

## CONTEXT ANALYSIS

### Project Ambulantes Interviews

#### An Overview of the Situation of Domestic Agricultural Migration in Mexico November 2024

It is estimated that in Mexico 2.3 million people work as agricultural day laborers, the majority of whom are men, comprising 89.5% of the workforce, compared to 10.5% women nationwide. In other words, 9 out of 10 day laborers are men<sup>1</sup>.

CONEVAL highlights that individuals aged 15 to 19 constitute the largest proportion of agricultural day laborers within this population, with approximately 259,400 men and 30,710 women. This indicates a significant level of participation in agricultural work among adolescents and young people. It is also important to highlight the presence of individuals aged 65 or older, with approximately 149,000 men and 8,411 women, indicating the participation of older adults in this sector<sup>2</sup>.

These data highlight that the largest proportion of agricultural day laborers, 73.0% (1.7 million people), reside in rural areas, while nearly a quarter (23.7%) belong to the indigenous population<sup>3</sup>.

The analysis of extreme poverty, based on CONEVAL data, shows that out of the 9.1 million people living in extreme poverty nationwide in 2022, approximately 470,200 were agricultural day laborers. This means that 5.2% of agricultural workers face extreme poverty, highlighting the vulnerability of this group. Similarly, of the 9.1 million people living in extreme poverty, nearly 1 in 5 were found to live in households with at least one agricultural day laborer<sup>4</sup>.

According to the 2022 multidimensional poverty measurement, 20.1% of the agricultural day laborer population was living in extreme poverty, which equated to approximately 500,000 day laborers earning below the Línea de Pobreza Extrema por Ingresos (Extreme Poverty Level by Income) (the value of the basic food basket). In addition, they exhibited at least three forms of social deprivation, namely, that although their income was sufficient to purchase the basic food basket, it was inadequate to cover non-food goods and services. On average, their income from work is lower than that of subordinate workers nationwide<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, refer to “La población jornalera agrícola en México y su situación de pobreza”, CONEVAL, agosto 2024, pág. 11; [https://www.coneval.org.mx/Medicion/MP/Documents/contribucion\\_estrategias\\_pobreza/Analisis\\_pobreza\\_jornaleros\\_agricolas\\_Mexico.pdf](https://www.coneval.org.mx/Medicion/MP/Documents/contribucion_estrategias_pobreza/Analisis_pobreza_jornaleros_agricolas_Mexico.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pp. 12-13

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 12-13

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp. 13-14

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 16 y 22

In 2018, a study by the Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (National Commission on Human Rights) revealed that day laborers earn less than the legal minimum wage, resulting in precarious incomes. This economic vulnerability explains why they are often compelled to migrate from one place to another<sup>6</sup>.

The Comisión Nacional de los Salarios Mínimos (National Commission on Minimum Wages) has reported that 33.3% of agricultural day laborers earn at or below the minimum wage, while just over half, 54.5%, earn more than one but not more than two minimum wages. The deprivations they face are compounded by the seasonal nature of their employment as agricultural workers, which means that their income is insufficient to meet basic needs throughout the entire year. These low wage levels are further exacerbated by high labor flexibility and minimal regulation. Additionally, the data reveals that 93.4% of individuals lack a written contract, 90.9% do not have access to healthcare through their work, 85.3% are without employment benefits (excluding healthcare access), and 60% work a full day or more<sup>7</sup>.

These figures are further exacerbated by the lack of access to social security, healthcare, basic housing services, and educational disparities. In this regard, 88 out of every 100 agricultural day laborers lacked access to social security, a situation closely tied to their working conditions. The absence of work benefits is one of the primary factors influencing this indicator. On the other hand, 67.7% of day laborers (1.6 million individuals) lacked access to healthcare. Therefore, of the agricultural day laborers who had health issues, 40.3% sought treatment in private clinics and hospitals, 23.1% at health centers (Secretaría de Salud [Health Secretariat]), and 20.3% at pharmacy clinics<sup>8</sup>.

Access to basic services in the home was the third most common form of deprivation, impacting 54.1% of cases. The percentage of agricultural day laborers living in a home without heating or a chimney, despite using firewood or coal for cooking, was 42.4%. Furthermore, 17.7% of them were living in homes without access to water, and 17.2% occupied dwellings lacking drainage. Regarding educational disparities, 52.5% of individuals were affected by this issue. Among agricultural day laborers under 25 years of age, 7 out of 100 have an incomplete primary (grade school) education, while only 19 out of 100 have completed high school or a higher level of

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<sup>6</sup> Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (2018). Estudio sobre la intervención de las Autoridades del Trabajo en la prevención de la trata de personas y la detección de posibles víctimas en campos agrícolas, pág. 38. Available here: <https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/all/doc/Informes/Especiales/Estudio-Autoridades-Trabajo-Trata.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> For further details, refer to “La pandemia del COVID 19 exhibe la indefensión y precariedad de millones de jornaleros agrícolas” (The COVID-19 Pandemic Exposes the Vulnerability and Precariousness of Millions of Agricultural Day Laborers), BOLETÍN No. 10/2020, Comisión Nacional de los Salarios Mínimos (National Commission on Minimum Wages) | 08 de abril de 2020 (April 8, 2020) | Comunicado, en (Presented here) <https://www.gob.mx/conasami/prensa/la-pandemia-del-covid-19-exhibe-la-indefension-y-precariedad-de-millones-de-jornaleros-agricolas-es-el-momento-historico-para-fijar-el-salario-minimo-y-saldar-la-deuda-con-este-sector-y-sus-familias?idiom=es>

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. Coneval 2024, pág. 19

education. This highlights a significant educational challenge within the agricultural day laborer population<sup>9</sup>.

