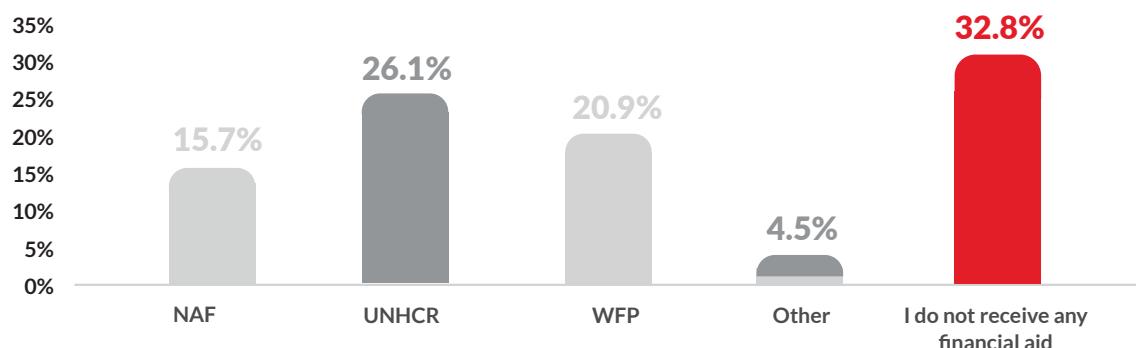


When grouping and analyzing the other mentioned areas, the reasons for incurring debt included legal and financial issues, living expenses, educational purposes, building and housing, business and trade, as well as personal reasons such as purchasing items, marriage, and relocating to other places.

### 3.3.1 FINANCIAL AID AND SUPPORT

When caregivers were asked about receiving financial support from the NAF, UNHCR, WFP, or any other organization, the most commonly selected response was that they did not receive any financial aid 32.8%. The next most common source of support was the UNHCR, with 26.1% of caregivers reporting assistance from this organization.

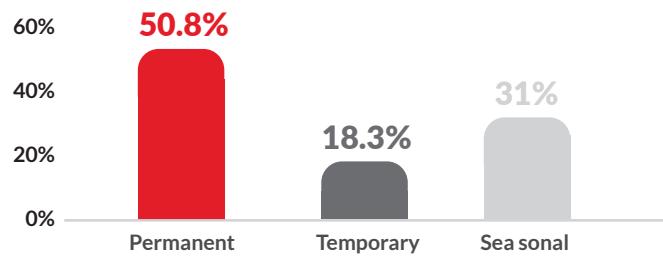
**Graph 7: Do you receive any financial support? - Caregivers**



### 3.3.2 CHILDREN SUPPORTING FAMILY INCOME

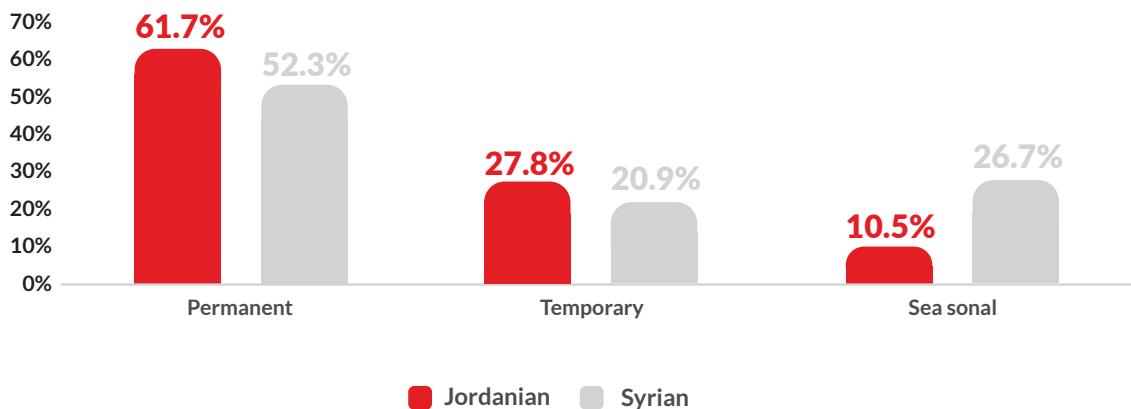
The majority of children interviewed reported having parents and/or legal guardians who work. When asked about their own role within the family, the majority 87.3% reported that they help or contribute to household expenses, while 12.7% reported being the primary supporter of their family and household expenses. Most of these children stated that they are able to support their families due to permanent jobs 50.8%, followed by those who reported doing seasonal work 31%.

**Graph 8: Is your job permanent, temporary or seasonal? - Caregivers**



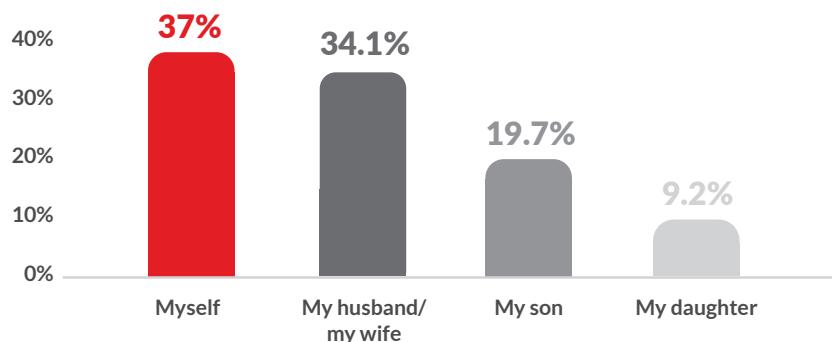
When data was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Jordanian children reported having parents with permanent jobs 61.7% compared to Syrian children 52.3%. Conversely, a slightly higher percentage of Syrian children reported that their parents have seasonal jobs 26.7% compared to Jordanian children 10.5%.

**Graph 9: Is your job permanent, temporary or seasonal? By nationality**



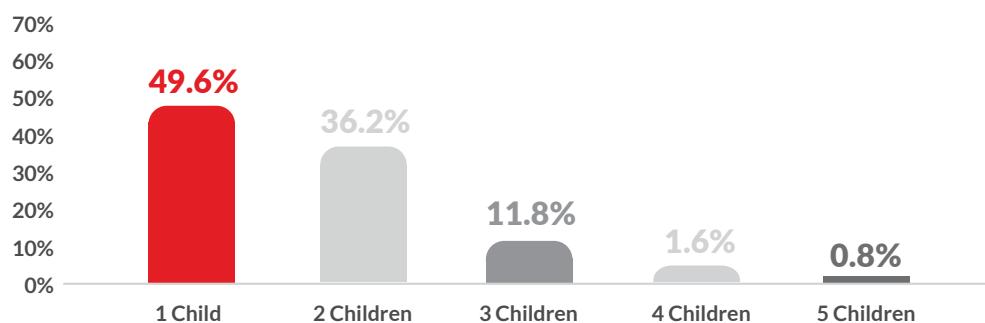
When caregivers were asked about the primary breadwinner in their household, the majority responded «myself» 37%, followed closely by «my husband/my wife» 34.1%.

**Graph 10: Who is the primary breadwinner? - Caregivers**



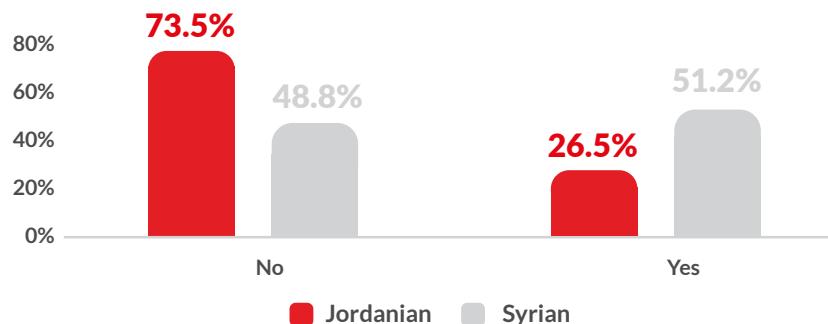
Furthermore, when caregivers were specifically asked about the number of children currently working, the highest percentage indicated that one child was working 49.6%, followed by those who mentioned two children working

**Graph 11: How many children do you have who are currently working? - Caregivers**



When asked if any of the children's siblings under 18 years old were working, the majority of respondents 62.7% reported that they did not have working siblings, while 37.3% reported that they did. Disaggregating this data by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Syrian children 51.25% reported having siblings under the age of 18 who work, compared to Jordanian children 26.5%. This highlights a significant disparity in child labor prevalence between Syrian and Jordanian families.

**Graph 12: Do you have any brothers or sisters who are under 18 years of age and who are working? By nationality**



## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

In Syrian families residing in tents on farms, there is a collective effort by all members of the family to contribute to household income through agricultural work. This communal approach involves all able family members, except mothers with newborns or those suffering from medical illnesses.

### 3.3 HOUSING SITUATION

The housing situations of the interviewed families present challenging living conditions, with many residing in tents. However, there is a relative split in terms of stability: approximately half of the families move seasonally but return home afterward, while the other half do not move seasonally. Additionally, a notable number of families reported living in independent homes, indicating a level of stability. Most parents house their children with them or with other family members, highlighting a strong familial living arrangement despite the challenges in housing.

#### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs, Syrian children and caregivers who move seasonally explained that they do so based on work availability, often stating, «Syrians move to pursue their income.» They migrate between Mafraq, the Jordan Valley, and Ramtha. Some families relocate entirely with all their belongings, while others with stable jobs on farms leave most of their possessions behind in their tents, and move temporarily for work, returning to their farm homes afterward. In families that move seasonally, all children are school dropouts, or never attended school, and most of them are completely illiterate.

**We live in tents, not on a farm. There are around 5-6 tents, we have 3 tents for people from the Dom community, and two groups of families who work and two Shawish's who live with us. They are scattered tents, and each tent has one family.**

**We move together.**

Male, 15 YO, Syrian- Jordan Valley (Central)

We move based on the seasons, sometimes we move north for two months, and then we come back here... overall we only spend 6 months in Shuneh... our tent is small, and we take it with us along with our gas cylinder. I don't have a washing machine or a fridge... I have a large water cylinder that keeps water cold.

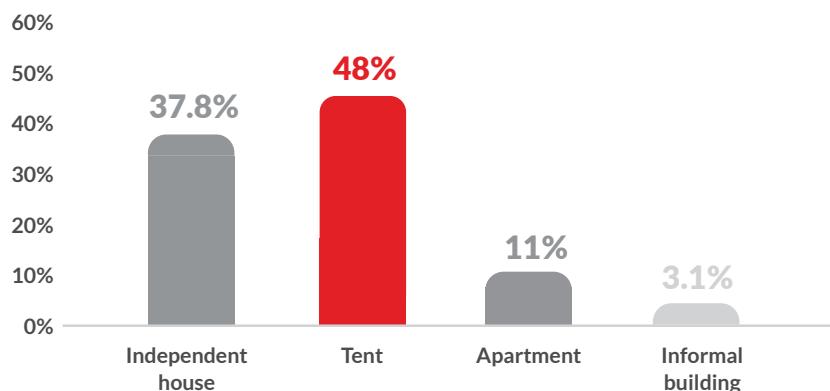
Female Caregiver, Syrian, Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

We move once every 6-7 months... but we are based here in the farm. We go to Amman during the winter for two months and come back here. We go to the Ghor for two months and return here... we keep our tent here, and we rent a place to stay wherever we go.

Male Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

Examining the housing situation and dynamics, the majority of respondents reported living in a tent (48%, followed closely by those living in an independent house 37.8%. A significant majority 66.7% indicated that the house they live in is owned, while 33.3% reported renting their accommodation.

**Graph 13: What type of home do you live in? - Caregivers**



The housing dynamics of their children, the majority of parents 86.6% reported that their children live with them. Eleven percent 11% reported their children living with their mother, while the remaining percentages were distributed among three areas: living with relatives, with the father, and with other family members, each with equal lower percentages. When asked if they housed any orphans, the majority reported that they did not 90.6%, while 9.4% reported that they did, with most of those who did being immediate or close family to the orphan.

Regarding moving homes, almost an equal split was reported with 48.8% moving according to seasonality, while 51.2% did not. Among those who reported moving seasonally, 39.1% do so regularly, while 60.9% return home at the end of the season.

### 3.4 EDUCATION

The education situation observed reveals a common trend among the interviewed families where children engaged in child labor are predominantly not enrolled in formal schooling. This trend is confirmed by both children and their caregivers. Caregivers themselves reported that their education typically ended at the primary school level. For their children, reasons for non-enrollment or dropout often include never enrolling at all or dropping out by the 7th grade.

#### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs the majority of caregivers confirmed that their children do not attend school. Some children had never been to school, as exemplified by an innocent admission for an 8-year-old child laborer: "I don't know what children do in a school... do they play games? Or make shapes?" Some caregivers and children reported that even those who are registered and attend school do so irregularly. They continue to go to occasionally to avoid being classified as school dropouts. It is also noteworthy that the IDIs reveal that the vast majority of children interviewed (regardless of the level of their education) are completely illiterate.

“

I will be very honest with you, my children go to school, but they attend one day, and then skip two... my son is going to Tawjih next year, but he doesn't attend school regularly.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

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Omar goes to school sometimes, he's in grade 11... but somedays when he doesn't have enough money for spending, he goes to work and skips school. Honestly our situation does not allow for the kids to go to school. My younger son has been missing a lot of school days for the past two years. He goes occasionally so they don't expel him from school, but truthfully, he hasn't been at all this year.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

I go once a week so that they don't register me as a drop out.... But I can't read or write.

Male, 15 YO, Jordanian, Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

I did not drop out, but honestly, I don't go much to school. This year I barely went but I'm registered.

I haven't been to school in around 15 days.

Male, 17 YO, Jordanian, Mafraq

“

On the other hand, among those who do attend school regularly, they typically attend five days a week. Those not attending formal school often report participating in informal or non-formal education with UNICEF's Makani program being frequently mentioned. Findings from the IDIs reveal that some children have access to educational activities provided by local CBOs. However, these activities are not mandatory, and children do not attend them regularly. Despite this, the interviewed children proudly mention attending school when referring to these education programs.

“

The place where the teacher gives them schooling is far, it's around 3 KM walk... the teacher gives them lessons, but I'm not sure if they understand what they're being taught or not.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

My kids don't go to school but there are girls who come to us and give them lessons... by the time they come to us at around 9 am, my daughter stops working next to her father, she studies and then she goes back to help her father at the farm.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

I used to go to the school in the refugee camp daily, but I honestly don't know how to read or write.

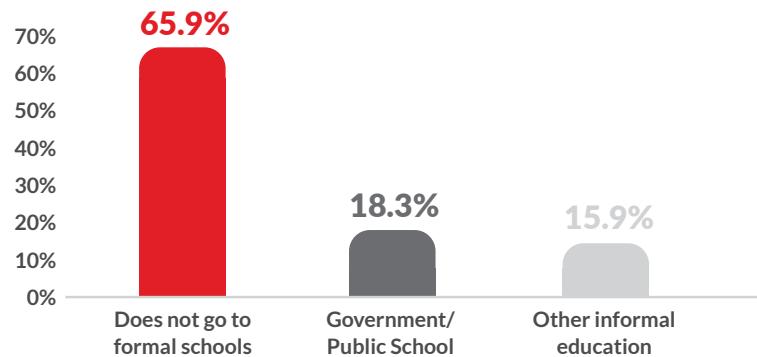
Male, 15 YO Syrian- Jordan Valley (North)

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Examining the education level of children, the majority reported having dropped out of school, with 65.9% indicating this. Additionally, 18.3% reported being enrolled in public school, while 15.9% mentioned pursuing other forms of education.

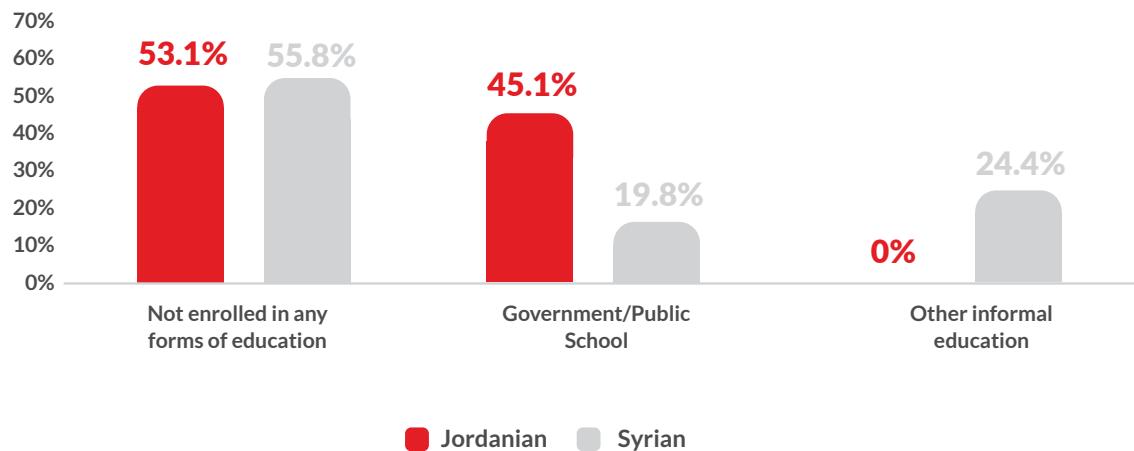
Out of the 15.9% who reported participating in other forms of informal education, the results were varied. The most frequently selected option was UNICEF's Makani education for out-of-school students, chosen by 45% of respondents. This was followed by programs dedicated to Syrian dropout students, selected by 20% of respondents. The breakdown of the remaining options is as follows below.

