



International
Labour
Organization

► Labour reforms in the State of Qatar

Coming together around
a shared vision



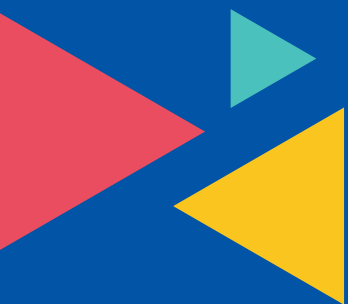




Qatar's labour reforms

In just a few years, the Government of Qatar has undertaken comprehensive labour reforms to improve the conditions of the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers in Qatar. In doing so, it adopted new legislation, introduced new or improved existing labour administration systems and enhanced labour relations. While this is still a work in progress, and there are gaps in implementation, the reforms have already yielded benefits for workers, employers and the economy more broadly.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has closely supported these reforms through a technical cooperation programme with the State of Qatar, particularly the Ministry of Labour (MOL). This document provides a concise summary of the key highlights and the remaining challenges. This will help to illustrate the extent of the reforms and present some of the priorities going forward. Moreover, it is hoped that the good practices mentioned within could inspire enhanced labour protection in other contexts.



The ILO-Qatar technical cooperation programme

The story of the ILO's involvement in the labour reforms goes back to 2014, when international trade unions submitted a complaint at the ILO against the State of Qatar, regarding non-compliance with core international labour standards. At the heart of this complaint were allegations that the 'kafala' or sponsorship system was enabling exploitation and even forced labour, and that the regulatory structures in the country were not adequately detecting or resolving labour rights violations.



The complaint triggered a series of steps under the ILO supervisory mechanism, including a decision by the ILO Governing Body to deploy a high-level tripartite mission to Qatar. After a period of intense negotiations, the State of Qatar and the ILO agreed on a programme to enact major labour reforms, which was endorsed by the ILO Governing Body, and led to the closure of the complaint procedure in 2017. In April 2018, the ILO opened an office in Doha.

The programme of work that was agreed was wide-ranging, covering various areas of law and policy, as well as the enhancement of systems and capacities of different institutions to better safeguard migrant workers' rights and to modernize labour relations. An already ambitious programme was made even more challenging by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the constituents and programme had to adapt and respond to new challenges facing workers and employers.

The reforms have taken place in the run up to Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, an event that has put the country in the spotlight. But the Government has repeatedly stated that the World Cup is not the finish line. The reforms are aligned with, and are contributing to, the realization of the State's National Vision 2030, which includes objectives related to the development of a competitive, diversified and knowledge-based economy.

The ILO Qatar Project Office works in very close partnership with the Ministry of Labour (MOL). The ILO has provided advice on law and policy, drawing from international labour standards and international good practice. The MOL and ILO have conducted research and assessments, supported dialogue with workers and employers in the country, to ensure the laws and systems can be continuously improved and made more effective. The ILO Office is also alerted to the gaps in implementation through daily interaction with workers. Training has been provided to government officials, and representatives of workers and employers. Various awareness raising campaigns have been designed to target workers and employers, in multiple languages.

In addition, the MOL and the ILO hold strategic discussions twice a year with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the global union federations (GUFs),¹ and separately with the International Organization of Employers (IOE), to review progress, define priorities and plot a route forward. The international trade unions have five community liaison officers based in Doha to raise awareness on laws and procedures among workers and community leaders, and to document workers' complaints and refer them to the MOL. There has also been collaboration with governments, trade unions and civil society organizations in Asia and Africa, based in countries that are home to the vast majority of the workforce in Qatar. These close partnerships have been critical to the progress made.

This journey has demonstrated the effectiveness of the ILO's supervisory system, which helps to ensure that countries implement the international labour standards they ratify. It showed that the combination of this unique system, the ILO's technical cooperation expertise, and a country's political commitment, can produce results quickly, and in partnership with the Government, and workers' and employers' organizations.

There is universal recognition that there are challenges in implementation. This is not surprising given the scale and pace of the reforms undertaken. The ILO remains committed to working with the Government of Qatar and social partners to ensure all workers and employers can benefit from the reforms, and continuing to strive towards full compliance with international labour standards. This phase of the ILO project will run until the end of 2023. The Government of Qatar has formally and publicly requested that the ILO establish a more permanent presence in Doha. The nature of that presence and the scope of work will be explored in 2023.