The challenges that day laborers and their families encounter in accessing these social rights are primarily due to their lack of the fundamental elements necessary to exercise these rights, such as the labor protections specified in the Ley General de Desarrollo Social (General Law of Social Development) and the Ley Federal del Trabajo (Federal Labor Law).

It is important to note that a significant portion of the day laborer population in Mexico consists of domestic migrants. The factors driving this mobility are diverse, but primarily stem from the neglect experienced by small farmers in the central and southern regions of the country. In addition to this, there are social deprivations, high rates of marginalization, insecurity, violence, and extreme poverty experienced by several municipalities in rural and indigenous areas of the states that comprise these regions.

The robust growth of agro-industrial production in the north, northwest, and center of the country has created a labor market that facilitates the supply and demand for workers engaged in various agricultural activities. This development has prompted thousands of day laborers, along with their families, to seek subsistence. As a result, they are faced with the decision, whether voluntary or forced, of migrating to other regions to pursue agricultural work, often encountering additional deprivations and ongoing violations of their labor rights. There is no guarantee of fair and dignified work, nor of adequate working and living conditions, as outlined in the Ley Federal de Trabajo (Federal Labor Law) and international human rights instruments and conventions.

It is crucial to discuss the reasons why agricultural day laborers migrate in Mexico. In this regard, the Red Nacional de Jornaleros y Jornaleras Agrícolas (National Network of Agricultural Day Laborers), in its Informe [\*Violación de Derechos de las y los Jornaleros Agrícolas en México\*](#) (Report on Violations of the Rights of Agricultural Day Laborers in Mexico), explains that for agricultural, rural, peasant, and indigenous day laborers, the precariousness of their living conditions exacerbates inequalities related to gender, class, and ethnicity. This situation further normalizes violence and human rights violations, particularly affecting workers in the central and northern regions of the country. The growing gap between the decline in agricultural employment and the corresponding rise in migration for income generation is driven by two key factors: the lack of an agricultural policy that supports the peasant economy with dignity and ensures access to human rights in communities of origin, and the increasing demand for labor to sustain global agro-industrial production<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pág. 20

<sup>10</sup> *Violación de Derechos de las y los Jornaleros Agrícolas en México*, Red Nacional de Jornaleros y Jornaleras Agrícolas, 2019, pp. 11: [https://cecig.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/INFORME\\_RNJA\\_2019.pdf](https://cecig.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/INFORME_RNJA_2019.pdf)

The Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (National Commission on Human Rights) has made several recommendations highlighting the ongoing violations of the human rights of agricultural day laborers in the context of domestic migration. Each one addresses key elements that highlight the conditions of vulnerability to these violations and their impact on the lives, development, and well-being of girls, boys, adolescents, women, men, people with disabilities, migrants and indigenous peoples. At the same time, it emphasizes the responsibility of states and authorities for their negligence, leading to these conditions<sup>11</sup>.

This document presents very specific contexts that clearly highlight the situation, needs, and challenges faced by certain indigenous rural communities at the national level. Veracruz, Oaxaca, Morelos and Guerrero are integral to the migratory dynamic experienced across the country. These states are both sources and destinations of migration, with their communities serving as origin points for migrants and, simultaneously, as settlement areas. Additionally, these states are key agricultural producers of specific crops, such as coffee, sugar cane, green beans, and oranges, among others. While there is also interstate migration within these sectors (i.e., movement from one municipality to another within the same state), Veracruz also attracts day laborers from neighboring states.

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<sup>11</sup> 28/2016.- Sobre el caso de los Jornaleros agrícolas indígenas tarámuris (Tarahumaras) en Baja California Sur; [Recomendación 28/2016 | Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos - México \(cndh.org.mx\)](#)