Graph 14: Children school enrollment - Children



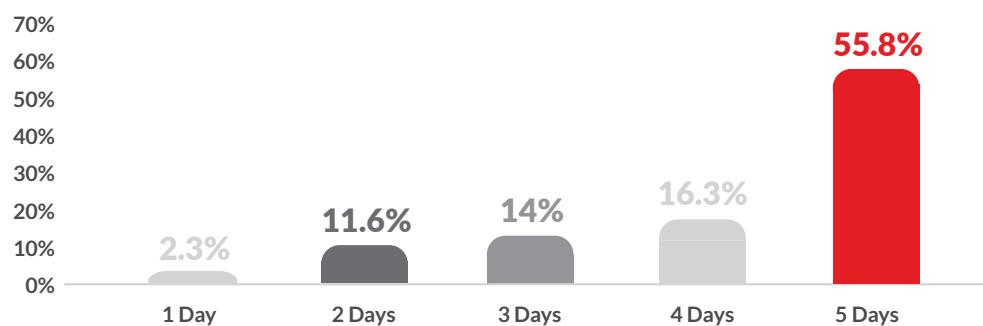
When the data was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Jordanian children reported enrolling in government/public schools 45.1% compared to Syrian children 19.8%. In contrast, a higher percentage of Syrian children reported enrolling in other forms of informal education 24.4%, whereas Jordanian children didn't report any enrollment in these informal educational settings.

**Graph 15: Children enrollment, by nationality**



Out of the 18.3% who reported attending public school, the majority 55.8% stated that they attended school 5 days a week. The distribution of the remaining hours and their frequencies of attendance is illustrated below.

**Graph 16: How many days per week do you attend school? - Children**



**Table 7: Reasons for dropping out of school- Children**

	Count	Percentage
I need to work to earn an income to help my family.	55	57.3%
My family cannot afford school expenses.	19	19.8%
I am not interested.	7	7.3%
My family moved from one place to another.	4	4.2%
The school is far from our home; difficulty with transportation to the school.	4	4.2%
I have to help with household chores/ need to take care of siblings or other family member.	2	2.1%
I don't know	2	2.1%
Other	2	2.1%
Because the school refuses to accept me	1	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDI's confirm and shed further light on reasons for not attending school, with financial constraints emerging as the primary reason cited by both parents and children for school dropout. This includes the need to support their families financially or the inability to afford associated expenses. The IDIs reveal the following reasons (identified from both children and caregivers) why most child laborers are not attending schools:

- Financial challenges and the need to support household expenses force many families to prioritize income over education. As one caregiver put it, «If I put the children back in school, who is going to spend on us? How will we get an income?»

The most vulnerable households interviewed naturally prioritize their livelihood, sacrificing their children's education to secure the minimum income needed for survival. Additionally, some caregivers complain about being unable to cover school-related expenses, including transportation, while children mention that they cannot attend school without daily pocket money, which they can only earn through work.

They never taught us anything at school, so I stopped going and began working with my friends to support my family. There's no one to earn an income for us except for me.

Male 13 YO, Jordanian, Jordan Valley (North)

My father is sick and I'm the only one who can work in the house.

Male 8 YO, Syrian, Jordan Valley

They are children. You can't send them to school without pocket money... when they see other children buying snacks and then feel bad that they didn't get any allowance... it's unfair. My child deserves what others have too. They're so young they don't understand anything. So, I decide not to send them to school.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq (ITS)

I stopped alone. Honestly, I loved school... but I stopped to work with my mother... anyway my brothers won't let me go back to school even if I wanted to right now.

Female, 17 YO Syrian, Mafraq

- Some children faced difficulty keeping up with the curriculum at school. For students who struggled academically, parents were quick to pull them out and send them into the labor market. Some children simply disliked schools, and when they decided to drop out, their parents did not object. As one mother explained, «They just weren't clever, and they didn't learn how to read; it was useless.»
- For families who move seasonally, maintaining consistent school enrollment for their children is extremely challenging. Caregivers reported that their children were either never enrolled in school or had to drop out because the family frequently relocates for work opportunities.
- Caregivers also cited the distance of schools from their residences as a significant barrier. With no nearby schools, financially burdened parents cannot afford the transportation costs to send their children to and from school.

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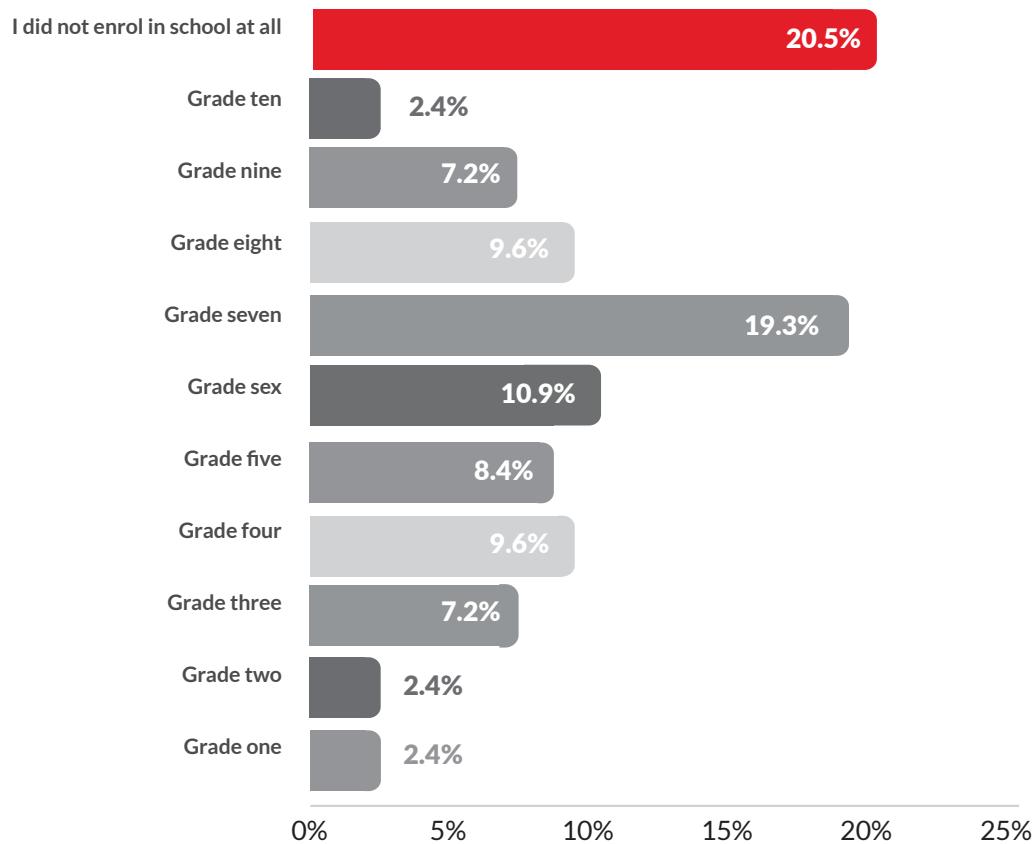
I made my children drop out because there are no schools around us. Some of my children got to study till the 6th grade while we were in the Za'tari camp, and I'm so happy they can read and write. my heart aches for the rest who missed the opportunity to go to school. At the moment we need to live; to survive, we don't need schools.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

“ ”

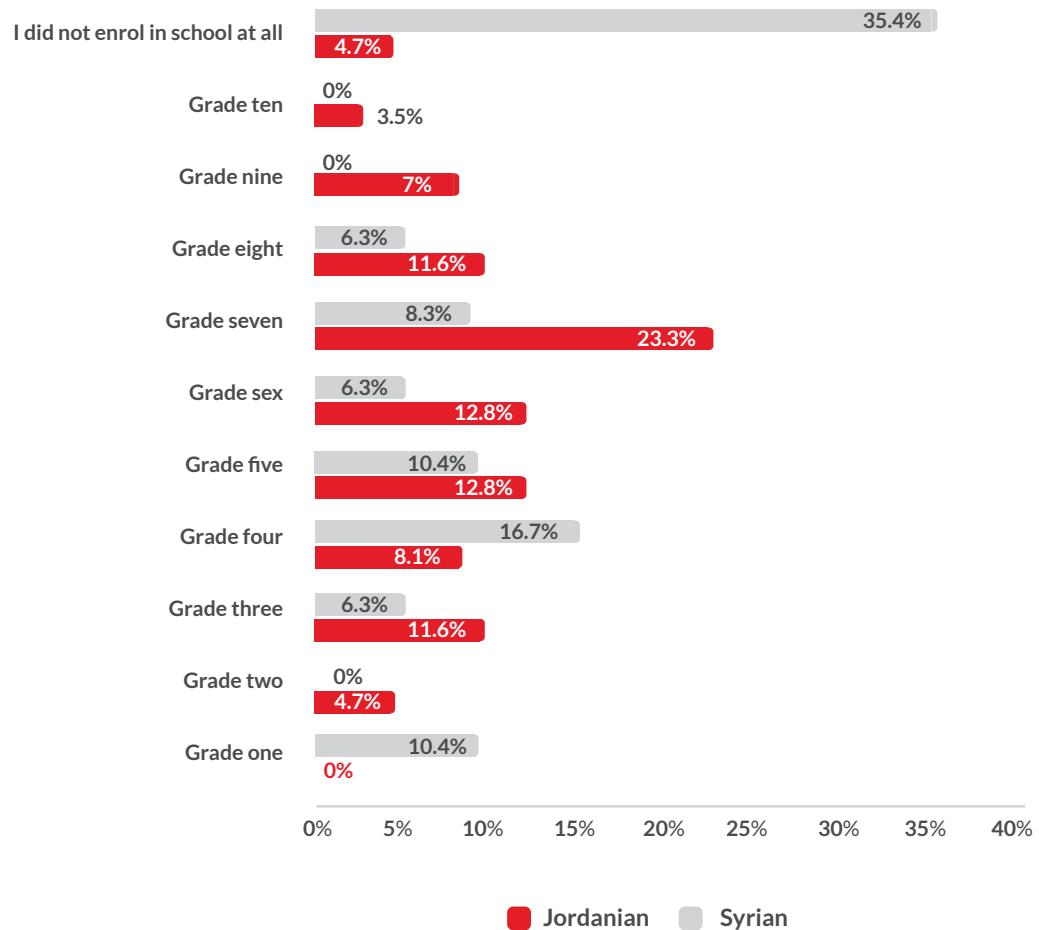
Further probing on out of school children it was found that 20.5% had never even enrolled nor gone to school to begin with, followed by 19.3% that reported having gone up until seventh grade before dropping out, the rest listed the following grades that they enrolled in before dropping out.

**Graph 17: Until what grade did you go to school before quitting school? - Children**



When disaggregating the grade at which children dropped out of school based on nationality, a higher percentage of Jordanian children reported dropping out most frequently in grade (7) 23.3% compared to Syrians 8.3%. Conversely, a significantly higher percentage of Syrian children reported never having enrolled in school at all (35.4% compared to Jordanians 4.7%).

**Graph 18: Until what grade did you go to school before quitting school? By nationality**



Regarding caregivers' perspectives on their children's enrollment in formal education, the majority confirmed the findings above in that when asked if they have school-aged children who are currently not attending formal school, the majority 70.1% confirmed this, while only 29.9% said they did not. The primary reasons reported for not attending school were financial; the first being the need to provide income for the family, followed by the expenses related to education.

**Table 8: Why is he/she/ they not going to a formal school? - Caregivers**

Reasons	Count	Percentage
Because they need to work to provide income for our family.	43	36.8%
Because our family cannot afford the expenses of education.	29	24.8%
Because the school is far from our house, and I do not have transportation to the school / there are difficulties in transportation to the school.	18	15.4%
Other	13	11.1%
Because my child was not doing well at school.	8	6.8%
Because the school refuses to enroll them.	3	2.6%
Out of fear for girls from the road and the risks they may face.	2	1.7%
Because they do not treat my children well at the school in our area.	1	0.9%
Prevailing customs and traditions that discourage girls from completing their education.	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100%</b>

Regarding caregivers and their educational background, the majority reported completing only primary school at 55.9%.

**Table 9: Caregiver school completion - Caregivers**

Education Background	Count	Percentage
Primary school	71	55.9%
Illiterate	27	21.3%
Secondary school	14	11.0%
Tawjihi	12	9.4%
Bachelors	1	0.8%
Vocational	1	0.8%
Diploma	1	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100%</b>

## SECTION 4

# THE REALITY OF CHILD LABOR



## 4.1 RECRUITMENT INTO THE WORKFORCE

Historically, the word “Shawish” in Arabic refers to a non-commissioned officer, often used to denote a sergeant in the military. Over time, this term evolved in different contexts, including in refugee camps and among migrant labor communities. In the context of labor migration, particularly among Syrian refugees and other displaced populations, a Shawish has come to represent an informal community leader or labor broker. This role has become particularly prominent in settings where formal governance structures are weak or absent, such as in informal settlements, refugee camps, and among migrant worker communities.

The role of the Shawish is multifaceted, blending elements of leadership, brokerage, and community support. The Shawish often acts as a labor broker, a mediator between farmers and workers. They are responsible for organizing labor, negotiating wages, ensuring the workers are employed, receiving a share of salaries and managing various aspects of employment. In addition to their role as labor brokers Shawish's also often take on leadership roles within their communities. They help to resolve disputes, provide support and guidance and act as a liaison between the community and external entities, such as aid organizations and local authorities.

Although the concept of a Shawish is not exclusive to Syria, it has become particularly significant among Syrian refugee communities due to the large-scale displacement caused by the Syrian civil war. The Shawish system is not new to Arab agricultural communities and was familiar to Syrian workers before their migration to Jordan. In recent years, the concept of Shawish has increasingly taken hold in Jordan, with many Jordanians also assuming this role. Despite the growing recognition of the Shawish system and its widespread practice, including instances where Shawish's act as employers, they remain unregulated. They are not mentioned in the procedures or decisions issued by the Ministry of Labor, nor are they covered by the labor law or the Agricultural Workers Bylaws.

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The study reveals that the vast majority of child laborers are brokered through a Shawish, either alongside their families, or individually. Children who work independently were familiar with the Shawish and had direct interaction with him/ her. An interesting finding is that several respondents stated that the Shawish they dealt with were women; however, their role was more recruitment of children or acting as community leaders in ITS's, evident both in Mafraq and the Jordan Valley, whereas the male Shawish's were involved in more supervision roles.

## 4.1.1 THE ROLE OF THE SHAWEESH (QUALITATIVE)

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs, children and caregivers provided insights into the perceived role of the Shawish. They indicated that the Shawish is primarily responsible for finding employment for workers and deciding on which farms they will work. Additionally, the Shawish coordinates between workers and farm owners, negotiates salaries, and ensures laborers do not need to interfere in this process. The Shawish also collects salaries from farm owners, ensures workers' rights are protected, and pays laborers either weekly or monthly as agreed. Some caregivers reported that when in need cash, they can request to take advances from the Shawish.

**We don't necessarily work in one farm, wherever the Shawish takes us we go to work.**

Female Caregiver, Mafraq

**He tells us where we are going to work, which farms, and what tasks we are doing. He told me that we're going to pick citrus fruits next. He gives me my allowance at the end of each week... and he is responsible for us.**

Male, Jordanian, 13 YO, Jordan Valley (Northern)

The Shawish also organizes transportation (typically through the farm owner) to and from the farms, ensuring children are collected and returned home after work.

While on the farm, children reported that the Shawish supervises workers, ensuring productivity and efficiency, providing instructions, and allocating tasks. Some caregivers mentioned that the Shawish also looks after their children while they work and serves as the point of contact between them and their children working alone on farms. Only a few caregivers acknowledged that the Shawish takes a small fee from their daily rates in exchange for his or her services.

role is to supervise the work of all the workers, and to organize the workflow... he also guarantees our rights and saves our monthly allowances which he pays us end of the month. If we need any cash during the month we can ask for some and he pays us. He is the one who finds us the work, and he has a car given to him by the farm, so he transports us to and from the farms... He looks after the children, and if I need to speak to Yamen my son, I call the Shawish. In return, the Shawish takes 10 piasters daily from us.

Female Caregiver, Syrian, Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

**The Shawish's role is to represent the employer... he watches the workers while they work making sure everyone is working efficiently, and if anyone is slacking, he tells them to work better and faster. If someone isn't working well, he asks them to work properly... he also transports the workers to the farm and back to their homes, and in return he gets a daily wage from the farm owner.**

Female, Syrian 17 YO (Mafraq)

“

Shawish's behavior varies, not all being the same. In general, children and caregivers tend to say positive things about how the Shawish treats them. Many children, especially younger ones, mention that the Shawish is kind and speaks softly with them. Syrians, in particular, note that the Shawish treats them well, some provide them with breakfast, tea, and allowing breaks when they're tired.