This publication presents the main components of the programme in Qatar since 2018.

¹ Building and Wood Worker's International (BWI), International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and UNI Global Union (UNI).

1 Dismantling the kafala system

Several new laws and regulations, adopted between 2018 and 2020, did away with the most problematic aspects of the kafala, a legal system of sponsorship that exists across the region.



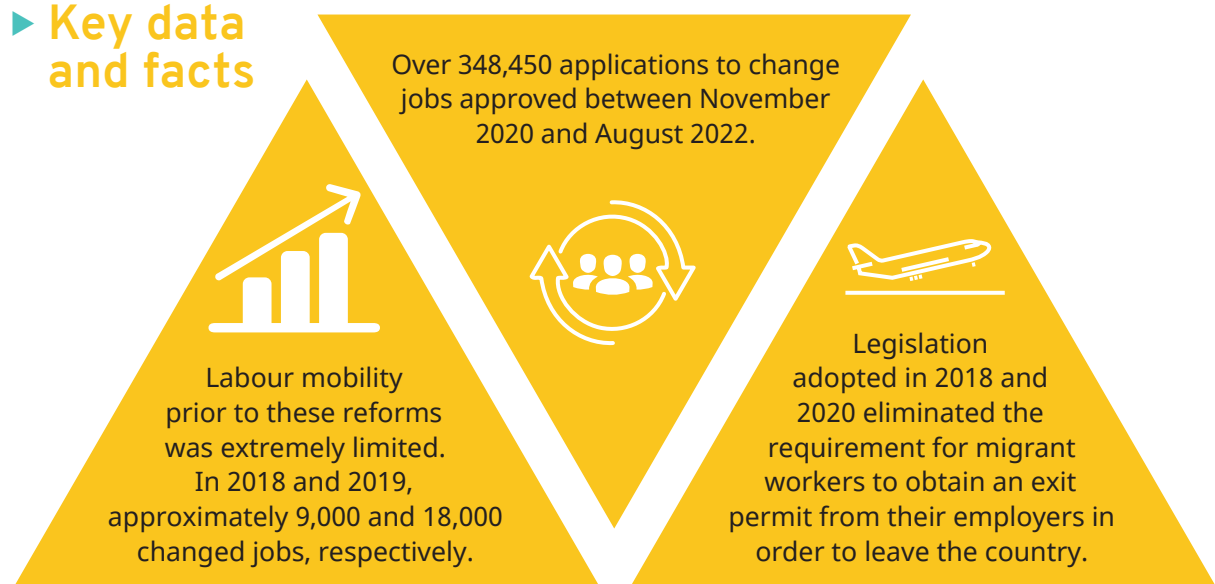
Workers in Qatar previously required permission from their employers, in the form of a No Objection Certificate (NOC), in order to change jobs. This made workers overly dependent on their employers, and created opportunities for unscrupulous employers to exploit them. Workers now have the right to change jobs without their employer's permission as the new legislation no longer requires them to obtain an NOC. They can change employers at any time during their contract, after a notice period of up to two months. Migrant workers, including domestic workers, also no longer require an employer-approved exit permit to leave the country. The exit permit requirements can still be applied to a very limited number of employees (capped at five per cent of a workforce), and only at the senior level.

This dismantling of the kafala system has facilitated a huge increase in labour mobility. Over 348,450 applications to change jobs have been approved between 1 November 2020 and 31 August 2022.² Labour mobility creates a labour market in which workers can find jobs according to their skills and expectations. Employers are incentivized to raise standards in order to attract and retain workers. The kafala reforms have also significantly reduced migrants' vulnerability to forced labour, which resulted from the inordinate control employers had over their lives.

Labour mobility also benefits employers, and the economy more broadly. Employers can hire staff locally, who more closely match their needs, rather than incurring the expense and potential risks associated with recruiting from abroad. Moreover, by allowing skills to circulate in the labour market, Qatar develops a more competitive and knowledge-based economy.