- 70/2016.- Sobre el Caso de las Violaciones a los Derechos al Libre desarrollo de la personalidad, al trabajo digno y al interés superior de la niñez, al derecho al trabajo, a la seguridad jurídica y la procuración de justicia, en agravio de V1, V2, V3, V4 y demás jornaleros agrícolas indígenas localizados en una finca en Villa Juárez, San Luis Potosí; [Recomendación 70/2016 | Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos - México \(cndh.org.mx\)](#)
- 2 /2017.- Caso sobre la Violación a diversos derechos humanos en agravio de personas jornaleras agrícolas del Valle de San Quintín, en Ensenada, Baja California; [Recomendación 2/2017 | Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos - México \(cndh.org.mx\)](#)
- 60/2017.- Sobre el caso de la violación a los derechos humanos al trabajo, a la seguridad social, a un nivel de vida adecuado y al interés superior del niño en agravio de V1 y V2, personas jornaleras agrícolas en el estado de Coahuila de Zaragoza; [Rec 2017\\_021.pdf \(cndh.org.mx\)](#)
- 15/2018.- Sobre el caso de las violaciones a diversos derechos humanos por actos de trata de personas en agravio de jornaleros indígenas de origen mixteco en condiciones de vulnerabilidad localizados en un ejido del municipio de Colima, Colima, [Recomendación 15/2018 | Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos - México \(cndh.org.mx\)](#)
- 36/2019.- Recomendación General respecto de la situación de marginación y pobreza que enfrentan más de dos millones de personas jornaleras agrícolas en el país, misma que resulta en su mayoría, contraria y violatoria de sus Derechos Humanos, lo que se refleja en condiciones laborales precarias, y vulneraciones a los derechos al trabajo y en el trabajo, a la seguridad social, a un nivel de vida adecuado, así como la falta de atención y garantía del interés superior de la niñez sobre la situación de la población jornalera agrícola en México. [Recomendación General 36/2019 | Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos - México \(cndh.org.mx\)](#)
- Y la más reciente, 209/2022.- Sobre el caso de violaciones a los derechos humanos al trabajo en condiciones de dignidad, en el contexto del trabajo agrícola, así como a la procuración de justicia y al interés superior de la niñez, en agravio de 38 personas jornaleras agrícolas indígenas, en Villa de Arista, San Luis Potosí [Recomendación 209/2022 | Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos - México \(cndh.org.mx\)](#)

CAMINOS Centro de Acompañamiento a Migrantes, AC; Fomento Cultural y Educativo, AC; and Centro de Estudios en Cooperación Internacional y Gestión Pública, AC provide information that offers insight into the complex reality of internal migration processes. This information highlights the mechanisms that facilitate and protect the recruitment, down payment, and contracting practices of agricultural companies, as well as the living and working conditions experienced by day laborers and their families, both in their places of origin and in the states to which they migrate.

## Veracruz

Thousands of people from the Sierra and Huasteca regions travel at various times throughout the year to work on *contracts*<sup>12</sup> for harvesting crops such as chili, tomatoes, tamarind, and more. The majority of these workers come from Nahua, Otomí, Tepehua, Totonac, and Tének communities in the states of Veracruz, Hidalgo, Puebla, and San Luis Potosí. The destination sites, known as ranches, are located in various states, including Coahuila, Sinaloa, Durango, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, Estado de México, Jalisco, Sonora, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Baja California, and others. The inhabitants of the Sierra and the Huasteca customarily travel in groups, organizing themselves with neighbors or relatives to go out and work.

In most communities, an intermediary acts between the recruiter and the day laborers. These intermediaries, known as *anotadores* (annotators), are paid to recruit a group of people in anticipation of the recruiter or contractor's arrival. The recruiter also acts as an intermediary between the agricultural company and the day laborers. The job offer is promoted by the recruiter or contractor through public announcements across a variety of media, including commercial radio stations like *La Voz de la Huasteca*, in Huejutla, Hidalgo.

These radio announcements provide information about the locations where interested individuals can go to register. The promised salary is outlined, along with an additional amount ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,000 pesos, which will be provided to the worker upon leaving their community. This sum, referred to as an "enganche,"<sup>13</sup> (meaning 'hook' in English) will later be deducted from the total salary based on the number of days verbally agreed upon in the contract. The offered work period typically ranges between two and three months, though it may be extended depending on the nature of the work and the duration of the activity.

In many cases, it is the recruiter and/or contractor who receives payment from the company, meaning the worker does not have direct information from the employer or business owner

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<sup>12</sup> A term used in rural or indigenous communities to describe seasonal migration to another region for agricultural work. It is used in the Huasteca region of Mexico, which comprises municipalities from Veracruz, Hidalgo, and San Luis Potosí.

<sup>13</sup> The advance payment is given prior to the worker's departure from their community and can be considered a salary advance. This payment is made days or even months before the worker begins, ensuring that day laborers endure poor working conditions: [La Jornada del Campo](#).

regarding their salary. The recruiter sets the salaries for those they recruit and/or hire, keeping a portion of the payment they receive from the agricultural company owner. Multiple recruiters may operate on behalf of the same farm.

Typically, agricultural workers do not sign a formal work contract. They verbally determine both the salary and the amount of the *enganche*. Even when a contract is present, workers often struggle to understand it, as many are illiterate or do not speak Spanish fluently. There are reports of adolescents as young as 12 working on ranches. They are not offered a written contract because the arrangement falls outside the scope of the Ley Federal del Trabajo (Federal Labor Law); instead, they use documents that belong to adult neighbors.

The most common way for workers to reach the 'contracts' is by traveling in a pickup truck to the city of Huejutla, Hidalgo, where most recruiters and contractors are based. This city also serves as the departure point for migrant day laborers heading to different destinations in Mexico, including the United States.