“

**The Shawish is nice, does not beat us, but if you do something wrong, they might hit you with a small stone, or with a stick on your back... and they might fire you and no longer give you work. If one of us gets upset from him we can go home, and if you're ok then you stay and work. He never hit me because I work hard.**

Male, 8 YO Syrian, Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

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**The Shawish is good, he is fair to be honest. He considers us all relatives and he doesn't pick on us so much. Sometimes the farm owner pressures us, but the Shawish ignores him, he just tells us to put in a little more effort and we understand what he means... And if I get tired, I just tell the Shawish that I'm tired and that I want to stop working and he allows me to.**

Female Syrian 17 YO, Mafraq

“ ”

However, some in-depth interviews have revealed instances of verbal abuse, including yelling and threats directed at children. Some children have described the Shawish as a «bully,» noting that not all children can cope with their authoritative behavior.

“ ”

**He is always screaming at the workers to work faster and better, giving instructions**

Male, Syrian, 15 YO Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

**He's rough but not very verbally abusive, it's just his way of treating people. My brother, for example cannot handle this type of treatment, he likes to work at his own pace. But working on a farm you can't work at your own comfort; you need to obey the Shawish.**

Male, Jordanian, 17 YO, Jordan Valley (North, Kraimeh)

“ ”

The study reveals that younger and more vulnerable children, who rely on these jobs, are afraid of upsetting the Shawish due to his role in securing their employment. One 8-year-old mentioned working hard to avoid punishment from the Shawish. The study reveals that these informal leaders operating outside of any formal oversight, are abusing their power without facing consequences. Despite the abuse towards children, the most vulnerable families endure it due to their dependence on these jobs, recognizing that if they complain they are replaceable.

One troubling account shared by a 13-year-old involves being tied or hung from a tree by the Shawish's brother, as well as being beaten with a stick, supposedly in jest. However, the same child mentions that the Shawish allows him to call his mother after work and describes him as kind.

“ ”

**I sometimes think they're too strict with the kids. For instance, my daughter asked her 13-year-old brother to bring back some citrus fruits from the farm where he works. The supervisor got very angry, which upset my son. He only wanted to share some fruit with his sisters. But maybe this strictness is necessary for him to learn self-reliance. If he sees my son taking a break and not working, he might yell at him. Sometimes, when he's really angry, he kicks the fruit box in front of him, spilling its contents, which upsets my son. He comes home and tells me about it. There was a time when my son stopped working because of this, and I spoke to the farm owners. I understand they have a lot to do and can barely keep up with the work.**

Female Caregiver from Jordan Valley (North), Jordan.

**“the brother of the Shawish hangs me on a tree, he hits me using a stick sometimes, but he's joking. Sometimes when he ties my older brother and beats him, I call for Ibrahim the Shawish, and tell him that they're hitting me. He comes immediately.**

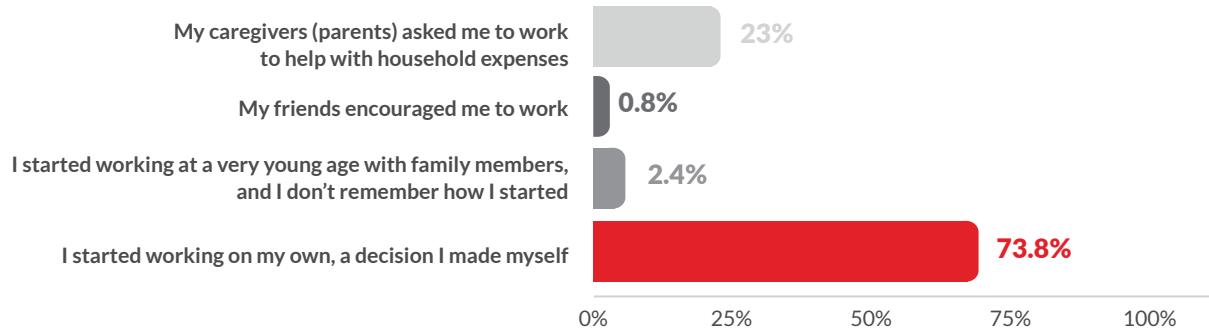
Male, Jordanian 13 YO, Joran Valley (North)

“ ”

#### 4.1.2 DRIVERS OF CHILD LABOR

Children overwhelmingly reported that their decision to work was based on their own choice, with 73.8% stating they made the decision independently. 23% reported that their caregiver/ parent asked them to work in order to help with household expenses. 2.4% have been working for far too long and started at a very young age, and accordingly do not recall how they started.

**Graph 19: Which of the following applies to you concerning how you started working?**



#### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDI responses from child laborers and their caregivers provide a clear picture of the financial hardships driving children into the workforce. For caregivers, the primary reasons for sending their children to work include the urgent need for additional income to meet basic needs, such as food and clothing.

One female caregiver from Mafraq explained the necessity of her 12-year-old son's labor by stating, «I take him with me because I need to earn more income to spend on our household. Where else am I supposed to bring money from? In our situation, you need to do what is needed to earn anything for us to survive and make ends meet.» Another caregiver highlighted the pressure of providing for her children: «When my children ask me for trousers or shoes, how am I supposed to afford these things? They always compare our situation to other children. So, I tell them, I can't help you. Go work with our neighbor's children, earn your income, and buy what you need.» A male caregiver echoed these sentiments, emphasizing that the work is essential to avoid begging: «We had to make the children work so that we can afford to buy the food we need. We don't want to build houses or purchase cars. We just need enough to buy our food.»

From the children's perspective, their motivations align closely with their caregivers' concerns. Many children work to support their families financially. For instance, a 10-year-old female from the Jordan Valley expressed her dedication to helping her parents by saying, «I work with my father because I want him to have more money so that he can buy us food. We only eat on the farm because we can't afford to buy any food.»

There was nothing in the house, and my brother and I were studying at the time... we started working and found it comfortable... there were no jobs for our parents, so we started working and spending on our family.

Male 17 YO, Jordanian, Jordan Valley (North)

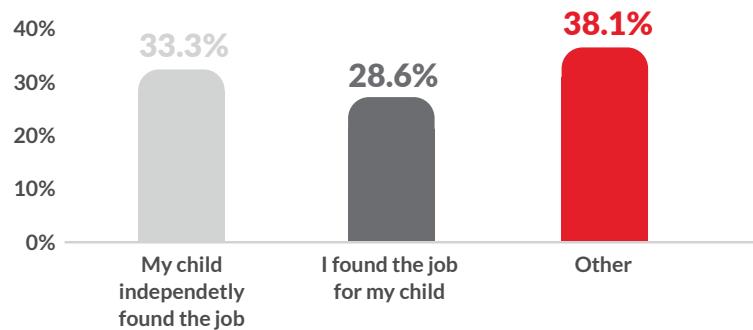
However, a smaller group of children work to gain personal spending money, a necessity driven by their caregivers' inability to provide allowances. A 15-year-old boy voiced his frustration, noting, "What really upset and bothered me was that my father works, but he did not give us any allowance. So, I began working to earn my allowance and I give my siblings an allowance as well."

These narratives collectively underscore the pervasive financial challenges faced by these families. Unemployed parents or those with unstable, low-paying jobs are significant factors compelling children to work. The children's labor, often seen as a necessity rather than a choice, is crucial for their families' survival, reflecting the dire economic circumstances that leave little room for alternatives.

#### 4.1.3 FINDING WORK

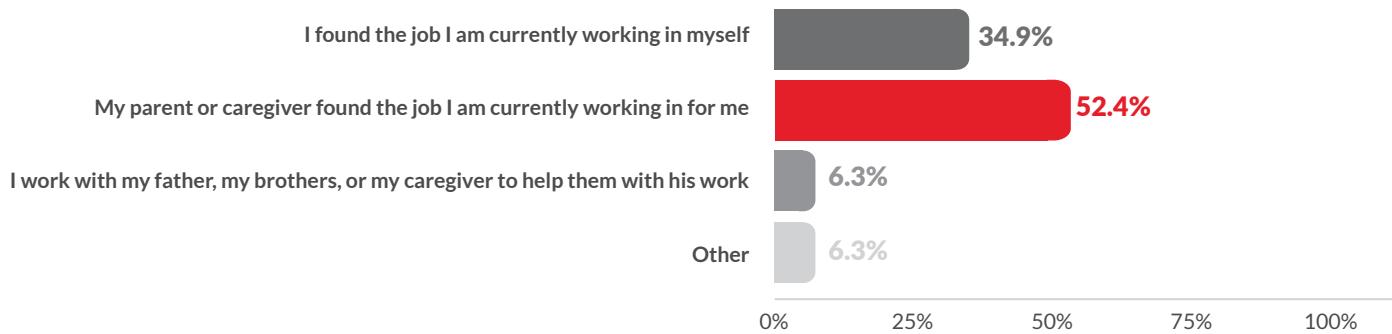
The majority reported that they obtained their current job through their parent or caregiver, with 52.4% indicating this, followed by 34.9% who reported finding the job themselves. The 6.3% who chose other included finding work through family members, neighbors, friends, acquaintances or the Shawish.

**Graph 20: How did your child find his current job? – Caregivers**



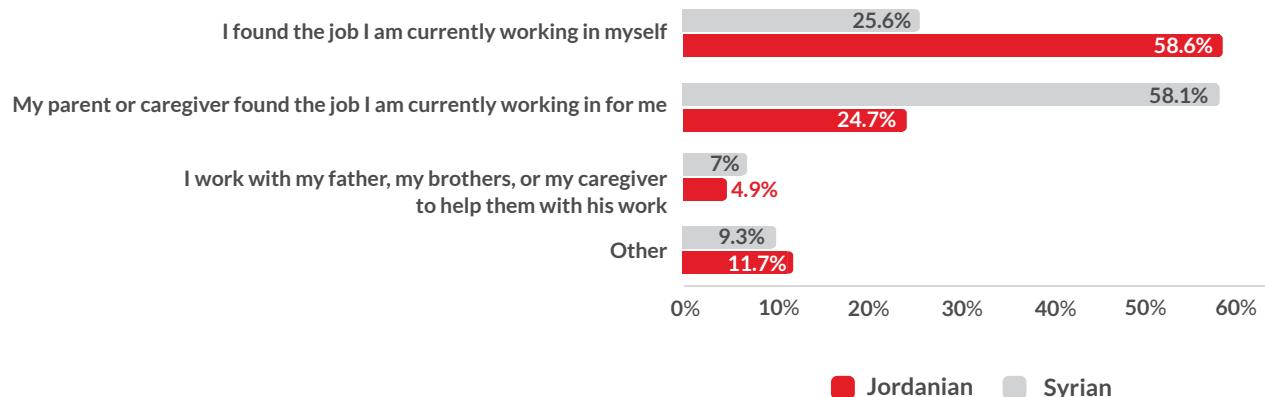
Parents' perspectives on how their children found employment varied, in comparison to their children: 33.3% mentioned their children independently secured their jobs, while 28% stated they facilitated the job finding process, and 38.1% cited other familial support in job searches. Furthermore, 66.9% of caregivers asserted that their children work with them on the same farm, and only 33.1% indicating otherwise.

**Graph 21: How did you obtain your current job? - Children**



When data was disaggregated by nationality, a higher percentage of Jordanian children reported finding the job they are currently working at on their own 58.6% compared to Syrian children 25.6%. Conversely, more Syrian children reported that their parents or legal guardians found their jobs for them 58.1% in comparison to Jordanians 24.7%.

**Graph 22: Which of the following applies to you concerning how you started working? By nationality**



## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDI findings corroborate the quantitative data. Most children report to have made the decision to start working on their own. Those who found jobs independently did so through friends, neighbors, cousins, or, in one case, through a Facebook post. Some mentioned going directly to nearby farms and asking the owners if they need daily workers. For those whose parents or caregivers found work for them, some said that the Shawish identified the farms where they work on, and they simply show up.

Sometimes they find work through people we know; neighbors' children go together... the young children gather each other and work together... and of course they exploit them because they're young.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian, Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

Me and my brother were discussing how there was nothing to eat in the house one day... we decided we wanted to work, and we found jobs at a farm... our first job was in a potato farm.

Male 17 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Kraimeh)

My parents asked me to work with them to support them on a farm... that's how I started. the Shawish reached out to her brother who is my father's relative, and she asked for workers. That's how I found my current job.

Male 17 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Tal Al Arba'in)

Regarding employment sectors, among children employed in agriculture, the majority 84.6% exclusively work in this sector over the past two years, indicating limited occupational diversity. Caregivers confirmed the trend when asked if any of their other children worked in different sectors, with the majority 98.4% reporting that agriculture was also the primary sector for their other children.

**Table 10: Have you worked in any other sector during the past two years in addition to the sector you currently work in? - Children**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I have not worked in any other sector	110	84.6%
Other	10	7.7%
Construction	3	2.3%
Salesperson in a shop	2	1.5%
Workshops and car repairs	1	0.8%
Painting	1	0.8%
Blacksmithing	1	0.8%
Waiter in a restaurant or cafe	1	0.8%
Street vendor	1	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs, a 13-year-old male working in agriculture in the Northern Jordan Valley shared his experience of playing a handmade flute. Occasionally, he is hired to perform at events and parties. He recounted, «I get calls asking me to play for 20-30 dinars for half an hour at weddings or parties. I also go to many male parties but my mother advised me not to accept anything in case it's drugged. I honestly prefer working on a farm because it's better work than parties. The number of days I can work on a farm far exceeds the parties; they only happen once or twice a month but work on the farm is available daily.» While interviewing a community leader from the same village, the research team learned that the child was given Captagon pills by his older sibling to enhance his performance at these parties, gain more popularity, and secure more gigs, as they pay well. During an interview with the child's mother, she also admits that her son was showing abnormal signs, stating "when he first started going to these parties he was drinking water continuously, taking a sip every 5 minutes, and his breathing was abnormal. Some of the guests he meets at the parties encourage him to take a pill, tell him it's normal to do so, in order to gain more energy. I always warn him to be careful."

While only a small minority shared these experiences of working multiple jobs, their stories are very telling. Among them is an 8-year-old who works in waste picking and collecting metal cans. He shared, «I use the money to buy bread... I enjoy collecting metal more than picking fruits and vegetables... when I sell the cans, I use the money to buy biscuits for me and my siblings. I don't mind much, but I search through the waste bins and get lucky sometimes.» When we interviewed his mother, she stated:

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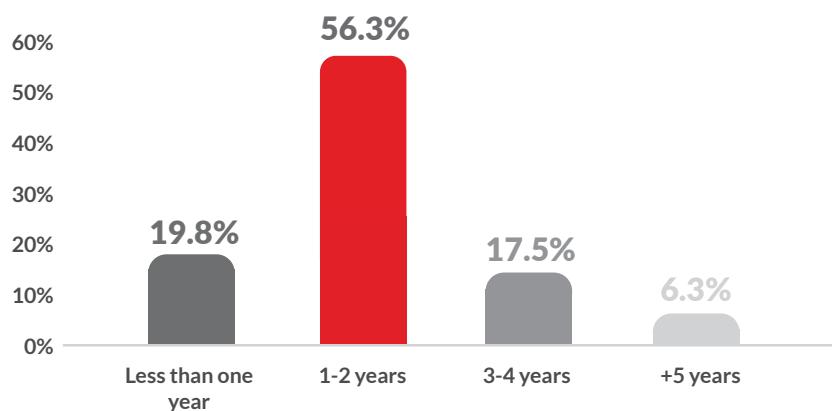
He always asks me to collect soda cans... he tells me: mama collect me some cans so that I can buy trousers for myself and a t shirt... he sells them to a man who goes around the homes for 5-10 piasters and uses the money to buy snacks for his siblings.

Female, Caregiver, Syrian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

“

Regarding the duration of their employment in the agriculture sector, the majority reported working there for 1-2 years 56.3%, followed by less than one year 19.8%.

**Graph 23: For how long have you been working in the agricultural sector? - Children**



## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDI's reveal that some children who have been working for many years began at a very young age, as early as 6. One child recounted, "I started working 7 years ago as soon as my mother got divorced... I was 6 years old at the time". Another child reported starting so young that he didn't understand what he was doing, saying, "I used to think working was a game we play."

## 4.2 EMPLOYERS/ FARMS

The vast majority of children reported working on someone else's farm 95.2%, while very few reported working on a farm owned by their family 3.2%, or a farm owned by a relative 1.6%.

Graph 24: Do you work in: - Children

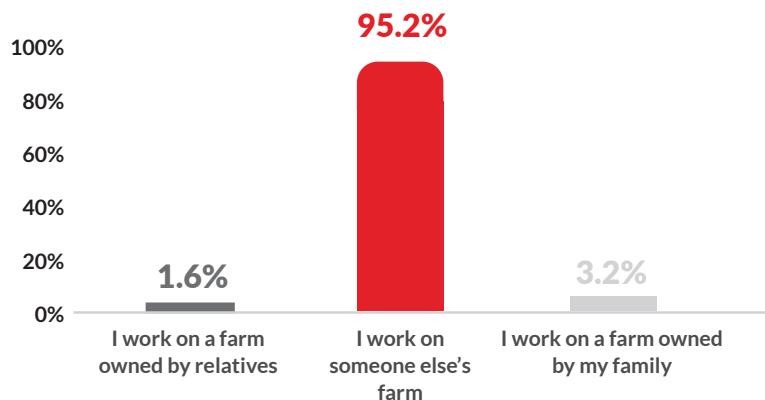


Table 11: Name of the farm children work for - Children

Farm name	Count	Percentage
I don't know	54	76.06%
I know	17	23.94%

An interesting finding is that many child laborers either did not know the name of the farm owners, or only knew their first name or the names of their supervisors.