The removal of exit permits has been implemented smoothly. However, some workers have faced challenges in changing jobs, and employers have faced delays in recruiting workers. The main issues relate to a lack of clarity on whether NOCs are required – among workers, employers and even some officials. While the MOL has taken steps to improve and standardize the process, there is a need for more communication efforts. Secondly, a number of unscrupulous employers have retaliated against workers who applied to change jobs. This retaliation can take the form of threats of deportation, cancelling residency permits or filing absconding charges. Workers can still overcome these threats, but this often amounts to a bureaucratic and time-consuming process that then acts as a deterrent for others who would otherwise be keen to change jobs.

► Key data and facts



² Workers have to submit an application to change employers to the Ministry of Labour. The figure above reflects the number of applications that have been approved. In some cases, a worker may have changed jobs multiple times. Over 183,000 applications were rejected in the same time period, for different reasons.

2 A minimum wage adopted

Qatar is the first country in the region to adopt a non-discriminatory minimum wage that applies to all workers, of all nationalities, in all sectors, including domestic work.



The Minimum Wage Law came into force in March 2021. It is unique in that it establishes a minimum monthly basic wage of QAR 1,000 (US\$ 275), and also stipulates that employers must provide decent accommodation and food, or monthly allowances of at least QAR 500 (US\$ 137) for housing and QAR 300 (US\$ 82) for food.

The minimum wage is an instrument that aims to protect workers against unduly low pay. The Law resulted in 13 per cent of the workforce (280,000 people) seeing their wages rise to the new minimum threshold. Many more workers have seen an increase in their overall remuneration due to the standards for food and accommodation allowances.

Minimum wage setting is a process which involves progressive adjustments. The establishment of a Minimum Wage Commission in the Law was key a measure to support the sustainability of the minimum wage policy.

The ILO provided the Government of Qatar with guidance on the principles of minimum wage setting according to international labour standards, conducted research, and carried out a scenario analysis. The ILO promotes five principles contained in the Convention on Minimum Wage Fixing, No. 131 (1970). These are (1) broad-based application to cover as many workers as possible; (2) consultation with workers, employers and relevant stakeholders; (3) balance between economic factors and the needs of workers and their families; (4) periodic adjustment of the minimum wage; and (5) measures to ensure implementation.

Analysis of data from the Wage Protection System (see section 3) and other sources has found that there is a high degree of compliance with this legislation. However, there are a number of challenges related to wage protection more broadly. These are addressed in subsequent sections. The ILO recommends regular reviews to adjust minimum wages in Qatar in the future, in consultation with workers, employers and experts.

► Key data and facts



3 Wage Protection System strengthened

Qatar's Wage Protection System (WPS) is an essential tool to monitor the payment of workers' wages. The system has played an important role in reducing wage abuses and resolving wage disputes.



The WPS, introduced in 2015, obliges all employers in the private sector to transfer their employees' wages through Qatari banks. These transfers are then monitored by the MOL.

In 2019, the ILO and MOL commissioned an independent assessment of the WPS. The very publication of this report (among others) demonstrates a commitment to transparency, a determination to continually strengthen wage protection measures – and a willingness to share experience that could be valuable for other countries with similar systems.

The report contained a series of recommendations on how the WPS could better fulfil its potential, and how wage protection efforts could be more effective. The Government has acted on several of the recommendations, including strengthening the capacity of the WPS Unit to better detect violations, including payment under the minimum wage, the non-payment of allowances, and unlawful deductions.

Another finding from the independent assessment was that some small enterprises struggled to register with the system. They have since been targeted with communication materials and technical adjustments made the platform more user friendly. Coverage among enterprises and workers has increased. A total of 96 per cent of eligible workers and 94 per cent of companies were registered in the WPS in 2020, up from 58 per cent and 78 per cent in 2019. However, according to recent survey findings, 11 per cent of workers are still paid in cash.

The WPS Unit has also been swifter in imposing blocks on companies for violations, preventing them from receiving MOL services such as renewing work permits or recruiting new workers. In January 2020, the WPS Unit imposed blocks on 588 companies, while in June 2020, as the impact of COVID-19 restrictions took hold, the number reached 8,756. Violations are referred to the police, and penalties for non-payment of wages were increased to one year in prison and a maximum fine of QAR 10,000 (US\$ 2,750).

Despite these measures, the primary complaint submitted by workers to the Ministry of Labour relates to non-payment of wages and benefits. The measures needed to ensure more effective access to justice are outlined in section 4.