Transportation conditions for day laborers are far from ideal. They often experience accidents on poorly maintained roads,<sup>14</sup> and the buses used for transport lack basic amenities such as bathrooms, windows or air conditioning.

Housing conditions in the workplace are among the most precarious aspects, as revealed by workers' testimonies. Companies provide warehouses where employees live in overcrowded conditions. These large spaces often accommodate both men and women, and sometimes children as well. In such housing conditions, the bathrooms are always insufficient, unable to meet the needs of the large population, and lack basic water services to support over 300 people.

Some workers prefer to rent houses in construction zones within nearby communities. These houses typically accommodate 10 to 12 people who travel together from their community to the workplace. The construction sites often have temporary roofs made of sheet metal and lack windows, kitchens, or bathrooms. Workers are forced to bring their own kitchen utensils or purchase them to prepare food. This situation is similar in shelters coordinated between companies and municipal councils.

In areas near the capital, workers stay in employers' houses, typically consisting of unfinished second floors without windows, doors, or mattresses, just blankets, and sometimes even without a bathroom.

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<sup>14</sup> [Accidente de camión con 45 jornaleros deja siete lesionados \(luznoticias.mx\)](http://luznoticias.mx).

Since most workers come from marginalized and impoverished communities, they often fail to recognize that their rights are being violated. Sleeping on cardboard boxes, disassembled for months and without adequate shelter, is a form of inhuman treatment.

Food, another major source of suffering, further exacerbates the situation. Although most farms, as required by the Ley Federal del Trabajo (Federal Labor Law), do provide food free of charge, its quality is extremely poor. Workers are subjected to the same meals repeatedly throughout the week, with a severe lack of protein. The water provided is neither clean nor purified, and its availability is limited. Some workers report being given spoiled food.

Access to external food is also restricted, either because workers live far from stores or markets, or because many farms withhold their weekly wages. They engage in practices that violate the provisions of the Ley Federal de Trabajo (Federal Labor Law), such as withholding wages until the contract ends. In some cases, employers justify this by claiming that, as per the agreement, the workers' pay will be given at the end of the contract. Additionally, cash loans of up to 500 pesos per week are offered during the contract.

However, workers are forced to purchase goods from the farm's own store, where prices are excessively high. As a result, workers are left with little choice but to endure hunger and poor nutrition. The cost of the items they consume is deducted from their final pay, thereby violating their labor rights and committing other forms of injustice.<sup>15</sup>

Another significant challenge is access to healthcare. Most workers report that if they fall ill and are unable to work, the farm does not compensate them for the days they miss. The company or farm typically provides only a basic first aid kit. Access to a clinic can be difficult, but it remains the primary option for addressing more complex health issues. During the COVID-19 pandemic, workers had virtually no access to protocols or strategies to prevent the virus from spreading during work. Additionally, very few workers inscribed in the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social or IMSS (Mexican Social Security Institute).

Health risks are further exacerbated by exposure to agro-toxic substances, including herbicides, insecticides, and chemical fertilizers used in farming. Agro-industrial agriculture is designed with heavy reliance on these chemicals. To protect themselves, day laborers working in certain crops are required to cover the bottoms of their pants with stockings, wear hoods over their heads, and cover their faces with scarves to avoid the harmful effects of agrochemicals on their skin. However, in hot environments, such as greenhouses, this protective clothing increases fatigue due to heat and negatively impacts workers' health during their shifts. It is also

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<sup>15</sup> [FISCALÍA DE DDHH RESCATÓ A 35 JORNALEROS DE PRESUNTA EXPLOTACIÓN LABORAL EN VILLA DE ARISTA – Fiscalía General del Estado \(fiscaliasp.gob.mx\)](https://www.fiscaliasp.gob.mx/).

important to note that day laborers who are repeatedly exposed to agrochemicals can suffer long-term health effects, such as allergies, dermatitis, and even cancer.

Most workers report not perceiving instances of violence or discrimination in the workplace. However, in-depth conversations during the Fomento team's fieldwork reveal that discrimination, mistreatment, and racism are realities that indigenous peoples have endured for years. This makes it difficult for them to recognize these experiences as forms of violence. However, women frequently report instances of sexual harassment.

In many of the agricultural work environments, violence is pervasive, with organized crime often directly linked to or operating near the farms. Drug trafficking on the farms is common, and many workers return to their communities addicted to crack, crystal meth, or marijuana. These addictions often lead to aggressive behavior toward their families and neighbors, and the violence they experience during the contract period is then mirrored within their communities.

Most laborers reported that the main aspects they would like to change in their jobs are the poor living conditions and the low wages they receive. The most egregious issue with the recruitment and labor system is the lack of enforcement of regulations by the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social (Secretariat of Labor and Social Security). Additionally, there is a clear absence of oversight and monitoring of working conditions, housing, food, health, and safety by labor authorities at both the federal and state levels, particularly at the destination sites. Key aspects such as the right to accommodation, food quality, social security registration, wages, and overtime pay are neither settled nor guaranteed.