To be honest I don't know the names of the farms my sons work in... I know the people that my boys go with, they are our neighbors, I know his Shawish (Mu'allem), but the farms don't have signs that say the name of the farm, so I honestly don't know. In the winter he takes them to citrus farms, and in the spring to fruit farms in Rajeb. Female Caregiver, Jordan Valley (North)

"We work in a private farm, he's rented a land here, and he put us on the land and doesn't charge us rent.

Male Caregiver, Mafraq

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDI's reveal that some children who have been working for many years began at a very young age, as early as 6. One child recounted, "I started working 7 years ago as soon as my mother got divorced... I was 6 years old at the time". Another child reported

#### 4.2.1 RELATIONSHIP WITH EMPLOYER

The majority of children working in agriculture expressed positive sentiments about their employers, with respect being the most commonly mentioned aspect at 64.9%. A small minority of children expressed negative sentiments about their employers, describing them as harsh 6.5%, unfair 3.9% or unkind, inconsiderate and disrespectful. Other qualities were also noted, as listed in the table below:

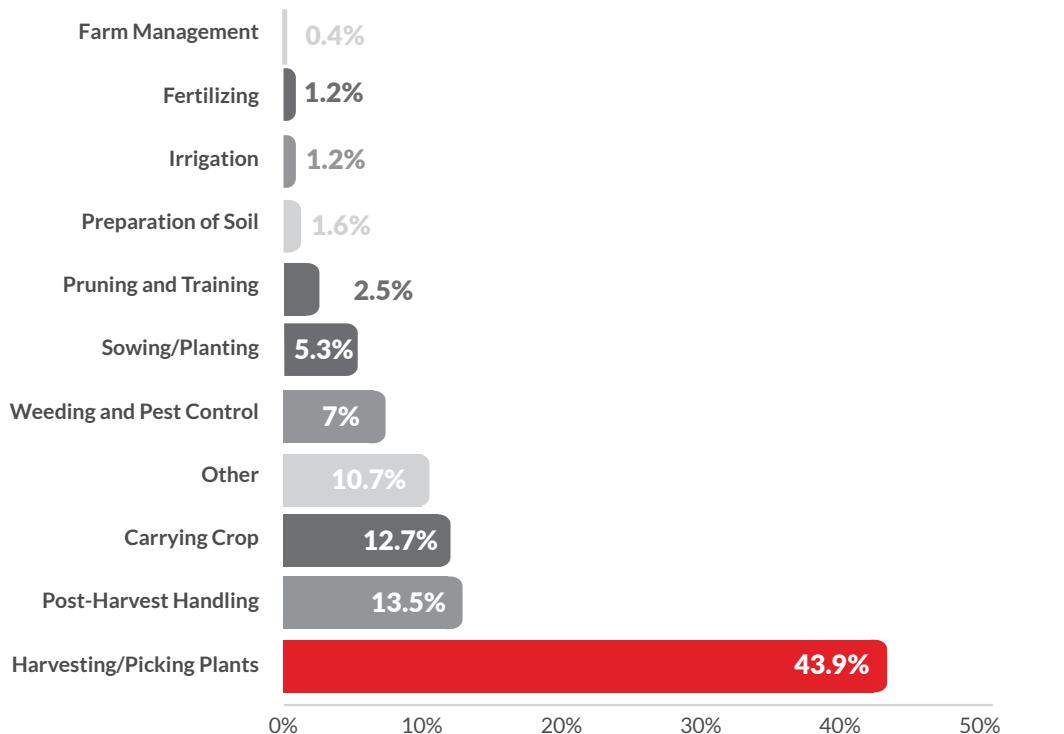
**Table 12: How is your relationship with your employer?**

	Relationship	Count	Percentage
<b>Positive Descriptions</b>	Respectful	100	64.9%
	Kind	13	8.4%
	Understanding	10	6.5%
	Fair	3	1.9%
	Gentle	3	1.9%
<b>Negative Descriptions</b>	Harsh	10	6.5%
	Unfair	6	3.9%
	Disrespectful	2	1.3%
	Inconsiderate	2	1.3%
	Unkind	2	1.3%
Other, specify		3	1.9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>154</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.3 NATURE OF WORK

When asked what work on the farm includes, the most frequently selected answer according to children was harvesting/picking plants 43.9%. Other options were less frequently chosen, as listed in the table below along with their frequencies. When probing about 'other' selected options, laying out the crops was the most frequently mentioned.

**Graph 25: What does your work on the farm include?**



Further probing into the work done on the farms revealed that the most frequently selected answer was carrying heavy objects such as sandbags and water 16%, followed by climbing trees 15.2%. The complete breakdown is detailed in the table below.

**Table 13: Which of the following activities do you do? - Children**

Activity	Count	Percentage
Carrying heavy objects: sandbags, water...etc.	79	16.0%
Climbing trees	75	15.2%
Using sharp tools: knives hooks, hoes, sickles...etc.	63	12.8%
Working in spaces of extreme height.	60	12.2%
Working in confined spaces.	50	10.1%
Animal shepherd	37	7.5%
Using pesticides and chemicals during work.	36	7.3%
Touching or handling plants without protective gloves	34	6.9%
Use heavy machinery: saws, farm vehicles...etc.?	32	6.5%
Driving or handling tractors or machines	19	3.9%
Other, specify	8	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Comparing the above data with the responses of the parents, the results were very similar, with slight differences indicating agreement on tasks such as climbing trees and carrying heavy objects.

**Table 14: Which of the following activities does your child engage in? - Caregivers**

Activity	Count	Percentage
Climbing trees	78	16.6%
Carrying heavy objects such as bags of sand and water, etc.	73	15.6%
Use of sharp tools: such as knives, shovels, sickles, etc.	62	13.2%
Working at very high places	50	10.7%
Touching or handling plants without wearing protective gloves	42	9.0%
Use of pesticides and chemicals during work	41	8.7%
Working in confined spaces	40	8.5%
Use of heavy machinery such as saws or agricultural vehicles, etc.	29	6.2%
Other - Specify	20	4.3%
Caring for animals	16	3.4%
Driving or handling tractors and machinery	10	2.1%
Does not engage in any of the above tasks: What type of work does your child participate in?	8	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs, children shared the types of crops they harvest/pick on farms, with tomatoes being the most commonly mentioned. Other crops included eggplant, okra, pepper, cucumbers, cauliflower, green beans, zucchini, potatoes, melon, bananas, lemons, various citrus fruits, peaches, and grape leaves, depending on the season.

Some children expressed preferences and aversions for certain plants. Many disliked harvesting tomatoes due to the constant squatting, which causes strain and pain in their lower backs. They also disliked harvesting heavy plants or those requiring special care, such as sorting by size, as is the case with eggplants; as one child explained “some size are sold for frying and other size for stuffing, and we need to sort them accordingly.” Melons and watermelons are particularly challenging due to their weight and the special attention needed to handle them. One explained, “Once picked, they are placed on polystyrene to avoid being dampened by the soil. If they drop them while carrying them, they break, and the farm owner loses his crop. Therefore, they are carried together at the end and placed directly into a truck.”

In contrast, grape leaves were favored because they are paid by the kilogram rather than an hourly rate. This payment method allows children to stop working once they have reached their self-set target weight, rather than being obligated to meet a daily quota based on filled buckets or completed areas.

I dislike picking eggplant, they collect so much dust and small fruit flies... also we collect some for frying and some for stuffing, the boss tells me what to pick because there is usually more than one size on the same plant.

Male 15 YO, Syrian- Jordan Valley

I don't like picking lemon because they're heavy to carry.

Male 13 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“Picking grape leaves is ok, because whenever you want to stop working you can. But with tomatoes you can't stop...you need to keep picking until you fill up your bucket.

Female, 17 YO, Syrian Mafraq

In general, the IDIs reveal that children perceive agricultural work as physically exhausting, monotonous and unexciting. The most difficult tasks include carrying harvested crops, which they commonly refer to as “Taqfees- تقفيص” spraying pesticides, squatting for long hours, and working in confined spaces.

“

It's all difficult, and the most difficult is picking tomatoes because you need to squat for hours... and then you need to carry the bucket you filled. You know the big buckets they use for wall paint; those buckets need to be filled before you carry them.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

Harvesting tomatoes is the worst, you squat for so long you feel your back is going to break.

Male, 15 YO Jordanian, Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

Girls only harvest, they don't carry heavy things, this work is done by the males. But they do work in confined spaces.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Mafraq

My son (13-year-old) works in the workshop. There are 30 workers who bring the crop and lay it on a table. He bring the boxes and sorts the fruit into each, and then he sticks each box with tape to secure the fruit inside. Then when it's evening, he helps carry the boxes onto to large vans that they transport to the market to sell.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

The hardest thing is planting lemon trees... I need to use a rock and tools and slam it into the ground until I make a hole and then I put in the trees and cover them with soil.

Male 13 YO, Syrian- Jordan Valley (North)

Spraying is the worst, sometimes it takes us 2 hours and we spray once every two to three days. We rented the land, so I can't say I don't want to spray, if there isn't anyone else to do the job, I need to. sometimes my father sprays. The other day we sprayed from 6 am till 6 pm... it's a big farm. I also dislike picking tomatoes, it hurts my back.

Male, 13 YO Syrian- Mafraq

“

“

The IDIs also reveal that some children as young as 13 engage in various strenuous and hazardous activities. They carry heavy crops and load them onto vehicles for transportation to the market. Additionally, these young laborers use knives and saws and are involved in spraying pesticides, which poses significant health risks. Several children also climb trees, with the most dangerous being date trees, adding a considerable element of physical danger to their already demanding work. However, this is not the norm in all farms. Some caregivers affirm that certain farms do not allow young children to carry heavy items, use sharp tools, or spray pesticides. Instead, these children are given lighter, age-appropriate tasks, such as sorting crops and placing them in boxes. As one mother stated, "The farm owners don't mind how young the child is, as they give them light tasks such as filling empty boxes with fruit or spreading empty boxes on the ground."

## 4.4 EXAMINING THE WORKING CONDITIONS, HAZARDS AND RISKS

Work in the agricultural sector is inherently dangerous, posing significant risks to workers due to its demanding physical nature and exposure to hazardous environments. The use of motorized agricultural machinery, handling of toxic pesticides, and exposure to extreme weather conditions contribute to high rates of work-related injuries and fatalities. According to the ILO, agriculture is among the top three most perilous sectors concerning occupational safety and health. This danger is further amplified when it involves children, as the physical, mental, and moral well-being of young workers can be severely compromised<sup>26</sup>.

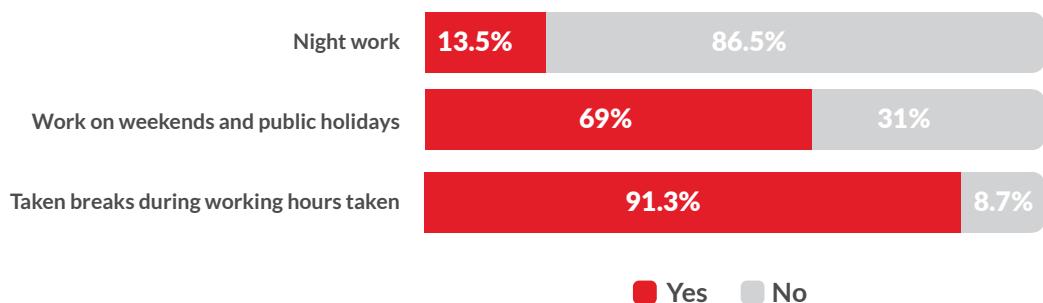
Hazardous tasks, such as operating heavy machinery, working long hours under the sun, and exposure to chemicals, make agricultural work one of the «worst forms of child labor,» underlining the urgent need for stricter safety regulations and protective measures to safeguard these vulnerable workers. The following section includes findings related to the working conditions as well as hazards and risks facing child laborers.

The findings highlight that children engaged in agricultural labor face diverse working conditions, presenting both positives and concerns. A notable majority receive payment and take regular breaks, yet they frequently confront hazards like encounters with wild animals and physical discomfort, often exacerbated by the lack of essential protective gear. This shortfall in safety measures contributes to increased risks and higher incidence of accidents during tasks. Moreover, the work-life balance appears strained, with common work during weekends and public holidays. It is worth noting however that night and daytime work hours are relatively moderate in comparison.

### 4.4.1 WORKING HOURS AND BREAKS

The law in Jordan forbids employing a child for more than six hours per day, mandates a minimum one-hour rest after four consecutive hours of work, and bans children from working on religious, weekly, and official holidays as well as between 8 PM and 6 AM.

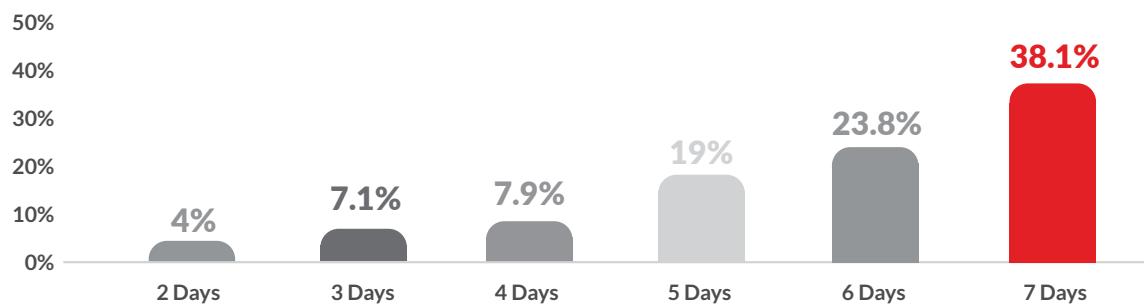
**Graph 26: Do you face any of the following while you're working? - Children**



<sup>26</sup> ILO: 2016: <https://www.ilo.org/resource/article/refugee-crisis-child-labour-agriculture-rise-lebanon>

With regards to working hours, the majority of children reported not working at night 86.5%, while a small minority indicated that they did 13.5%. When asked about the number of hours they worked at night, the most frequently selected answer ranged between 3-7 hours. During the day, children most frequently reported working all 7 days a week 38.1%, followed by 6 days a week 23.8%.

**Graph 27: How many days per week do you work? - Children**

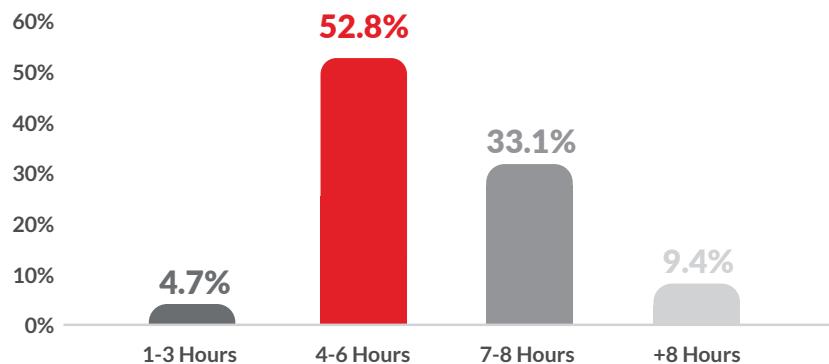


As for the hours they spend working, children most frequently mentioned working within the range of 5-9 hours per day. This slightly contrasts with caregivers' reports, which indicated that the most frequently selected working hours were 4-6 hours per day for their children's daytime work schedules. The contrast in reported working hours between children and caregivers may stem from differences in perception, with caregivers possibly underestimating the time their children work or lacking direct observation. Children may provide more accurate accounts due to firsthand experience. Additionally, communication gaps, variation in work patterns, and potential intentional misreporting by caregivers to avoid scrutiny could also contribute to the discrepancy.

**Table 15: How many hours a day do you spend working? - Children**

No. of Hours	Count	Percentage
1 hrs.	1	0.8%
11 hrs.	1	0.8%
15 hrs.	1	0.8%
13 hrs.	2	1.6%
12 hrs.	5	4.0%
2 hrs.	7	5.6%
3 hrs.	2	6.1%
10 hrs.	8	6.3%
6 hrs.	24	9.01%
4 hrs.	12	9.5%
5 hrs.	13	10.3%
9 hrs.	14	11.1%
7 hrs.	16	12.7%
8 hrs.	20	15.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Graph 28: How many hours per day does your child work? - Caregivers



### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs, some children reported that their daily working hours depend on meeting specific workload requirements.

I work until I fill the required number of cars with harvested crops. Sometimes it's five cars, other times it's two carloads per day. Once the cars are filled, the workday ends.

15-year-old, who moves between Mafraq and Ramtha depending on the season

“

we sleep in a room with workers from other nationalities, all together. They give us a mattress, a pillow.

Male child laborer

“

Regarding work during weekends and public holidays, the majority reported that they did work 69%, which was also echoed during the IDIs with children, as outlined below.

“

I leave home at 5:00 am and work all days including Friday and Saturday. I don't take a break. I work around 4 hours daily, from 5-10 am. And sometimes I go back to the farm in the afternoon to work again.