► Key data and facts



4 Access to justice improved

The Ministry of Labour's online platform has greatly expanded workers' ability to lodge complaints. Now the focus is on efficiency, cutting down the time between submission of a complaint and receipt of due wages and benefits.



In just a few years, the channels for lodging and resolving complaints have been overhauled. An online complaints platform was established in 2021, which included an anonymous whistleblower channel. The number of complaints more than doubled as a result. Between October 2021 and October 2022, 67 per cent of the complaints were resolved before or at the conciliation stage, with the remainder referred to the Labour Dispute Settlement Committees – similar to dedicated labour courts.

The ILO continues to support the Ministry's efforts to enhance the efficiency of the relevant institutions – still relatively new – including the Dispute Settlement Committees and the Workers' Fund. Moreover, the ILO Project Office receives cases from workers, through in-person visits, email, phone calls and social media. The ILO refers and follows up on these cases with MOL. This casework has provided the ILO with first-hand knowledge of the day-to-day challenges workers face, and this has been crucial in formulating precise advice on policies and procedures.

The system has had to deal with a large number of complaints, not only due to the increased access, but also due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, many companies struggled to pay their workers their wages and benefits, leading to a spike in complaints, and at the same time, the courts could not meet due to the lockdown protocols. The dispute settlement committees are still addressing a backlog of cases, and the number of courts increased from three to five in November 2022.

The new complaints platform has increased access, and because the WPS monitors payments electronically, most cases (84 per cent in 2021-2022) are decided in favour of workers. There has been a dramatic increase in the amount paid out from the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund between 2021 and 2022. However, there is still a need to improve communication with workers on the status of their cases, and for cases to be handled in a more systematic and timely manner.

► Key data and facts



5 Promoting social dialogue

Social dialogue is an invaluable tool for promoting social justice and good governance. In Qatar, fledgling social dialogue structures are being established in enterprises and other levels.



Independent trade unions do not exist in Qatar. At the outset of the Technical Cooperation Project, it was agreed to gradually establish platforms for workers' representation, beginning at the enterprise level.

The main avenue for social dialogue within companies is the joint committee, which brings together management and worker representatives to discuss work-related issues and prevent or resolve workplace conflicts. Legislation was adopted in 2019 that set out rules for companies to hold elections for worker representatives on the committees. This legislation, allowing for elected migrant worker representatives, is a first in the region.

The MOL has established a Workplace Cooperation Unit to promote and support joint committees. As of October 2022, there were over 70 private companies and public bodies that had established joint committees, and dozens more companies have received the training modules – with a view to eventually holding elections. Joint committees were established across a wide variety of sectors, including construction and maintenance, landscaping, catering, cleaning and hospitality, manufacturing, and transport.

The worker and management representatives on the joint committees have received training from the MOL and ILO on five modules: (1) the roles and responsibilities of the committee members; (2) employee participation rights; (3) grievance mechanisms; (4) discrimination; and (5) violence and harassment at work. Companies are receiving support in strengthening company policies, for example, on complaints procedures.

In addition to enterprise level committees, Central Labour Management Committees (CLMCs) are being promoted among government clients and sectoral groups. A first sectoral-level CLMC was established in the hospitality sector, with worker and management representatives from 12 hotels, enabled by the strong support from the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC). Qatar Foundation (QF) also has a CLMC for contractors on their sites. That committee has also been developing guidelines for worker-led assessments of contractors' social services, to complement regular audits commissioned by QF.