The structural problem with this labor system is that millions of agricultural day laborers, a number that increases each year, are part of an expanding industrial agricultural model that prioritizes intensive production. These companies are not limited to local or national operations; they are also international, acquiring or leasing land and implementing advanced systems for design, administration, and input, all with the goal of boosting productivity and performance. Recruitment systems are operating outside the law, effectively controlling workers through their exploitation and relying on the extreme poverty of workers and their families.

## Oaxaca

The Encuesta Nacional de Jornaleros Agrícolas (National Survey of Agricultural Day Laborers) (ENJO, 2009), determined that 24.4 % of day laborers in the country are of Oaxacan origin. One of the key factors contributing to the high levels of migratory expulsion in Oaxaca is the degree of marginalization<sup>16</sup> within the state: Oaxaca ranks third in the country for the highest

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<sup>16</sup>The marginalization index is a measure that distinguishes regions and municipalities across the country based on the overall impact of deprivations faced by the population. This includes lack of access to education, inadequate housing conditions, insufficient income, and living in small towns.



marginalization rates, following Guerrero and Chiapas<sup>17</sup>. The state has 216 municipalities with a very high rate of marginalization, 144 with a high rate, 171 with a medium rate, 28 with a low rate, and only 11 with a very low rate of marginalization.

In Oaxaca, day labor migration is predominantly a family-based activity,<sup>18</sup> accounting for 79.5% of total migration. Circular migration and agricultural labor pose unique challenges for families. These include difficulty in establishing ties to a particular territory and in strengthening community networks that offer protection and support in the absence of the State. Additionally, this migration pattern disrupts children's and adolescents' ability to participate in formal and continuous education, while also increasing their vulnerability to labor exploitation, exclusion, and discrimination.

The primary objective of this study was to gain first-hand insight into the situation and context of day labor migration in the Valles Centrales region of the state. Interviews were conducted with 42 participants, 21 women and 21 men, ranging in age from 20 to 50 years. Most migrant day laborers interviewed are Zapotec speakers, with at least half of the agricultural workers also fluent in Spanish, with proficiency ranging from 80% to 100%. In terms of education, 23 of the interviewed day laborers had completed primary school (grade school), 12 had finished secondary school, and 2 had attended high school. Five individuals reported having no formal education at all.

Fifty percent of the respondents were married, and more than 85% of these individuals had dependents. The primary crops grown in the fields are cucumbers, chili peppers, tomatoes, green onions, and strawberries. Over 90% of the interviewed day laborers are involved in harvesting and cutting tasks, with the average work period lasting 8 months. The lack of employment opportunities in their home communities is the leading reason for their migration.

Regarding the recruitment process, most day laborers reported learning about job opportunities through community advertisements or via direct invitations from relatives who migrate annually to the agricultural fields. Notably, only 10 out of the 42 interviewees received a written contract before starting their work; the remaining participants were hired through verbal agreements. The documentation required from agricultural workers includes the birth certificate, the Clave Única de Registro de Población or CURP (Population Registry Unique Code), and the official Instituto Nacional Electoral or INE (National Electoral Institute) ID, which collectively account for 65%. It is important to note that, based on information gathered during fieldwork, none of the workers received a prior work contract or advance payment.

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<sup>17</sup>Minimal analysis of migration in Oaxaca. Dirección General de Población (General Directorate of Population). Available at: [www.digepo.oaxaca.gob.mx/recursos/publicaciones/DIAGNOSTICO\\_MINIMO\\_EN\\_MATERIA\\_DE\\_MIGRACION\\_EN%20OAXACA.pdf](http://www.digepo.oaxaca.gob.mx/recursos/publicaciones/DIAGNOSTICO_MINIMO_EN_MATERIA_DE_MIGRACION_EN%20OAXACA.pdf) (Accessed in January 2023.)

<sup>18</sup> ENJO, 2009. Available at: <https://www.inee.edu.mx/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/sedesol-2009-pobreza-migracion-y-capacidades.pdf>.

During the transit stage, workers are transported from their community of origin in a passenger van to a nearby town with better access, where they either take public transportation or board a bus provided by the company to reach the work farms. Generally, entire families, or at least three members, travel together. Notably, 77% of workers in the study were transported by the company-provided bus, while 10% used more than one form of transport to reach their destination. At least 65% of the workers traveled in buses that were in favorable condition (clean, with air conditioning and a bathroom). None of the interviewees reported experiencing any accidents during the transfer, nor did they mention any instances of harassment. It is also important to highlight that none of the workers had travel insurance, nor was it mentioned by their employers.

During the COVID-19 health contingency period, it is important to note that 28% of workers did not receive any prevention or care protocols during their transportation and had to provide their own face masks. Only 60% of the laborers were provided with face masks and sanitizing gel by the company during the workday. No worker reported being affiliated with a union. Regarding their financial situation, salaries are variable. Fifty percent earn between 201 and 300 pesos per day, 38% earn between 150 and 200 pesos, and the remainder earn more than 300 pesos daily. Additionally, 50% receive extra pay for overtime worked.

It is common for laborers to work 9 hours per day and receive one day of rest per week (Sunday). More than 50% of the day laborers interviewed receive their salary in cash, while 21% are paid by check and 18% through a debit card.