Male, 17 YO Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Tal Al Arba'in)

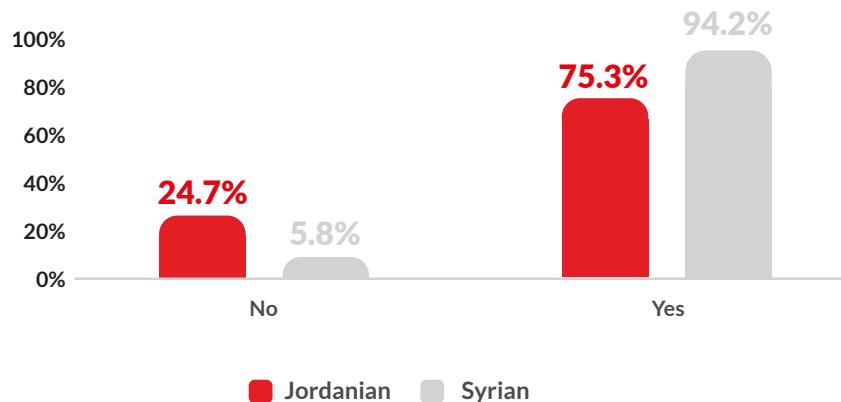
I work all week, 6 days at the farm. I don't come back home until Thursday. And I go back to the farm on Friday. During holidays I also return home. I work from 5 am till sunset.

Male, 13 YO Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“

Taking breaks during working hours was a common practice among the majority of children 91.3%, with only a small percentage 8.7% indicating that they did not take breaks. Most children reported taking breaks lasting between 15 to 30 minutes on average. When this practice was disaggregated by nationality, it was observed that a higher percentage of Syrian children 94.2% reported being given the opportunity to take breaks, compared to Jordanian children 75.3%.

**Graph 29: Do you get a break during working hours? By nationality**

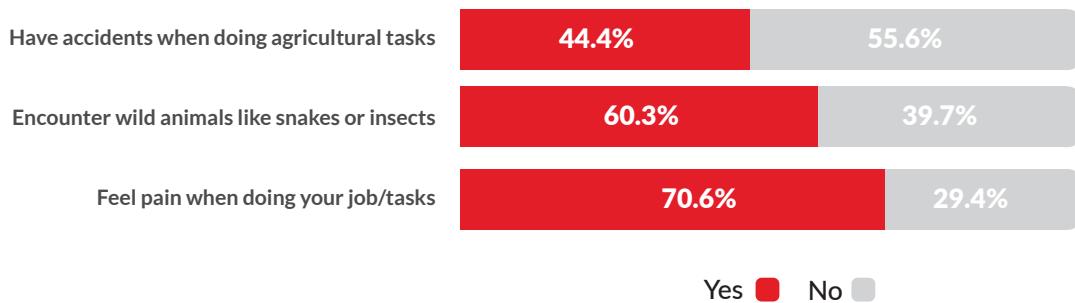


#### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs, one Syrian female caregiver who also works in agriculture stated that they are rarely allowed to take breaks, she states “you work until you fill the bucket... then you can stand up and stretch your back for two minutes until the guy comes to remove the bucket of tomatoes... we are prohibited from sitting. We get 10 minutes every two hours, these are the rules in Jordan, across all farms.”

#### 4.4.2 DANGERS, HAZARDS AND RISKS

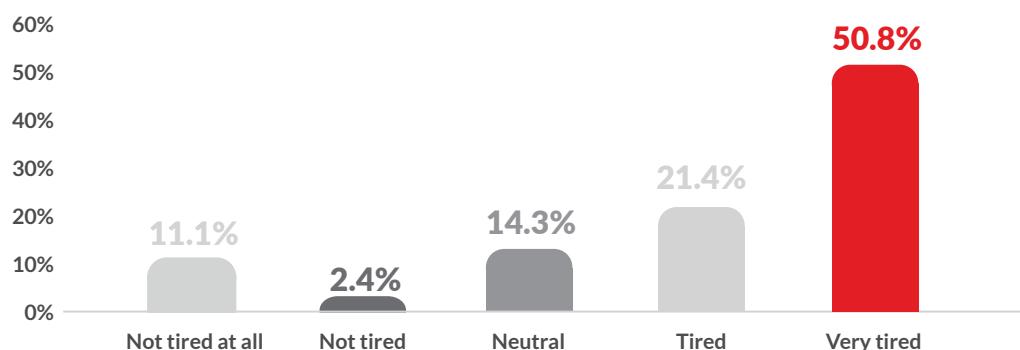
**Graph 30: Children that report encountering the following during work - Children**



#### 4.4.2.1 EXHAUSTION AND PHYSICAL PAIN

In examining the impact of work on children, a significant majority 72.2% reported feeling tired and exhausted from their work, indicating the strenuous nature of their responsibilities. Conversely, a smaller percentage 13.2% reported not experiencing feelings of fatigue, suggesting varying levels of physical and emotional strain among child laborers. Regarding feeling pain while performing their job or tasks, the majority reported that they did feel pain 70.6%, whereas a smaller percentage did not 29.4%.

Graph 31: Do you feel tired and exhausted from work? - Children



#### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

Caregivers echoed these concerns during the IDIs, with many mothers expressing worry about their children's exhaustion and the physical pain they endure. The most common complaint from the children is lower back pain either resulting from squatting while harvesting or carrying heavy loads. Additionally, some mothers reported that their children suffer from headaches due to the heat and overall body aches.

He tells me, mother, I am tired... I am very tired. Isn't it unfair that kids my age are in school, and I need to endure this pain?.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Jordan Valley (Central)

You see 13-year-olds carrying heavy crates, 40 KG's back and forth for 8 hours.

Male, 15 YO, Syrian- Mafrag

#### 4.4.2.2 ENCOUNTER WILD ANIMALS

When asked about encountering wild animals like snakes or insects, the majority reported that they did 60.3%, compared to those who did not 39.7%. During the IDIs, children and caregivers shared concern about snakes and scorpions. Most had seen snakes or scorpions while working. As one girl recounted "The other day, a girl removed the bag of tomatoes she was picking and found a snake underneath it."

“The date trees hold a lot of insects and small snakes in them. That is why they shave them to get rid of them. But the ones that are not shaved are dangerous. Recently my son was working harvesting melons... they found a poisonous snake.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

“There are many snakes, long ones and they are poisonous. We hear about incidents all the time.

Male 15 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“Three weeks ago, I found a Palestine snake while I was picking tomatoes... it's massive and venomous. It's a very scary thing to see. I left the plastic house immediately and didn't go back in.

Male, 15 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

#### 4.4.2.3 ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

Accidents during agricultural tasks were reported with responses equally split, but slightly more people reported not having accidents 55.6% compared to those who did 44.4%.

#### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

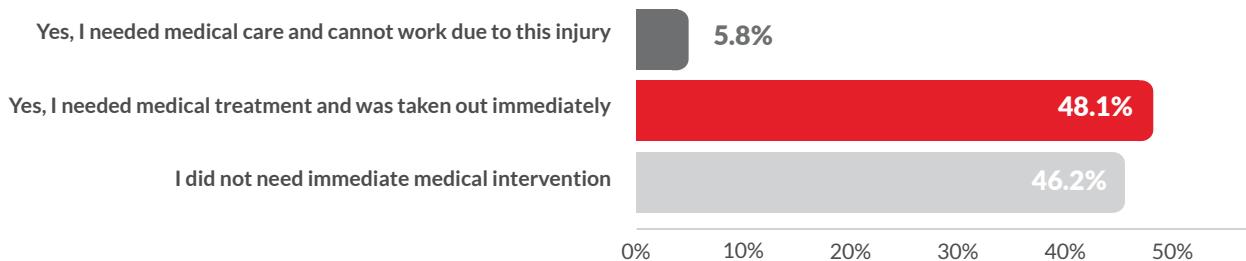
The IDI's reveal several factors that could lead to accidents and injuries for children working in agriculture:

- Working in mountainous terrain, which increases the risk of slipping and falling into a valley.
- Climbing on high, unsafe areas, such as water tanks.
- Using farming sharp tools and heavy equipment. Caregivers pointed out the physical risks children face in handling heavy items, sharp tools, and the potential for accidents and injuries inherent in agricultural tasks.

- The presence of water pools on farmlands, where children have fallen and drowned.

Children were subsequently questioned about injuries, revealing a nearly equal split in responses: 58.7% indicated they had not experienced any injuries, while 41.3% reported having encountered injuries. This indicates a significant incidence of injuries among child laborers, highlighting occupational hazards and safety issues within their work environments. Among those who reported having injuries, further probing into the severity revealed a similar division: 46.2% stated their injuries did not require immediate medical attention, while 48.1% indicated they needed medical treatment and were immediately removed from work.

**Graph 32: Did these injuries need immediate medical attention? - Children**



From the caregivers' perspective, responses mirrored those of their children regarding injuries. A significant majority, 79.5%, stated their children had not encountered any injuries, while 20.5% confirmed injuries had occurred. This discrepancy suggests a gap in caregivers' awareness of the actual risks and incidents faced by their children at work. Interestingly, a slightly higher percentage of children themselves reported injuries, some of which necessitated immediate medical attention. When questioning parents who reported that their children had experienced injuries and risks, the following categories were identified: incidents involving vehicles, accidents related to tools, encounters with insects and snakes, and illnesses related to natural causes (coughing).

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDIs provide valuable insights into the types of injuries children have sustained while working on farms. The following list summarizes the findings shared during the interviews:

**Scorpion bites:** Reported by a few children and caregivers. One child recounted, "I was bit by a scorpion that was venomous. I didn't even know until I went home, and it began swelling. My uncle took me to the hospital; they pulled out the poison and I had to take two injections."

**Falling from high places:** Several children reported falling from trees, with injuries ranging from mild to serious dislocations. Another child reported falling from a ladder, twisting his ankle, and injuring his mouth. One child fell from a water tank.

“ ”

Last year I fell from a very tall walnut tree, I was picking walnuts. That was the last time I went on a tree. But my arm is still dislocated, if you pull it, I can pop out.

Male, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

I was filling the water tank with water and the pressure was so high, I told them to keep it at 50 but he raised it to 80. I lost control of the hose and fell from off the tank. They took me to the hospital and put bandages on my back.

Male, Syrian- Mafraq

“ ”

**Head injuries:** One child reported that a heavy object fell on his head, requiring stitches.

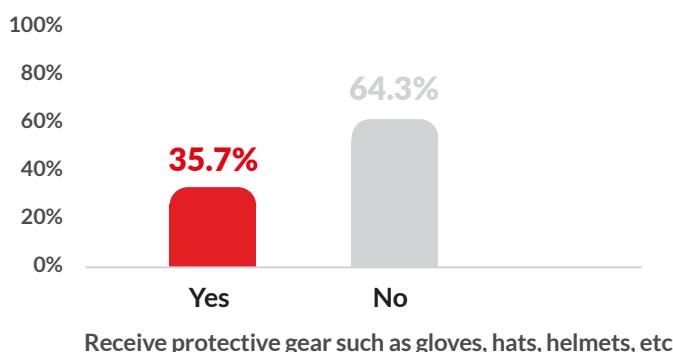
**Burns from spraying pesticides:** As one male from Mafraq stated, "The chemicals are so harsh that they burnt my skin. Most of the burns are on my hands."

Insights shared during the in-depth interviews (IDIs) reveal the dangers associated with climbing trees, a task performed by both children and women for harvesting, partial harvesting, or covering fruit with plastic to protect it from birds. The study indicates that this task is not assigned to younger children; only older children, aged 14 and above, with the necessary confidence and skill, undertake it. When climbing date palms, children do so manually, often scratching their thighs in the process. One mother noted that while the hourly rates for work involving tree climbing are higher, her son frequently returns home with injuries. She described the process: "Two boys climb up the same tree, working together. They sit on one of the palm leaves and do their work. During partial harvesting, they spend hours clipping certain dates to allow room for others to grow larger. On those days, he comes home with swollen legs and in pain. Sometimes the thorns prick him as well."

## PROTECTIVE GEAR

Receiving protective gear such as gloves, hats, and helmets was reported by the minority 35.7%, with the majority indicating that they did not receive such gear 64.3%. The IDIs reveal, however, that protective gear is usually purchased and brought to work by the laborers themselves and not provided by the farm owners.

Graph 33: Do you receive any protective gear? - Children



“

**Yes, I wear gloves that my father bought for me.**

Female 10 YO, Syrian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

**The farm owner doesn't give us anything, each of us brings their gear from their own homes. I don't use a mask, but I wrap my Shemagh <sup>27</sup> (Keffiyeh) around my face because it's better than a mask while spraying pesticides... it covers my entire face.**

Male 15 YO, Jordanian- Mafraq

**We buy our own gloves; the pair is for 1 JD... this is all on our own personal expense.**

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

“

Due to the lack of proper protective gear, many participants indicated that children are at serious risk of sunstroke, especially when working in extreme heat for hours. Additionally, children who spray pesticides without protective gear are at risk of chemical burns; this was evident in several IDIs where some children had severe burns on their hands and arms. They also experience difficulty breathing, as they do not use masks but rather wrap a Keffiyeh around their faces. One 15-year-old Syrian male from Mafraq reported, «You can get serious burns from spraying. I wrap my head with my Shemagh and keep my hands as straight and away from myself as I can. Some days, I spray up to 8 tanks of chemicals over a 12-hour period.»

#### **4.4.2.5 OTHER DANGERS FACING CHILDREN WORKING IN AGRICULTURE**

##### **QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:**

The IDIs, reveal extensive insight into the perceived dangers and risks associated with child labor in agriculture. The responses below (shared by both children and caregivers) echoed previous findings while expanding on several key points:

Participants emphasized fears related to risks of harassment and sexual assault. Exposure to bullying and negative peer influences, and the overall risk of assault or abuse. A few shared that there are some farm managers/ supervisors that are known to sexually harass girls and young boys. Moreover, some laborers who are negative influence can cause stress and danger to other children. As boy explained

“one workers can ruin 10... sometimes if one of our group can't show up to work with us, we find a substitute for a day or two... this person can be bad influence, so we keep an eye on them.” One caregiver noted sexual assault is easiest to take place in corn fields or around banana trees, “because these trees provide hidden areas, and a lot can go unnoticed.”

One caregiver also shared how she was subject to sexual harassment by one of the workers on the bus while they were being transported to the farm. While a few children reported attempts of sexual assault made towards them, as one male stated “the other day I beat up a 17-year-old boy who offered me 1 JD (in return for sexual favors).

“

**Some managers harass children; they are well known... and some managers are really nice... Some also harass the female workers, they keep roaming around them while they work... and there are some who sexually assault little boys.**

Male 15 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

**We were on our way to work early morning, and we rode in the bus... they scram us all in the back... I was sitting in front of a worker...and the chair had a hole in the back. He put his hand on my thigh...I thought it was my son. When I looked back, I saw him. And he touched me again.**

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

**An 18-year-old boy tried to sexually assault me when I was 12, I beat him with a stick on his head. He reported me to the police.**

Male, 15 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“

Transportation conditions and means also pose significant dangers for child laborers and women as they are packed way above the capacity posing a safety concern, and where sexual assault cases have been reported. One caregiver commented, «They put so many people in one Diana truck... I refuse to let my daughter ride in them. She is weak and can't defend herself. But the boys can manage.» Additionally, some respondents complained about the long distances to the farms, which can take hours. As one Syrian child in Mafraq explained, «Some areas, such as Hallabat or Sabha, are so far that we spend half the day in the cars, and we are not paid for the time spent traveling. You might leave home at 5 a.m., work until 4 p.m., and only earn 6-7 JD.»

<sup>27</sup> The Shemagh, also known as a keffiyeh, is a wrap-around head covering that is essential for protecting eyes, nose, mouth and neck from the effects of the sun, wind and sand.

“

**I see these small Kia busses crammed with boys, girls, old men and young girls.**

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

“

The IDIs revealed that some children rely heavily on cheap energy drinks to cope with the demanding physical labor. Many children reported consuming large quantities of these drinks daily to boost their energy levels and sustain their work efforts. One child mentioned, «I drink several cans a day because the work is so tiring, and it helps me keep going.» This dependence on energy drinks highlights the extreme fatigue and physical strain they experience.

“

**They drink energy drinks like crazy! My son told me about a boy who brings 5-6 bottles with him and drinks them daily while working at the farm. Each bottle is sold for half a dinar. Some girls in the neighborhood also drink these energy drinks daily.**

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

**I drink 3 Boom Boom energy drinks daily. It's not harmful at all, it gives you the same effect as taking a Captagon pill, only Captagon is harmful.**

Male, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“

Many participants also noted that child labor in agriculture exposes children to negative habits such as smoking and drinking alcohol, as well as exposure to criminal activities such as drug use and influences that could lead to the adoption of harmful behaviors or habits.

The most alarming danger facing children is the impact of using drugs such as Captagon pills in order to gain energy required to be able to work in the agricultural sector. This was reporting during many of the IDIs, especially by children

over 14 years of age and caregivers. Captagon described as an amphetamine-like stimulant, is favored among child laborers because it keeps them alert and energized, according to both the few who admit to trying it, and the majority who report what they've seen or heard from others (including in some cases their siblings or fathers). According to their reports, Captagon is widely and easily available within their communities and sells for around 1.5-2 JD per pill. Caregivers report that their children have told them about peers who promote the use of Captagon, as one mother stated, "they tell my son that it's ok to take a pill and that it will prevent them from getting tired." Some also mention that the drug increases nicotine consumption, and, according to a few children, its effects can be reversed by consuming yogurt.