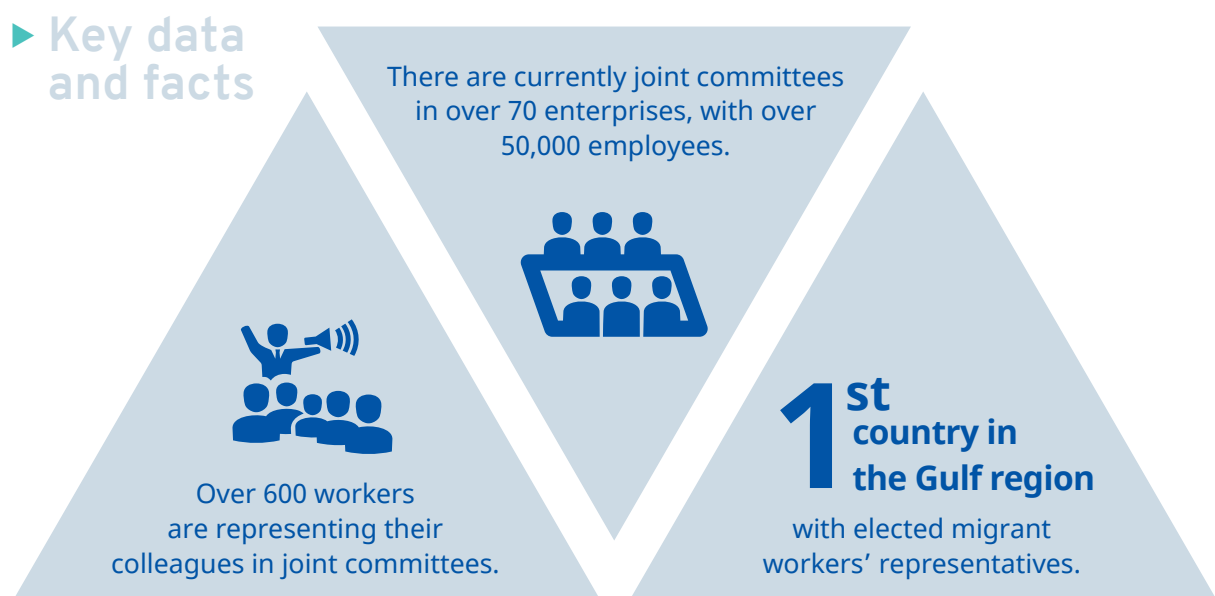


At the national level, the Taawon (“cooperation” in Arabic) forum was established in August 2019 to encourage tripartite consultation between the MOL, management and elected workers’ representatives, on labour policies and procedures. Members, who include representatives from public bodies and CLMCs, attended a series of webinars organized by the ILO, which showcased national social dialogue platforms in Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa and Tunisia, and in turn informed Taawon’s first strategic plan.

At the international level, since 2018 there have been semi-annual meetings between the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Global Union Federations (GUFs), the Ministry of Labour and the ILO. The participating GUFs include Building and Wood Worker’s International (BWI), the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and UNI Global Union. These meetings provide an important opportunity to share updates and challenges, and also highlight the priorities of the unions for the subsequent six months. In addition to the joint meeting with the international trade unions, several ongoing bilateral priorities are also pursued between the unions and the Qatari government and institutions. In 2022, MOL signed two new memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the ITF and BWI. The MOUs outline cooperation on the protection of transport and construction workers’ rights over the next two years.

The ILO is facilitating meetings between Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), MOL and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE).

This model – building committees and promoting workers’ voice at the enterprise, sectoral and national levels – is inevitably a gradual process. A next step is to conclude a study on the possibility of making joint committees mandatory for companies of a certain size. It is also crucial to demonstrate how social dialogue contributes to gains for workers, employers and the government.





6 Labour inspection and OSH strengthened

The MOL and the ILO have worked closely on the development of law and policy, systems, enhanced capacity of inspectors and communications campaigns, including on measures to keep workers and workplaces safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.



A national labour inspection policy with a strong focus on strategic, evidence-based planning was adopted in April 2019, to increase efficiency and achieve sustained compliance with national and international standards. The policy was informed by an assessment of the Qatar labour inspection system, conducted by the MOL and the ILO.

The MOL and the Ministry of Public Health adopted a National Policy on OSH, with ILO support. The policy was published in October 2020, after a series of consultations among government entities, and with employers' and workers' representatives. It is built on the principles of prevention, continuous improvement in assessing and addressing workplace hazards, and further strengthening the culture of safety and health nationwide. The policy identifies five main areas of action:

- Establish coordination mechanisms to promote the exchange of best practices.
- Develop systems to compile and analyse statistics on occupational accidents.
- Harmonize and regularly update OSH legislation and standards.
- Provide occupational health services focused on prevention.
- Ensure broad access to OSH education and training.