In terms of housing, over 50% of migrant day laborers live in shared houses or warehouses, with the company covering the rent while the workers pay for drinking water and electricity services. The rest rent separate rooms, often outside the farm. Health and education services are located off the farm, and workers are responsible for covering these costs themselves.

Despite the limited scope of this small study and the small sample size drawn from the vast number of migrant day laborers who move year after year in search of better work opportunities, it provides valuable insight into the conditions surrounding this migration. This allows us to identify and confirm the labor and human rights violations, deprivations, and omissions that workers experience before, during, and after their migration, as well as in the workplace. Common issues include the lack of legally compliant contracts, poor working conditions, and inadequate housing. These cases, often perpetuated by limited access to information, are repeated day after day, community after community.

## **Morelos**

When discussing Morelos, it is essential to consider the context of its agricultural market and its national and international connections. Morelos has long been a magnet for temporary

agricultural day laborers. In addition, it has become home to families of agricultural workers who settled in the last decade of the 20th century, primarily from Guerrero, but also from Oaxaca and Puebla

Over time, Morelos has also evolved into a state of origin, as many of these workers, who initially settled there more than 20 years ago, now migrate to other states such as Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, and others in the central and northern regions of the country, in addition to participating in the seasonal agricultural harvests within Morelos.

The state was a supplier of sugar in the first half of the 20th century, but in the second half, it also became a producer of vegetables. Sugarcane is grown across the territory, with the southern and eastern regions serving as the primary sources for the state's two sugar mills: Emiliano Zapata and La Abeja.

The municipality of Ayala, located in the eastern part of the state, is home to several sites where day laborer families are settled on the outskirts of Tenextepango. The area has a population of approximately 8,835 inhabitants. A 2017 analysis by the municipality of Ayala indicates that La Joya is one of the areas with a high rate of disenfranchisement: -0.6696<sup>19</sup>.

The inhabitants of the day laborer communities settled in La Joya are occasionally employed in cutting green beans, but they have diversified their sources of income through other economic activities, such as the sale of products crafted by women or construction work undertaken by men<sup>20</sup>.

Twenty-two years ago, the first families of day laborers arrived in the community of Tenextepango, migrating from different areas in the La Montaña region of Guerrero. These include communities such as Potoichán, the municipality of Copanatoyac, Rancho Escondido, Santa Anita, and Cosontopia, among others. The majority of the population in La Joya speaks Mixtec, although some residents also speak Nahuatl. The families initially traveled to the municipality of Tepalcingo in the state of Morelos to work in the green bean harvest. On average, each family has between four and eight children<sup>21</sup>.

Access to quality, free healthcare services and decent employment opportunities are the community's most pressing needs. Regarding the right to healthcare, the La Joya community has proposed the following:

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[https://www.hacienda.morelos.gob.mx/images/docu\\_planeacion/planea\\_estراتيجية/diagnosticos\\_municipales/2017-2/AYALA2017.pdf](https://www.hacienda.morelos.gob.mx/images/docu_planeacion/planea_estراتيجية/diagnosticos_municipales/2017-2/AYALA2017.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> "Diagnóstico Comunitario: Sistematización de la aplicación en estados de origen y destino en migración jornalera agrícola interna: Guerrero, Morelos y San Luis Potosí", Centro de Estudios en Cooperación Internacional y Gestión Pública, AC, para Fundación Avina como parte del Proyecto Periplo, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

1. Proximity to healthcare services
2. Culturally relevant care
3. Uninterrupted care
4. Taking into account the various diseases that women of all ages face, with a particular emphasis on reproductive health
5. Preventive measures addressing nutrition, adequate housing, and sanitation services that are efficient and hygienic
6. Improving the community environment, particularly the management of unhygienic animals (including dogs, cats, and backyard animals)

In the Tenextepango settlement, water is delivered to homes via hoses. Electricity is available, but there is no paving. The community faces an overpopulation of animals on the streets, with many stray dogs in the area.

The problems faced by women of all ages in these communities are primarily structural, sharing similarities with those of male and female migrant day laborers, though with distinct differences and particularities. For this reason, CECIG urges the state government to recognize these communities, along with all agricultural day laborer communities (who often become migrants), as essential populations, as declared by President Claudia Sheinbaum. Their labor is crucial in ensuring that vegetable products reach the tables of every citizen in Mexico.

## **Challenges**

On one hand, the economic structure marginalizes people based on their economic and indigenous status, which in turn limits their access to quality education in their native languages. As highlighted in the previously mentioned analysis, these communities also lack access to decent, culturally relevant healthcare services.

Additionally, there is a pressing need for quality education to enable individuals to secure decent jobs. Young people, especially girls, also require culturally relevant sexual education to prevent teenage pregnancies within these populations.

These communities are still in the early stages of organizing to voice their needs. It is also crucial to explore the leadership potential of young women, who could play a key role in advancing community organization. While reflection on these issues has begun, significant work remains to address their needs and empower women to organize and propose solutions.

If local, state, and federal governments include these communities in their programs, it would significantly contribute to the advancement of dignified citizenship.