“

**I see my father work very fast... he changes instantly and starts working much more and much faster. I also see other children who work very hard and fast without taking any breaks of showing any signs of being tired. I'm not sure how much they buy it for, but it's available.**

Male, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“

While discussing Captagon, caregivers highlighted two concerning issues. Firstly, many children are encouraged to sell Captagon pills for a profit. One Jordanian mother from the Northern Jordan Valley recounted, «Each pill is 2 JD. Someone will tell him to take a few and sell them for 2.25 JD to make a profit. So, they taught the children to deal in Captagon.» The study reveals the use of Captagon, an addiction to its effects, and an increase in dealing with it, driven by high demand. This issue is prevalent among children, both boys and increasingly girls, working in agriculture. As one caregiver noted, «They go to pick grape leaves and can pick up to 20 kg daily. That is not possible without taking something. They are using Captagon and are addicted to it.»

“

They only take Captagon in the morning before they go to work. Today, when I went to the farm at 5 am, Saleh one of my friends took a pill. He picked 32 KGs of grape leaves while I was only able to pick 11. That's a 6 JD difference in the income we earned working the same hours. When they take it, they spend the day laughing and chatting and working... they don't get tired. When the day ends the effects wear off and they drink yoghurt.

Male 15 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

Where I live is full of young boys hanging out, they sell Captagon. My son told me once that young boys his age never get tired while working in the farms, rain or shine, they run around all day and never get tired. Some girls also use Captagon while working... they spend the entire day full of energy. So many girls are taking it nowadays. But I can tell those who are on it, they walk in a different way and their eyes look scary.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

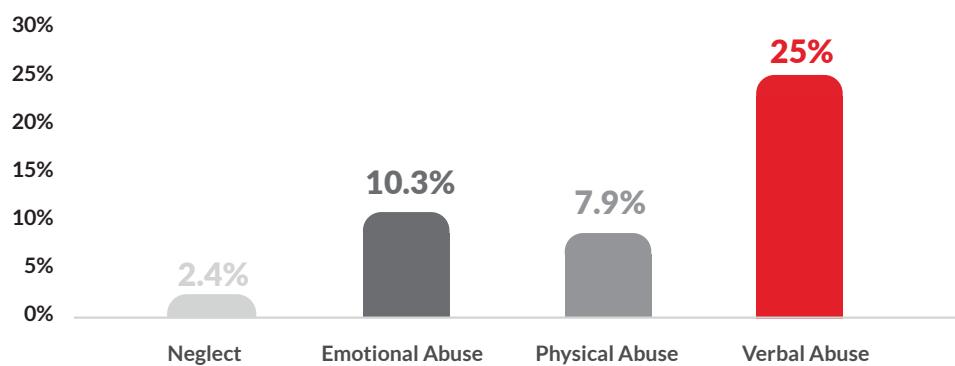
“

Finally, caregivers expressed significant concerns about exposure to pesticides, pollution, and other harmful substances like chemicals. They also highlighted numerous concerns such as diseases, exposure to sunlight, working in high areas, confined spaces, encounters with wild animals, injuries, snake bites, sunstroke, and handling heavy or toxic objects.

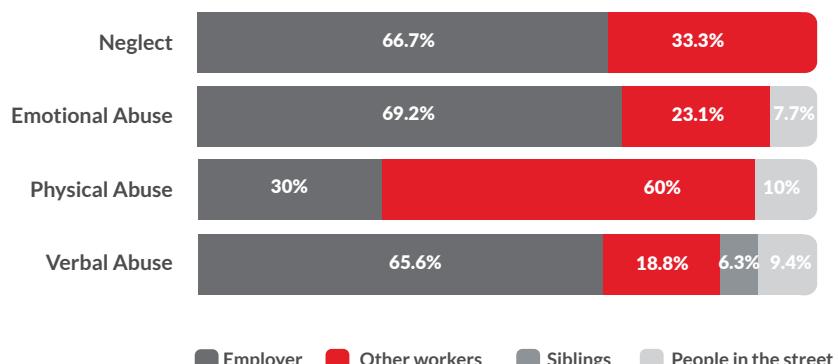
#### 4.4.3 NEGLECT AND ABUSE

In evaluating the experiences of children during their working hours, significant findings emerged regarding forms of abuse. When asked about encountering verbal abuse, a quarter of the children 25% reported experiencing it, primarily from their employers 65.6%. Physical abuse was reported by a smaller percentage 7.9%, with the majority stating it came from other workers 60%. Emotional abuse was reported by 10.3%, predominantly from employers 69.2%. Neglect had the lowest incidence at 2.4%, mostly attributed to employers 66.7%. These findings highlight concerning dynamics within the work environment where children face different types of mistreatment, predominantly from those overseeing their work activities. The breakdown of these forms of abuse are illustrated in the graph below:

Graph 34: Do you face any of the following while you're working? – Children



Graph 35: If yes, who committed this behavior – Children



### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

Below are some verbatim shared during the IDIs on the abuses facing children.

The IDIs also reveal that farm owners do not supply drinking water to the children, who must bring their own from home. However, some children noted that certain farms offer a simple breakfast and tea.

**“**

The supervisor on the farm beats me up as a joke... he tied me to a pole once... I made him untie me by pretending I was crying... I wasn't really crying, I just pretended so that he would untie me.

Male 13 YO, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

Some farm owners abuse children. They bring them in and promise to pay them 5, and then pay them 2 JD because they're children. The hourly wage should be 1.5 dinars, but they pay children 1 JD instead, and some farms only pay them 75 piasters an hour.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

When my children don't sort the fruits properly, he shouts at them.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

**“**

The farm owner is ok. He brings us foul, potatoes to boil and tea and water. He passes by daily to watch us work and then leaves.

Female, Syrian 10 YO, Jordan Valley (Central)

Some farm owners give us drinking water, but it is not guaranteed in all farms that you will get drinking water, so you we take our own water with us.

Male, Syrian 14 YO, Mafraq

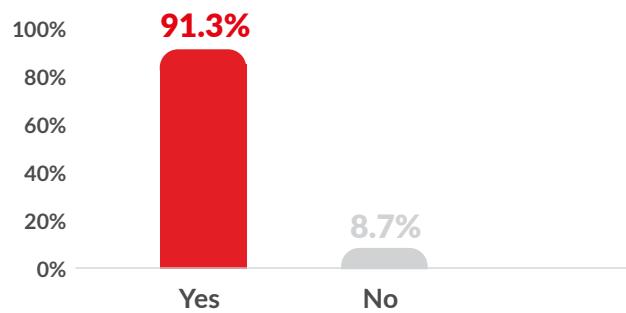
I give the children drinking water from home. They don't provide water.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

#### 4.4.4 WAGES

Regarding compensation, the vast majority of children indicated that they did get paid 91.3%, while a small percentage said they did not 8.7%. When asked to report on their daily earnings, the most frequently cited amount was 5 JDs per day.

**Graph 36: Do you get paid? – Children**



**Table 16: On average how much do you earn per day? - Children**

No. of Hours	Count	Percentage
5 JD	26	20.6
7 JD	19	15.1
8 JD	16	12.7
6 JD	14	11.1
I don't know	12	9.5
Other	10	7.9
10 JD	9	7.1
9 JD	7	5.6
4 JD	6	4.8
1 JD	3	2.4
2 JD	2	1.6
3 JD	2	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDIs uncover significant variations in wages and payment terms across different farms, depending on the nature of the work. Payment methods can include hourly rates, task-based payments, or compensation based on the kilogram of harvested crop. Even hourly rates differ according to the type of work, with distinct rates for harvesting, carrying and loading crops, and climbing trees.

Task-based payments may involve compensation for filling a certain number of truckloads with harvested crops or completing a tank of pesticide spray. Additionally, the study indicates that some farms pay different rates to adults and children. However, this is not a universal practice. For instance, a Syrian male from the Northern Jordan Valley recounted, «In Shuneh, they pay us 1 JD per hour, in Ramtha, it's 1.5 JD per hour, regardless of your age. Working in Ramtha is better; you work less and get paid more.»

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the youngest children interviewed, who often do not receive payments directly, were unaware of their exact earnings, providing guesses and estimates ranging from 1-3 JD per day.

“

We get paid 1 JD per hour for harvesting. Sometimes if the workload is heavy and we need to carry crops and load them, we might get paid 1.25 JD.”

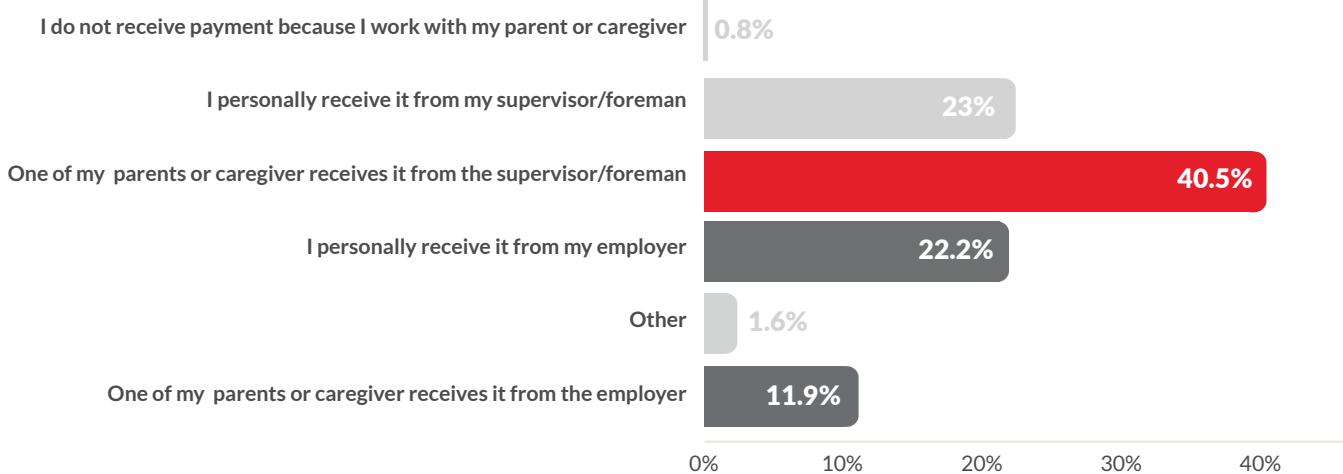
Male, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)  
“They pay around 3 JD for every 10 KG of grape leaves.

Male, Jordanian- Mafrag

“

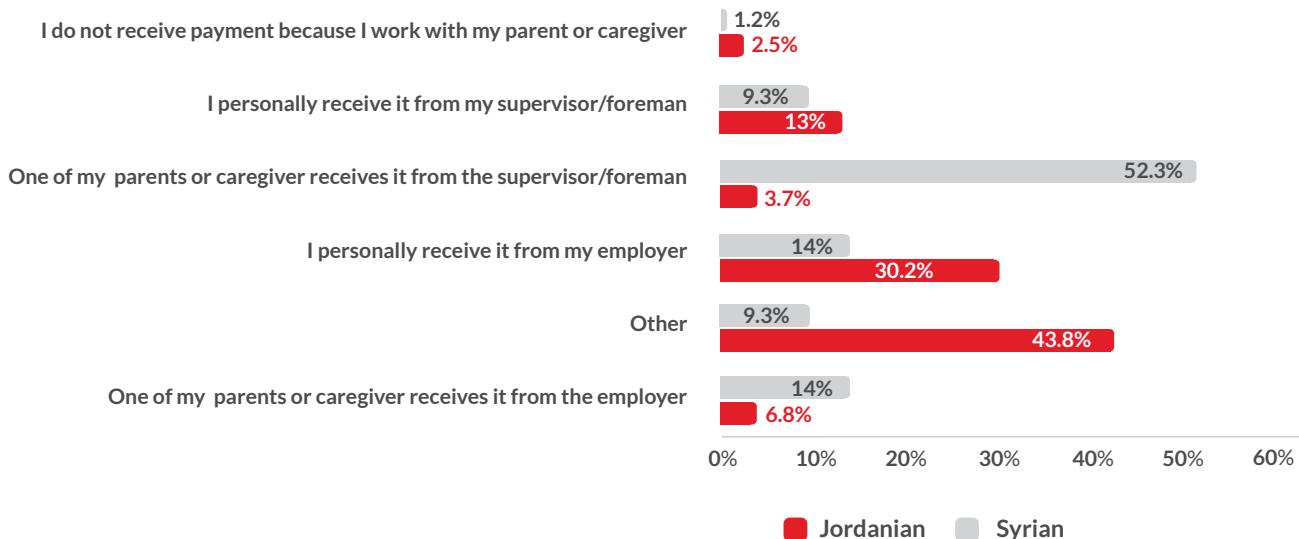
Further probing into who received the children's daily income revealed that a significant portion of the earnings did not go directly to the children. Specifically, 40.5% of children reported that their parents or caregivers received their income directly from the employer, while only 23% reported receiving their earnings themselves.

Graph 37: Who receives your daily income? - Children



When payment receipt was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Syrian children 52.3% reported that one of their parents or legal guardians received the payment from their supervisor, compared to Jordanian children 3.7%. Conversely, a higher percentage of Jordanian children 30.2% reported that they received their payment personally from their employer, compared to Syrian children 14%. This indicates a significant difference in the payment dynamics between Syrian and Jordanian working children, potentially reflecting varying degrees of financial control and autonomy within their families.

**Graph 38: Who receives your daily income? By nationality**



## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs, it was revealed that Syrian children working on farms with their parents do not receive their wages directly; instead, their caregivers receive the payment from the Shawish. Even Jordanian and Syrian children who receive their wages directly report to handing them over to their caregivers to contribute to household expenses. Some children mentioned keeping a small amount for pocket money while giving the bulk to their caregivers, who use it to buy food for the household. However, one child reported that his father takes his wages "to buy alcohol and drugs."

An interesting observation is that Syrian families working through a Shawish, do not receive daily payments. The Shawish collects payments from farm owners and either pays families monthly, calculating the total days, hours, and family members who worked, or weekly. If cash is needed at any point, families ask the Shawish for an advance.

Some Syrian children from Mafraq complained about delayed or unpaid wages. There is a common perception among Syrians that some farm owners exploit their vulnerable situation, as they cannot legally work without

permits. Reports have indicated instances where farm owners did not pay Syrian laborers. Therefore, Syrians prefer working through a Shawish to ensure their wages are received. One child stated, «The farm owners also fool the Shawish, promising them payments on Thursday, or next Tuesday, or when he goes to cash checks from the bank and so on. Most people who are still in the camps jump over the wired fences and work illegally without issuing work permits. So, they can't file complaints against farm owners who don't pay their wages on time, or even those who don't pay them at all.» Additionally, it was noted by a few that the Shawish deducts transportation fees from wages, around 250 piasters daily and 400 piasters for providing a carton.

These findings reveal multiple levels of exploitation. While not all farms engage in exploitative practices, Syrians working without permits face exploitation from farm owners through wage delays or non-payment. Syrian children and caregivers are also exploited by the Shawish, who controls their wages, payment schedules, and deductions. Finally, children are exploited by both farm owners, who pay them considerably less than adults, and by their parents, who take their entire earnings.

Two of my kids work as well. The Shawish calculates how much we get for the whole family, and they pay us. Once we receive the payment, we decide what to do with the money, and whether you want to give the children a JD each for themselves or use the money to pay expenses and buy groceries.

Female Shawish, Syrian- Mafraq (ITS)

The Shawish gives it to the children sometimes, and sometimes he sends it to our tent with someone we know. If the children receive their wages they give it to us, and we give them enough to buy a bag of chips or biscuits to each.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

He receives it and give it to us. Sometimes I give him 1-2 JD to spend on himself. But we are a family and it's my responsibility to make sure we have enough to spend on everyone.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

I take my wages weekly and go home and give them to my mother. I don't even count it, I just put it in my pocket, and she counts it. during the week if I need 1-2 JD to buy chips and biscuits, I ask the Shawish, and he gives it to me.

Male 13 YO, Syrian- Jordan Valley (North)

My father takes it from me, and I give it to him.

Sometimes I keep 5-10 JD which I distribute amongst my siblings, I give each one a dinar and keep 2-3 for myself which is not enough. My father spends the money on alcohol and buying Captagon for himself.

Male Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

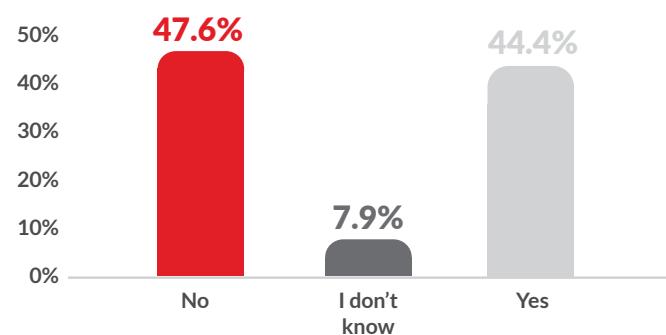
The Shawish pays the parents and not the children directly. Every Thursday he calculates how much each family earned and pays the father who is the head of the household

Female, Caregiver, Syrian Mafraq

These finding were corroborated by parents, 78.8% of whom clarified that they collected the cash payments from the employer on behalf of their children. This indicates a substantial control over the children's earnings by the parents or caregivers, reflecting the broader family dynamics and possibly the economic dependency within the household.

When asked about the adequacy of the payment amount, the results were evenly split, with nearly half considering it fair 44.4% and the remaining slightly more than half finding it unfair 47.6%.