Between 2019 and 2022, labour inspectors received training on the labour law, forced labour and trafficking, accident investigation, OSH in construction and gender-responsive approaches to labour inspection. In 2022, the MOL and the ILO designed a virtual reality training module which recreates a construction site and gamifies learning on OSH. The Labour Inspection Department was also exposed to the systems and approaches adopted in several countries, including Australia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Labour Inspection Department conducted targeted campaigns in response to identified priorities. This included campaigns to ensure compliance with the heat stress legislation, on conditions in shared accommodation, conducted as part of the COVID-19 response, as well as on the top causes of occupational injuries. These measures raise awareness among employers and workers, and improve the quality of labour inspections, while ensuring application of labour laws in the workplace. The MOL is also now publicizing inspection efforts, on a monthly basis, which is an important aspect of promoting compliance by creating a deterrent for employers who violate the law.

Enhancing the capacity of male and female labour inspectors is an ongoing effort. Moreover, there are opportunities to further modernize the labour inspectorate through more data-driven and strategic approaches. The MOL is also exploring the possibility of establishing an OSH Institute to support coordination, deliver training and undertake action-oriented research.

► Key data and facts



7 Steps taken to mitigate heat stress

New legislation was adopted to mitigate heat stress, an OSH priority given the size of the workforce employed in occupations that are exposed to harsh conditions during the summer. This has contributed to a reduction in the number of patients admitted to clinics with heat-related disorders.



In 2021, a Ministerial Decision was adopted that expands the period when outdoor work is prohibited during the summer. Previously, outdoor work had to stop between 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. from 15 June to 31 August. Now, it is prohibited between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. from 1 June to 15 September. The total number of prohibited working hours is significantly higher than in any other country in the region. In addition, the legislation requires that all outdoor work stop when conditions exceed 32.1° on the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) index, which takes into account temperature, humidity, wind factor and solar radiation. Companies must also adopt heat-stress specific risk assessments, adapted to the different conditions and types of work in outdoor worksites.

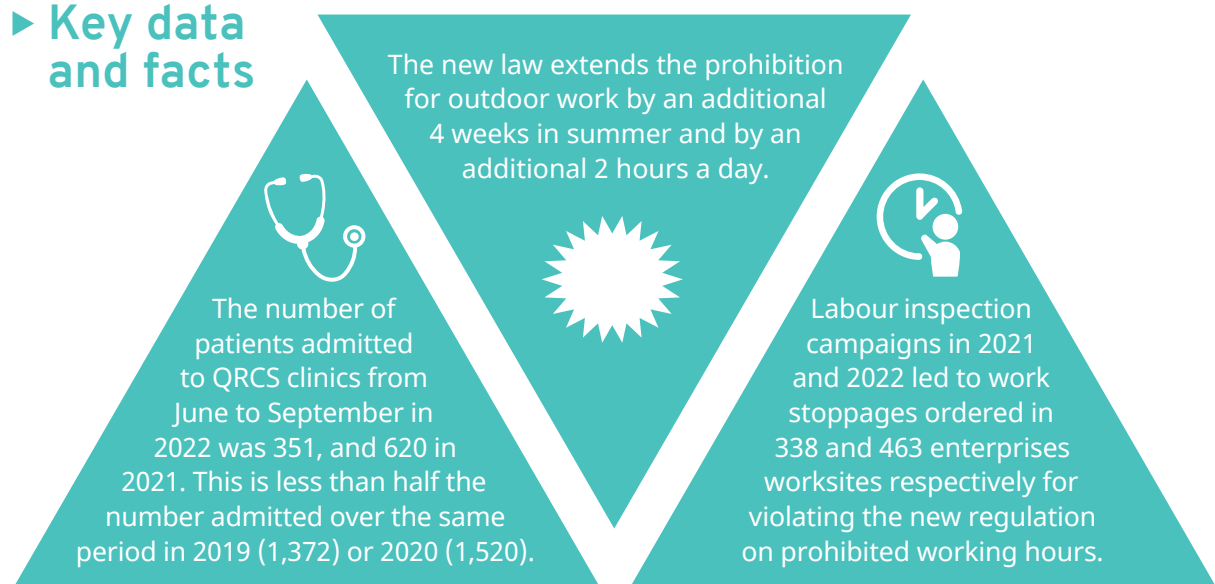
Importantly, annual health check-ups are required for outdoor workers to ensure that those who are more susceptible to heat-related disorders are assigned to appropriate tasks or take additional mitigation measures. A remaining area for intervention is to specify the medical checks that should be carried out as part of the annual health screening. The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), Ashghal, the Qatar Red Crescent Society Clinics (QRCS) and other institutions that have been carrying out such screenings can share their experience on medical screening.