## **Guerrero**

The state of Guerrero is situated on the southwest coast of Mexico and is divided into eight geocultural regions: Acapulco, Costa Chica, Costa Grande, Centro, La Montaña, Norte, Tierra Caliente, and La Sierra. The regions consist of a total of 85 municipalities, including four that were recently established: Santa Cruz del Rincón, San Nicolás, Nuu Savi, and Las Vigas<sup>22</sup>.

Guerrero has become the leading state in interstate migration, surpassing Oaxaca, with approximately 60,000 agricultural day laborers emigrating each year to work in the fields of northwestern Mexico. These migrants primarily come from the Centro, La Montaña, and Costa Chica regions<sup>23</sup>, many of whom are from indigenous communities. However, the agricultural day laborer population also includes mestizo, indigenous, and Afro-Mexican workers<sup>24</sup>. The regions with the highest number of indigenous agricultural day laborers are Centro, La Montaña, Costa Chica and Región Norte. This migratory flow involves around 1,000 localities across 70 municipalities in the state<sup>25</sup>.

The majority of the indigenous population resides in municipalities with the lowest levels of human and social development. Regions characterized by high levels of marginalization and extreme poverty also face the highest rates of labor expulsion. This is primarily due to factors such as unemployment, a lack of productive opportunities, poor management of natural resources, low productivity, limited technological advancement, restricted access to markets, inadequate organizational development, insufficient infrastructure, demographic dispersion, a lack of technical and training support, high production costs, institutional fragmentation, and the absence of comprehensive development planning. These issues, compounded by high levels of insecurity, hinder the development potential of these regions, making them unattractive for investment and resulting in limited employment and income opportunities<sup>26</sup>.

The Plan Estatal de Desarrollo de Guerrero (Guerrero State Development Plan) for the 2022-2027 period<sup>27</sup> states that poverty and low levels of human capital are significant factors driving the migration of agricultural day laborers to areas with a potentially higher demand for labor. This primarily involves migration from the southeast of Mexico to regions in the west and northwest of the country, where the relative demand for labor is greatest.

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<sup>22</sup> For more information, refer to “Contexto del Estado de Guerrero 2021-2024”, Secretaría de Planeación y Desarrollo Regional del Estado de Guerrero, pp. 84-85 available at: <https://seed.guerrero.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Contexto-del-Estado-de-Guerrero-GOB-2022-2027.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> “Acuerdo por el que se crea el Programa de Autoempleo Productivo para el Bienestar de Comunidades Jornaleras, y se emiten sus reglas de operación”, April 18 2023, <https://www.guerrero.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PAEMPPBIECOMJOR.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Refer to the Plan Estatal de Desarrollo de Guerrero (Guerrero State Development Plan) for the 2022-2027 here: <http://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/http://sefina.guerrero.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/PLAN-ESTATAL-DE-DESARROLLO-DE-GUERRERO-2022-2027-cc.pdf>

According to data from the Dirección General de Atención a Grupos Prioritarios (General Directorate for Attention to Priority Groups) of the Secretaría de Bienestar Federal (Federal Welfare Secretariat)<sup>28</sup>, there are about 60,290 agricultural day laborers in the state of Guerrero, representing 29% of the national total.

The Consejo Estatal de Jornaleros Agrícolas Migrantes, AC (State Council of Migrant Agricultural Day Laborers, AC), reports that the largest migratory flow is concentrated in the following municipalities: in the Centro region—Chilapa de Álvarez, Ahuacuotzingo, Zitlala, Tixtla de Guerrero, Mártir de Cuilapan, Chilpancingo de los Bravo, Quechultenango, José Joaquín de Herrera, Eduardo Neri, Heliodoro Castillo, Leonardo Bravo, and Juan R. Escudero; in the La Montaña region—Tlapa de Comonfort, Cochoapa el Grande, Metlatónoc, Atlixac, Olinalá, Copanatoyac, Alcozauca de Guerrero, Atlamajalcingo del Monte, Xalpatláhuac, Zapotitlán Tablas, Acatepec, Tlacoapa, Cualác, Malinaltepec, Iliatenco, Alpoyeca, Tlalixtaquilla de Maldonado, and Huamuxtitlán; in the Costa Chica region—Ometepec, Tlacoachistlahuaca, Xochistlahuaca, Cuajinicuilapa, San Luis Acatlán, Igualapa, Ayutla de los Libres, Juchitán, Cuautepec, Tecoanapa, Azoyú, and Copala; and in the Norte region—Copalillo, Atenango del Río, Tepecoacuilco de Trujano, Ixcateopan de Cuauhtémoc, and Huitzuc de los Figueroa<sup>29</sup>.

The Plan Estatal de Desarrollo de Guerrero (Guerrero State Development Plan) also indicates that migrant agricultural day laborers from Guerrero primarily travel along the Ruta del Pacífico (Pacific Route), which includes Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Chiapas as the source states, while Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja California, and Baja California Sur are the destination states. The lives and work of indigenous migrant day laborer families from Guerrero are closely tied to this route.