**Graph 39: Do you feel that the income you receive is fair - Children**

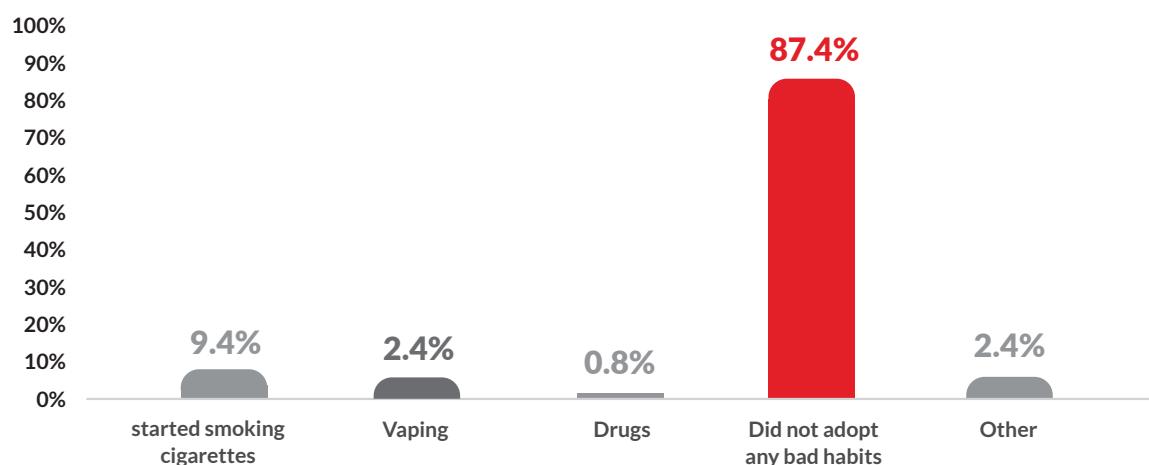


## 4.5 NEGATIVE IMPACT

### 4.5.1 NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD LABOR

When parents were questioned about the implications of child labor on their children, specifically whether they had adopted habits like smoking, drinking, or drug use due to interactions with other children or adults while working, the findings revealed that the vast majority 87.4% reported their children had not picked up any such habits. Only a small minority, 9.4%, mentioned their children had started smoking, while an even smaller percentage, 2.4%, reported that vaping had been picked up.

**Graph 40: Has your child picked up any habits such as smoking, drinking, or drug use as a result of interacting with other children or adults at work? - Caregivers**



### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDIs also provide a comprehensive view of the impacts of agricultural work on child laborers, highlighting both immediate and long-term behavioral changes. While many children initially deny picking up bad habits due to their work, a deeper examination reveals several concerning trends.

**Smoking Habits:** A significant number of children, as young as 12, have taken up smoking. Both children and caregivers reported this, although it is unclear whether this habit originates from the work environment or peer influence within their communities.

**Behavioral Changes:** There is a noticeable shift in how children treat their parents. Many caregivers reported increased disrespect and assertiveness from their children. One mother recounted, "When I ask my son for something, I find him screaming at me. He broke his phone and began screaming at me to get it fixed immediately." This change is particularly pronounced in teenagers, who are described as becoming increasingly rude and unrecognizable.

**Substance Use:** During all IDIs, both children and caregivers reported the prevalence and widespread substance use in their communities. A few children and caregivers admitted to experimenting with drugs in the past, though they claimed to have stopped. However, the detailed knowledge they possess about drug prices, effects, and dealers suggests ongoing close interactions with drugs.

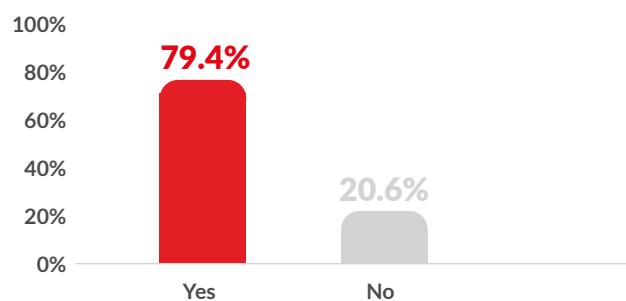
In summary, while many child laborers claim not to have picked up bad habits from working in agriculture, the IDIs reveal a darker reality. The physical and social environment of farm work and their communities, exposes children to smoking, disrespectful behavior towards parents and drug and alcohol use.

## 4.6 SENTIMENT RELATED TO WORKING

### 4.6.1 CHILDREN'S VIEWS

Regarding the willingness of children to work in the agricultural sector, the majority 79.4% reported that they willingly work in agriculture of their own free will. In contrast, 20.6% stated that they do not willingly work in the field. When asked why they continue to work in agriculture despite their reluctance, all of the 20.6% responded that they do so out of necessity to earn an income and support their families, particularly their parents.

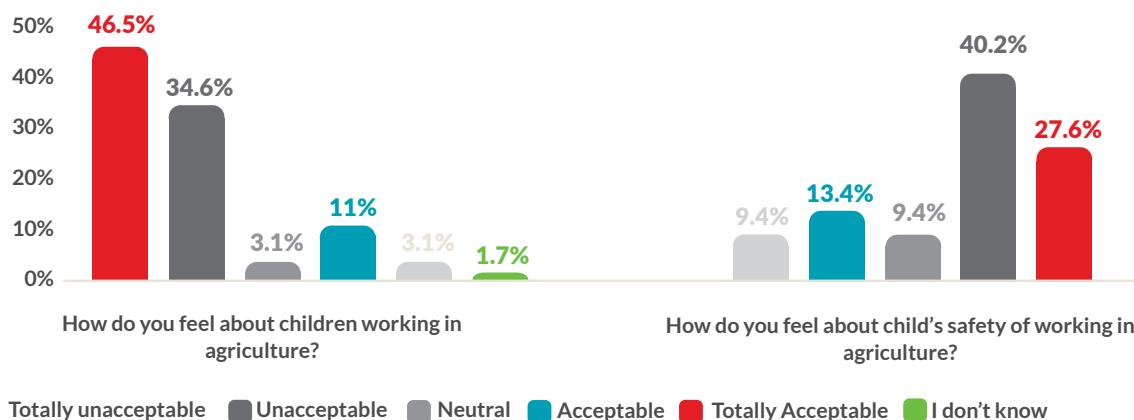
Graph 41: Are you working out of your free will?



### 4.6.2 PARENTS VIEWS

Parents overwhelmingly expressed dissatisfaction with their children working, with 81.1% indicating they are generally unhappy about it, while only 14.2% found it acceptable. This widespread discontent reflects a strong awareness of the associated risks and dangers. Specifically, when asked about their perception of their child's safety while working in agriculture, a significant majority 67.8% viewed it as dangerous. This highlighted a deep-seated concern among parents regarding the safety and well-being of their children in such occupations.

Graph 42: Perceptions about children working in agriculture - Caregivers



I don't think it is acceptable for children to work in agriculture, but we have to, we need to live and survive... his job in agriculture is very dangerous, but it is our only choice.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Mafraq

It is totally unacceptable, but I make him work because I have to. working in farms is very dangerous.

Male Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

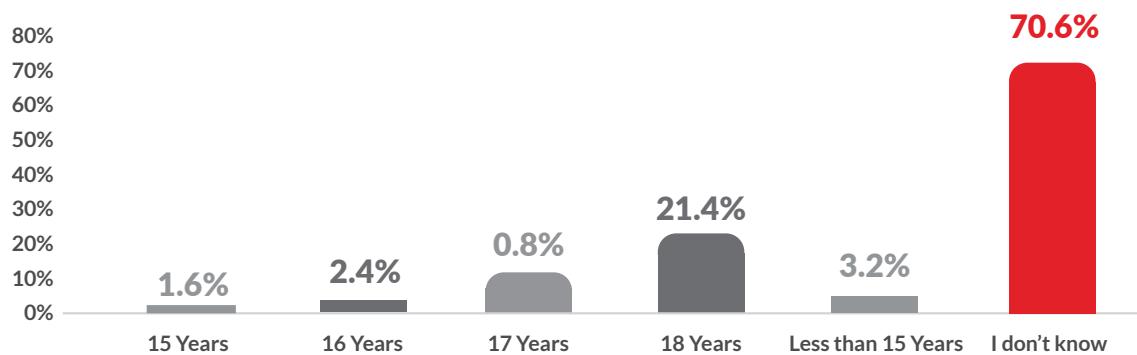
Having him work in farming is a big injustice. I feel he is too young, but we need to survive. Al Hamdullilah, it's better for us to work than to have to resort to begging.

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

## 4.7 AWARENESS OF CHILD LABOR LAWS

When evaluating children's awareness of child labor laws, the survey aimed to determine their knowledge of the legal working age in Jordan. Results showed a significant lack of awareness among respondents, with 70.6% indicating they did not know the legal age. In contrast, 21.4% incorrectly believed the legal working age was 18 years old. This highlights a critical gap in understanding among children regarding the legal protections and regulations pertaining to child labor in Jordan.

Graph 43: What is the legal age to work in Jordan? - Children



Caregivers demonstrated a significant lack of awareness regarding child labor laws, with a majority of 81.9% indicating no knowledge of these laws, while only 18.1% reported having some awareness. Further investigation into their familiarity with specific laws revealed that among those who claimed awareness, their knowledge was largely limited.

This finding highlights a significant issue where both caregivers and children lack awareness of legal protections intended to shield children from exploitative work settings. The majority's ignorance about these protections not only reveals a gap in knowledge but also signifies potential risks for children involved in labor. This unawareness could potentially subject children to unsafe conditions and exploitation because caregivers may not recognize or enforce the legal safeguards meant to protect them. Caregivers' limited understanding of these legal protections may inadvertently lead them to place children in environments where their rights and safety are compromised. Without

knowledge of laws prohibiting child labor or setting minimum wages for work, caregivers might inadvertently expose children to hazardous tasks or conditions that are not suitable for their age and development. This situation is further compounded by children themselves being unaware of their rights, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and potentially preventing them from seeking help or reporting abuses they may face.

It is prohibited for children to work. The UN agencies don't accept child labor... but they are also to blame because they have not covered the child financially in order for us not to send them to work.

Why would they prohibit my child from working when I have a family to feed? The law is not helping us... and they can't impose on us. Is it not our right to live? Is half a JD daily enough for a person to be able to live? It has no value.

Female, Caregiver, Syrian, Mafraq

## 4.8 NEEDS & ASPIRATIONS

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

This study delves into the dreams and aspirations of child laborers and their caregivers, shedding light on their collective desires and concerns. It is crucial to acknowledge that the insights derived from these findings reflect the perceptions and views of the children and caregivers who took part in the study. It is recognized that individual concerns may vary significantly among children and caregivers in similar circumstances. However, the dreams and aspirations articulated by the participants provide valuable insights into their collective desires and concerns, primarily revolving around the overarching theme of financial security. They articulate their aspirations through the prism of employment, emphasizing the yearning for financial resources to meet the needs of their families and indulge in life's experiences.

#### 4.8.1 NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF CHILDREN

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The research findings highlight four primary areas of aspirations that child laborers share: 1) financial stability, 2) attend school and achieve literacy and 3) stop working. The predominant theme revolves around the children's yearning for financial security, linking their aspirations to maintaining a decent standard of living and fulfilling familial responsibilities. Other dreams include obtaining a mobile phone, signing up in a football club, owning a bicycle, and having a sister, or dreams for divorced parents to be reunited, or for a father who consumes drugs and alcohol to refrain from doing so.

The aspirations voiced by the youth predominantly center around the pursuit of financial security, stability, and the means to afford various elements that contribute to their overall happiness and well-being. When probed about hypothetical wishes granted by a magic wand, some express desires for material possessions. These dreams encompass acquiring items such as a car, a house, or cash. These aspirations reflect a deep yearning for financial independence and the capacity to partake in life's pleasures. Several children also dream of no longer needing to work, as one stated "I wish I could rest and no longer work."

### 4.8.2 NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF CAREGIVERS

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

Caregivers also expressed their dreams and aspirations for their children, with the majority wishing for a «better life» than the one they are currently leading. The concept of a «better life» is centered around ensuring the safety of their children, alleviating constant worries, and affording them the opportunity to live in accordance with their age. Caregivers, in a selfless manner, seek material resources such as a home and adequate finances secured through stable and well-paying jobs to protect their children and fulfill all their demands and needs. A few caregivers stated that they are unable to purchase food their children crave at times, and dream of being able to do so, as voiced by one Syrian mother "the children have been craving Farrouj grilled chicken for two days. I honestly can't afford to buy it for them." Some caregivers dream of being able to enroll their children in schools, as echoed by one Syrian mother "I want them to go to school and study, just like any child does." Another caregiver expressed the dream of having a school in the ITS she resides in, "where they can teach the children life skills and some literacy."

“

**I want a better live... I would ask to no longer live the way we do, surrounded by soil, dust, stones and snakes... I would wish for my life to be different than the life I have.**

Female Caregiver, Syrian- Mafraq

**I want my children to succeed like any mother wishes for her children. I want them to be protected from illnesses and harassment and any dangers.**

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (Dead Sea)

**I dream for my son to be released from prison. All our problems will be resolved when he does. He used to work and spend on us when he was around.**

Female Caregiver, Jordanian- Jordan Valley (North)

“

In exploring the support needs from caregivers' perspectives, caregivers emphasized several key themes that underscored the essential requirements for children engaged in various activities. Firstly, recreation and sports were highlighted as vital components for children's growth. Caregivers expressed the need for accessible spaces where children can play football or participate in clubs. Additionally, they emphasized the value of free sports activities and vocational training institutes, recognizing these as avenues for physical development and skill enhancement, including computer-related programs that contribute to both recreational enjoyment and future employability.

Psychological and educational support emerged as critical pillars in nurturing children's holistic development. Caregivers stressed the importance of meeting basic

needs such as adequate food and clothing to ensure the well-being of children under their care. They also highlighted the significance of educational opportunities and vocational training centers, which play pivotal roles in equipping children with essential skills for their future. Moreover, access to health and medical care was highlighted as essential for addressing both physical and mental health needs, ensuring children thrive in a supportive environment.

Financial support was noted as integral to relieving economic pressures on families, enabling them to prioritize their children's education and overall development without resorting to child labor. Ensuring safety and security within their living environments was equally emphasized, aiming to create safe spaces where children can live comfortably and safely, free from the hazards associated with exploitative work conditions.

## EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

### SECTION 5

## PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES



### 5.1 ENGAGEMENT WITH ACTIVITIES

When queried about participation in activities sponsored by any organization, the majority 82.5% indicated they had not participated in such activities, while 17.5% reported they had. Among those who had participated in such activities, further investigation revealed the following concerning the variety of these, as follows:

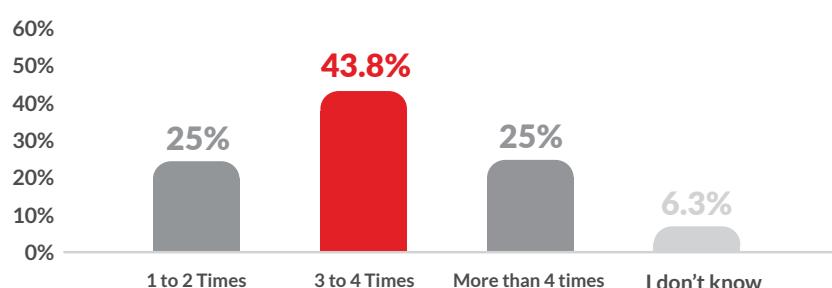
**Table 17: What kind of activities do you participate in? - Children**

Activity	Count	Percentage
Other	25	51.0%
There is none	8	32%
Learning languages	6	12.2%
Sports	6	12.2%
Nothing	3	12%
Learning mathematics	4	8.2%
Learning science	4	8.2%
Group discussions	4	8.2%
Dabke	1	4%
Drawing	1	4%
Agriculture	1	4%
Vocational training	1	4%
Computer courses	1	4%
Beauty course	1	4%
Computer course	1	4%
Trips	1	4%
Drawing and sewing	1	4%
Agriculture	1	4%
Art and drawing	1	4%
Football (soccer)	1	4%
Textile, hand-drawn painting	1	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100%</b>

When caregivers were asked if their children participated in such organized activities, the majority reported that their children do not, mirroring the children's responses, with 87.4% indicating no participation. Only a small minority, 12.6%, reported that their children did participate in such activities. When asked to name the organizations providing these activities, the responses were categorized into Charitable and Development Associations, Youth Clubs, Makani centers, and NGOs, including Save the Children.

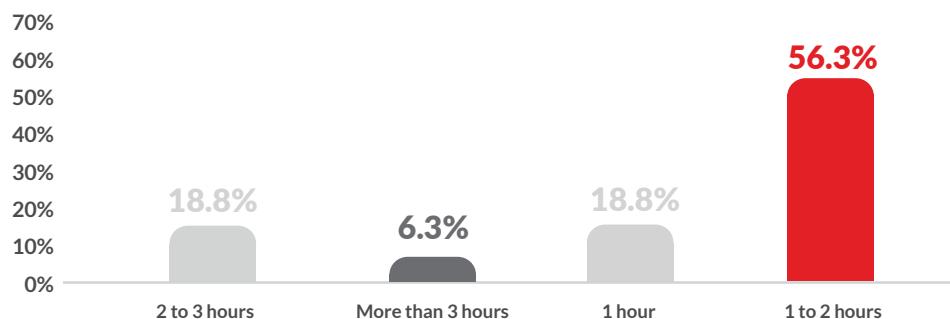
Furthermore, it is important to note the patterns of attendance for the minority of children who do participate in activities sponsored by these organizations. According to their caregivers, the most commonly-reported frequency was 3-4 times a week, with 43.8% of respondents indicating this level of attendance.

