

The Impact of Globalization on Rural Poor in Turkey: The Case of Social Risk Mitigation Project

By

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Abstract

Globalization has multi-facet impacts on the live of people. Turkey has faced the reality of globalization for many years but its adverse effect has been severely felt especially after the 1980s. Turkey, as other developing countries, has entered under the political realm of influential international organizations and has been negatively affected by this process. Globalization process has impacted agricultural sector more than any other sector. Turkey is no exception in this regard. 35% of total population lives in rural areas and 30% of the labor force is employed in agriculture. Despite its significance in employment, agriculture contributes only 10% to the gross national product. Especially in the 1990s liberalization policy being implemented has resulted in structural changes in the agricultural sector of Turkey. Millions of people have been adversely affected by globalization in general and by privatization and free-market economic policy in particular. Agricultural policy being orchestrated by international policy formation agencies has affected 90% of small agricultural businesses and 35 % of landless rural population and this policy has furthermore caused unemployment, poverty and migration from the rural to urban areas working as unregistered workers. In fact, during the year of 1991-2001 about one million agricultural enterprises has been shut down and there is no data about what these people are doing.

As a result of globalization policy being imposed, legal regulations regarding the limited production of tobacco, sugar, hazelnut and tea has affected about two million rural families and millions of agricultural workers directly or indirectly. Such development has increased poverty and 36% of people are making a living under the poverty line.

In Turkey the World-Bank financed Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP) has been implemented after the 2001 crisis. SRMP was put in force in order to mitigate the adverse effect of globalization and economic crisis on poor. SRMP is consisting of the four components:

- To mitigate the adverse effect of economic crises on poor;
- To strengthen the institutional capacity of public agencies providing services to poor;
- To establish health and education system targeting poor;
- To help poor to generate income and employment.

The purpose of this paper is first of all to examine the effect of globalization on Turkish agriculture and on increasing poverty. This will be followed by introduction of SRMP. Within this context, the last component of SRMP, income and employment generation, will be examined and discussed based on the results of field research.