However, other states also attract a significant portion of the migratory flow of Guerrero's day laborers, including Chihuahua, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Zacatecas, Durango, San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Colima, Nayarit, Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Hidalgo, Puebla, Morelos, and Estado de México.

Within Guerrero itself, although to a lesser extent, there are also migration flows of agricultural day laborers moving from their areas of origin to the coffee-growing regions of Atoyac de Álvarez and the farming areas of Tierra Caliente, particularly in Zirándaro de los Chávez, San Miguel Totolapan, and Ajuchitlán del Progreso. This indicates that, while the state expels day laborers, it also attracts them to certain regions and municipalities<sup>30</sup>.

Guerrero authorities acknowledge that day laborers, along with their children, constitute the poorest and most marginalized sector of the population. To survive, a significant number of rural families migrate from various parts of the state to national agricultural development centers, which year after year demand this labor force. Men, women, youth, adolescents, and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

children participate in this process as wage earners, often hired directly from their places of origin to work in fields under precarious conditions<sup>31</sup>.

Particularly, the region of La Montaña, or Montaña Alta, is known for its high levels of day labor migration. Located on the border of Puebla and Oaxaca, it is home to three of the four most prominent ethnic groups in the area: Nahua, Na' Savi (Mixtec) and Me' Phaa (Tlapanec). The fourth indigenous group is the Amuzgos, also known as the Nn'anncue, who are located in the eastern part of the Sierra Madre del Sur, along the border of Oaxaca. The region is made up of 19 municipalities.

La Montaña is not only a region that expels indigenous people to the United States, but recent data from the past decade reveals that, out of the 19 municipalities it comprises, Metlatónoc, Cochoapa el Grande, Tlapa de Comonfort, Copanatoyac, Atlixac, Xalpatláhuac, Alcozauca and Atlamajalcingo del Monte are the eight with the highest rates of agricultural day laborer migration within Mexico<sup>32</sup>.

Several municipalities of La Montaña, the primary source of agricultural migrants, have the lowest human development rates in Mexico, marked by a very high degree of marginalization compared to the cities to which they migrate each year, such as Culiacán (Sinaloa), León (Guanajuato) or Hermosillo (Sonora)<sup>33</sup>.

In La Montaña, the migration cycle historically began when ancestors migrated to offer their labor in agricultural areas that required workers for large plantations. Today, the migration season starts in mid-August, when the first groups of families or crews of agricultural workers are organized, with the state of Sinaloa as their primary destination. These migration flows continue throughout September, increase in November after the Day of the Dead celebrations, and close in December, following the festivities for the Virgin of Guadalupe. This period is known as the "high migration season" in the La Montaña region of Guerrero. In addition to Sinaloa, day laborers and their families also migrate to Baja California, Nayarit, and Guanajuato during the winter-spring cycle.

In this region, subsistence and self-consumption agriculture are often practiced in a rugged, nearly inaccessible environment with hard or stony soils. Over the past decade, the migratory patterns of indigenous day laborer families in La Montaña have been evolving, shaped by shifting agricultural cycles and the growth of vegetable and other crop cultivation. As a result, these families have developed new strategies to facilitate their mobility and expand their internal movements.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan, 2011, "Migrantes somos y en el camino andamos", Tlachinollan/Fundación W.K. Kellogg, México, pág. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan, 2013, "La Montaña de Guerrero: tierra de mujeres migrantes", Tlachinollan/Fundación W.K. Kellogg México, pág. 28.

Within this context, it is important to highlight that in the communities of La Montaña, the intermittent migration of men, women, girls, boys and adolescents as day laborers mostly occurs in integrated groups, meaning families and entire communities. Currently, according to data from the Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan (Tlachinollan Mountain Human Rights Center), from January to July 2024, 5,646 agricultural day laborers have migrated, mainly from indigenous communities. Of these, 1,999 were boys and girls from 3 to 15 years old. The municipality of Cochoapa el Grande stood out as having the highest migratory flow of young people, boys and girls, followed by Tlapa de Comonfort and Metlatónoc<sup>34</sup>.

These indigenous day laborer families are united by family ties, ethnicity, language, and place of origin. They create extensive community networks and employ various strategies of solidarity and self-protection to support one another, increase their income, and minimize the risks they encounter during their migration. In doing so, they enhance the resources at their disposal, including the economic, social, and cultural assets of each family member.



The General Overview and the contexts of Morelos and Guerrero were prepared by Centro de Estudios en Cooperación Internacional y Gestión Pública, AC; the context of Veracruz by Fomento Cultural y Educativo, AC; and the context of Oaxaca by CAMINOS Centro de Acompañamiento a Migrantes, AC. These organizations were responsible for conducting interviews, and the results can be explored through the maps and interactive dashboards on this platform.

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<sup>34</sup> “Hasta julio salieron 5 mil 646 jornaleros agrícolas de la Montaña, informa Tlachinollan”, from *El Sur de Acapulco*, 5 September 2024, available here: <https://suracapulco.mx/hasta-julio-salieron-5-mil-646-jornaleros-agricolas-de-la-montana-informa-tlachinollan/>