**Graph 44: How many times per week does your child attend these activities? - Caregivers**



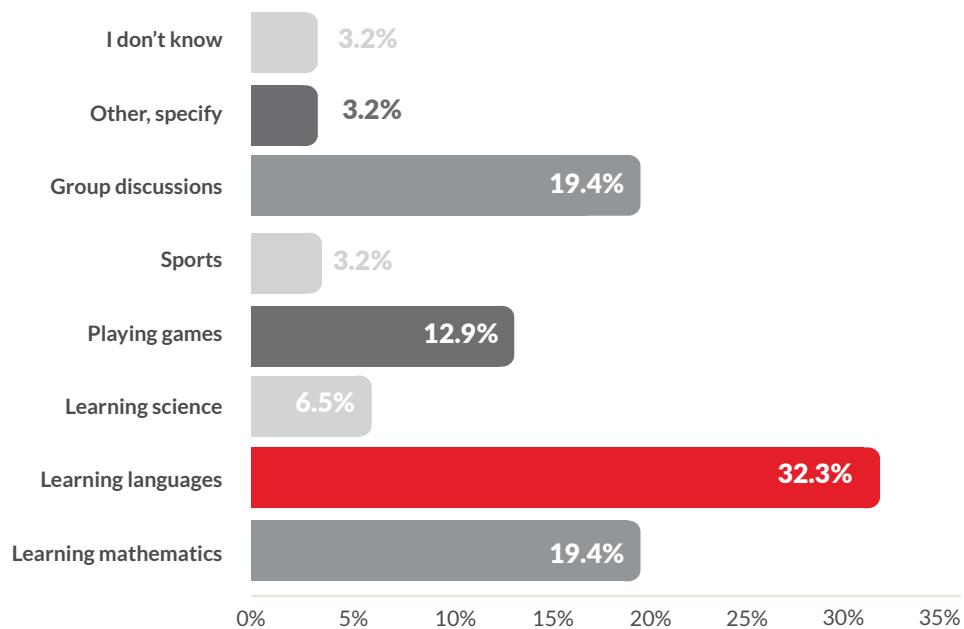
Parents reported that the most common duration for these activities was one to two hours per week, with 56.3% indicating this to be the typical amount of time that their children spend in these activities.

**Graph 45: How many hours does he/she spend there each time? - Caregivers**



Regarding those who did engage in activities, when asked about the types of these activities, the majority of parents reported that their children were enrolled in language learning-related activities, with 32.3% indicating this.

**Graph 46: What kind of activities does he/she participate in? - Caregivers**



## 5.2 WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE

Upon assessing their willingness to engage in future activities, a significant majority—comprising 87.3%—expressed a keen interest, highlighting their enthusiasm for further involvement, while only 12.7% indicated disinterest. When prompted to specify their areas of interest, participants predominantly expressed a desire to engage in diverse activities. These included opportunities for learning and education, enhancing artistic skills such as drawing, sewing, and embroidery, participating in sports and physical activities, and learning new languages. These findings highlight the eagerness of these children to participate in varied developmental and recreational pursuits with an exploratory spirit.

# SECTION 6

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. PREVALENCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS:

The family dynamics of child laborers in Jordan's agricultural sectors in both Mafraq and the Jordan Valley reveal significant trends and challenges that contribute to the prevalence of child labor. Most families are large, averaging 7.4 members, primarily consisting of minor children under 18. The qualitative data provides deeper insights into the complexities of these family environments. Issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and unstable family structures are prevalent, significantly decreasing the quality of the children's well-being and development. The challenges faced by these families underscore the broader social issues contributing to child labor in Jordan, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and hardship that affects both children and their caregivers.

### 2. EDUCATIONAL IMPACT:

The educational landscape for children involved in labor in Jordan's agricultural sector in Mafraq and the Jordan Valley reveals a troubling trend of widespread non-enrollment and early dropout from school. Many caregivers themselves have limited education, typically ending at the primary school level, and their children often follow similar paths, either never enrolling in school or dropping out by the 7th grade. The study highlights the reality that many children are completely illiterate, with some having never attended school at all. Even those who are registered often attend irregularly, maintaining minimal attendance to avoid being classified as dropouts. The study also reveals that a significant number of children participating in non-formal education programs do so sporadically, while still considering themselves to be attending school. Financial constraints emerge as the primary barrier to education. The need to supplement household income and the inability to afford school-related costs—such as transportation and daily pocket money—were cited as key reasons for dropping

out. Additional challenges include academic difficulties, seasonal family relocations, and the distance of schools from their residences. The data shows a stark contrast between Jordanian and Syrian children regarding school enrollment and dropout rates. A higher percentage of Jordanian children are enrolled in public schools, while a significant number of Syrian children either never enroll or drop out early, underscoring the heightened educational challenges faced by Syrian families. Overall, the educational situation for these children is dire, with financial hardships and socio-economic pressures forcing families to prioritize immediate income over long-term educational opportunities. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and limits future prospects for the children involved in labor.

#### Recommendation:

Addressing these educational barriers will require targeted interventions to alleviate financial burdens and provide consistent, accessible educational opportunities for all children.

- Increase efforts to ensure that working children have access to quality education. Address barriers to school enrollment and attendance, such as financial constraints and frequent relocations.
- Support initiatives that provide educational materials and incentives for continued schooling.
- Furthermore, encourage and facilitate greater participation in both extracurricular and developmental activities for children. Support programs that offer educational, artistic, and recreational opportunities, addressing barriers to participation and ensuring accessibility.

### 3. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DRIVERS OF CHILD LABOR:

The financial situation of families involved in child labor in Jordan's agricultural sector is characterized by instability and hardship. The majority of caregivers work in informal, low-paying jobs, averaging around 150 JD per month. This insufficient income leads to significant food insecurity, debt, and an inability to afford healthcare, severely affecting their quality of life. Many families rely on external aid, although it is not universally available. The findings highlight a shifting dynamic in which women are increasingly becoming the primary providers; also noted is women's abandonment by their husbands as well as the medical condition of some men. These factors place additional burdens on women and children, who often engage in agricultural work to sustain their families.

It is clear that children's contributions to household finances are substantial. The economic pressures faced by these families underscore the need for more comprehensive support systems to alleviate their financial burdens and reduce reliance on child labor. The data reveals a pervasive struggle with debt, primarily incurred for basic necessities such as food and healthcare. This financial vulnerability is exacerbated by limited access to consistent aid, with many families not receiving the necessary support. Syrian families are more likely to have multiple children working to support the household in comparison with their Jordanian counterparts.

The primary driver of child labor, as revealed through the study, is the severe financial hardship faced by families. A significant majority of children, 73.8%, reported that they chose to work independently, while 23% stated that their caregivers asked them to work to support household expenses. The findings reveal that child labor is often viewed as a necessity rather than a choice, with children and their families recognizing the work as essential for their survival. Additionally, the data shows that most children either found their current jobs through their caregivers or on an independent basis, reflecting the informal and unregulated nature of their employment. The reliance on the shawish system for job placement further illustrates the lack of formal employment avenues available to these children. In conclusion, the pervasive financial difficulties and lack of stable employment for caregivers are the primary drivers of child labor in the surveyed communities.

#### Recommendation:

The children's labor is indispensable for their families' survival, highlighting the urgent need for interventions that both address these economic challenges and provide sustainable alternatives to child labor.

- **Economic Support and Livelihood Programs:** Develop and expand social protection programs and economic support initiatives for families, especially those in informal employment, to reduce the economic pressures that drive child labor.
- **Implement targeted financial assistance and vocational training programs for caregivers in order to improve household income stability.**

### 4. EMPLOYERS:

The data reveals that the overwhelming majority of child laborers, 95.2%, work on farms owned by individuals other than their families. A notable observation is that many child laborers are unfamiliar with the names of the farm owners, often only knowing their first names or those of their supervisors. Despite these gaps in familiarity, most children working in agriculture reported positive experiences with their employers, with 64.9% expressing sentiments of respect towards them. However, a minority of children recounted negative experiences, describing their employers as harsh (6.5%), unfair (3.9%), unkind, inconsiderate, or disrespectful.

### Recommendation:

Farm owners bear significant responsibility for reducing instances of child labor in the agricultural sector going forward. It is essential that they are clearly informed and reminded of the legal prohibitions against employing child laborers. Despite this, some farm owners continue to engage child labor due to its cost-effectiveness, or perhaps because they delegate the oversight of laborers to intermediaries such as the shawish or farm supervisors. Ensuring strict adherence to labor laws and holding farm owners accountable for their employment practices is crucial for eliminating child labor in agriculture.

Even though employing child laborers is illegal and enforcing these laws should be the top priority, farm owners still have a significant responsibility to ensure the well-being of any child laborers on their farms, especially those living on the farms with their families. If the practice persists, it is crucial for farm owners to create a safe and respectful working environment, to adhere to ethical labor practices, and to support the rights and development of these young workers. Farm owners should:

- Treat child laborers who are of legal working age with fairness and respect, recognizing their needs and ensuring that their working conditions are safe and dignified.
- Support initiatives that allow child laborers to access education, either through flexible working hours or by facilitating participation in educational programs.
- Be trained to manage young workers appropriately, offering guidance and support rather than harsh or unfair treatment.

Furthermore, enhancing the enforcement of child labor laws and regulations and focusing on increasing awareness among both children and caregivers is essential. Implementing regular inspections and stricter penalties for non-compliance to protect children's rights and well-being should also be a top priority.

### 5. WORKING CONDITIONS AND RISKS:

Agricultural work is inherently hazardous, posing severe risks to workers, especially children. The use of motorized machinery, the handling of toxic pesticides, and the exposure to extreme weather all contribute to high rates of work-related injuries and fatalities. These dangers are further exacerbated for child laborers, compromising their physical, mental, and moral well-being. Hazardous tasks such as operating heavy machinery, enduring long hours under the sun, and handling chemicals have led to the classification of agricultural work as ranking among the "worst forms of child labor," underscoring the urgent need for stricter safety regulations and protective measures.

Despite Jordanian laws that limit child labor (ages 16 and over) to six hours per day with mandated breaks, many children report working longer hours, sometimes even at night. Discrepancies between children's and caregivers' reports on working hours suggest communication gaps or underestimation by caregivers. Many children work 5-9 hours daily, often driven by specific workload requirements, and they only take short breaks. Syrian children appear more likely to receive breaks than their Jordanian counterparts, indicating variations in treatment. This could be attributed to the fact that Syrian children are more likely to work alongside their family members, especially those who live on the farms, compared to Jordanian children. Additionally, the study reveals that Syrian shawish often show greater concern for the well-being of Syrian children.

The findings reveal the strenuous and hazardous conditions faced by child laborers in agriculture. A significant majority reported feeling tired and exhausted (72.2%) and experiencing pain (70.6%) from their work, highlighting the demanding nature of their tasks. Difficult tasks such as carrying harvested crops, spraying pesticides, and squatting for long hours are common. Children as young as 13 are involved in hazardous activities which pose significant physical dangers. However, some farms assign age-appropriate tasks to younger children, such as sorting crops.

Children also face other dangers, including encounters with wild animals such as snakes and scorpions, as well as accidents. A notable percentage of children (41.3%) reported injuries, with nearly half requiring immediate medical attention. The gap in injury reporting between children and caregivers suggests a lack of awareness among parents about the actual risks their children face. The

findings provide detailed accounts of injuries sustained by children, including scorpion bites, falls from heights, head injuries, and burns from pesticides. The dangerous task of climbing trees is reserved for older, more skilled children, yet it still often results in injuries.

The lack of protective gear for child laborers in agriculture poses serious health risks. Most children (64.3%) reported not receiving essential safety equipment such as gloves and hats, with many having to supply their own. This deficiency leaves them vulnerable to sunstroke and chemical burns from pesticides. Without proper respiratory protection, children also face breathing difficulties.

#### **Recommendation:**

Despite legal restrictions, children often work long hours with limited protective measures. The findings reveal severe and multifaceted risks and the urgent need for improved safety measures and protection for child laborers in agriculture. This need includes both a safer working environment and better support systems (adequate protective gear being supplied, means of transportation being better and safer) to safeguard the well-being of young workers.

## **6. ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION:**

The study reveals a troubling landscape of abuse within the work environments, with verbal abuse being a significant issue; one in four children report such mistreatment, predominantly at the hands of employers. While physical abuse is less common, it is still present, primarily inflicted by other workers. Emotional abuse affects a notable portion of children, again largely originating from employers and supervisors. These findings underscore a pervasive pattern of mistreatment, particularly from those in positions of authority. The qualitative insights further highlight the neglect of basic needs, such as access to drinking water, and the fact that adequate nourishment is often not provided.

This evidence calls for urgent action to address these abusive practices, ensuring that child laborers are protected from mistreatment and that their basic needs are met.

Many children also face exploitation in terms of low wages and delayed payments. The findings reveal a complex and often inequitable system. While most children report receiving payment for their work, significant disparities exist in both wage levels and payment practices. The most common daily wage reported is 5 JD. Payment methods differ widely, and discrepancies also arise between the wages paid to children and adults. A notable issue is that many children do not receive their wages directly; instead, their earnings are collected by their caregivers. This dynamic varies by nationality, with Syrian children more frequently having their earnings handled by their parents or legal guardians compared to Jordanian children.

The findings further highlight the challenges faced by Syrian children, who often encounter delayed or unpaid wages and exploitative practices by farm owners and intermediaries such as the shawish. Additionally, the reported instances of wage deductions and delayed payments exacerbate the exploitation of vulnerable workers.

#### **Recommendation:**

The results underscore the need for greater transparency, fairness, and protection in wage distribution practices in the agricultural sector. Additionally, child laborers who are of legal working age and in suitable working condition should receive timely and fair compensation for their work to prevent economic exploitation and improve their overall well-being. Moreover, it is recommended to establish mechanisms to report and address instances of abuse and exploitation among laborers in the agricultural sector.

## 7. THE ROLE OF THE SHAWISH:

The qualitative findings from the study highlight the multifaceted role of the shawish. Acting as labor brokers, they facilitate employment, negotiate salaries, and coordinate between workers and farm owners. Additionally, they manage transportation, supervise work on farms, and ensure the welfare of laborers, including children. While many children and caregivers describe positive interactions with the shawish—noting their kindness and support—there are also reports of verbal and physical abuse. This abuse is particularly troubling given the lack of formal regulation and oversight of the shawish system, allowing for the exploitation and mistreatment of vulnerable child laborers. Despite these challenges, the dependence on the shawish system persists due to the critical role they play in securing employment and providing essential support. This dependence highlights the urgent need for formal regulation and oversight in order to protect both the rights and well-being of child laborers and their families.

### Recommendation:

To address the complex issues surrounding the role of the shawish, the MoL should consider implementing the following measures:

- Establish a formal regulatory framework to oversee the activities of shawish. This should include licensing requirements, standardized registration processes, and clear guidelines defining their roles and responsibilities. By formalizing their status, the government can enhance oversight and ensure compliance with labor laws and ethical standards.
- Set up independent monitoring bodies to regularly assess the conduct of shawish and their interactions with laborers. Establish anonymous reporting mechanisms for workers to safely report abuses or exploitation without fear of retaliation.
- Conduct community outreach and educational programs to inform workers and their families about their rights and the roles of shawish. Raising awareness can help reduce dependence on informal labor brokers and promote more equitable employment practices.
- Partner with NGOs and community groups to facilitate the implementation of these measures and to support vulnerable populations. NGOs and CBOs can play crucial and transformative roles in advocacy, monitoring, and providing additional resources.

## 8. BEHAVIORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT:

Substance use, including Captagon use among child laborers in the agricultural sector, presents a deeply troubling scenario that underscores the extreme measures taken to address the grueling demands of labor. Captagon, an amphetamine-like stimulant, is reportedly used to sustain energy levels and increase productivity, often at the cost of children's health and well-being. The widespread availability of Captagon, its low cost, and its promotion within communities and workplaces have contributed to a dangerous cycle of addiction and exploitation. The accounts of caregivers reveal not only the troubling trend of children becoming users and sellers of Captagon, but also the disturbing possibility that some farm owners or supervisors might be administering the drug covertly to enhance labor output.

### Recommendation:

These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address the root causes of substance abuse and behavioral issues among child laborers. Efforts should focus on improving working conditions, providing support services, and implementing robust measures to prevent drug use and exploitation. Awareness campaigns on the dangers of its use, as well as the legal repercussions for both users and dealers, should also be intensified in both Mafraq and the Jordan Valley areas.

## 9. LACK OF AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES:

There is a significant gap in awareness about child labor laws among both children and caregivers. Many children are unaware of legal working age regulations. Additionally, participation in organizational activities is low, with a majority of children not engaging in such programs despite expressed interest.

### Recommendation:

Conduct awareness campaigns to educate communities about child labor laws, the importance of education, and the risks associated with child labor. Engage local organizations, CBOs and community leaders, and stakeholders in efforts to combat child labor and promote child welfare.

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