To support compliance with the new legislation, MOL and the ILO developed guidance for employers and raised awareness among workers and employers. A labour inspection campaign led to work stoppages in 338 worksites in 2021, and in 463 worksites in 2022 for violation of the new regulation on prohibited working hours. Data show that the number of people who visited the four QRCS clinics with heat-related disorders in the summer of 2022 was 351. This compares with 620 in 2021 (after the new legislation was introduced), and 1,320 and 1,520 in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

The changes in the law draw from the recommendations of a major study on the impact of heat strain on workers. The research, conducted by a team from the University of Thessaly in Greece was commissioned by the ILO, MOL and the SC. The study was the largest of its kind, covering more than 5,500 work hours, and has contributed to global knowledge in this field.

Given the international attention now given to occupational heat stress, Qatar is well placed to share its experience with other countries. At the same time, there is a need to continuously strengthen measures to ensure effective implementation of the legislation. An example of this is how, in 2022, the MOL required that delivery services should use cars rather than motorcycles during the prohibited hours.

► Key data and facts



8 Promoting fair recruitment

Many migrants pay recruitment fees, and many are deceived about their working conditions during the recruitment process. A number of measures have been adopted to begin addressing these challenges, though the challenge remains deep-rooted.



The practice of low-wage migrant workers paying recruitment fees is deep-rooted. Despite the legislation in place in several countries of origin and destination to prohibit or cap recruitment fees and related costs, the challenge persists. The debt incurred can put workers in vulnerable situations. And even among companies that do pay labour recruiters, payment of fees by workers remains common, because of limited investment into oversight and the complexity of due diligence across the recruitment chain.

The Government of Qatar has established 14 Qatar Visa Centres (QVCs) in 6 countries since 2019. This has played an important role in addressing issues of unfair recruitment. The QVCs are essentially one-stop shops for visa processing and completing the mandatory medical testing. Importantly, workers receive their employment contracts and sign the contracts that are legally binding in Qatar. This reduces the chances of contract deception and substitution.

The ILO and MOL have delivered training on labour laws in Qatar for the QVC staff in charge of facilitating the signing of employment contracts, so that they can better explain the terms of employment to workers. The ILO has also facilitated a series of consultations among the MOL, Ministry of Interior and trade unions and civil society organizations in countries of origin, to discuss the challenges of fair recruitment and the role of the QVCs.

A pilot programme was conducted to test how fair recruitment could be carried out, covering the entire recruitment chain, from villages in Bangladesh to construction sites in Qatar. An impact assessment of the pilot showed that workers recruited after the intervention paid on average US\$268 in recruitment costs, compared to US\$3,408 for those recruited before any fair recruitment policies and procedures were adopted by the employer. Ninety-three per cent of the workers recruited after the pilot reported having no debt after arriving in Qatar. The lessons learned from the pilot are being disseminated amongst employers to demonstrate how fair recruitment practices can be incorporated within their operations.



In order to improve recruitment practices in key sectors, the Government, together with Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), the ILO and the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) published a Guidance Tool to help hotels to promote fair recruitment and employment. It includes sector-specific guidance for engagement with labour recruiters, straightforward checklists and examples of good practice. This guidance tool has now been adapted for other sectors in Qatar and will be rolled out to companies in different sectors together with QCCI. The ILO also held awareness raising sessions on how to conduct due diligence of recruitment activities in the hospitality and private security sectors.

The MOL recruitment department has demonstrated an increased willingness to enforce recruitment regulations, with 45 non-compliant recruitment agencies closed in 2022, but more remains to be done. The Ministry with the support of the ILO is assessing the existing system for licensing and monitoring private recruitment agencies. These efforts will further enhance the role enforcement mechanisms play to promote fair recruitment of workers.

In order to create a level playing field among companies, the ILO Qatar Project Office also helped set up and run regular workshops with public institutions to document good practices and explore ways to further embed fair recruitment and working conditions in their procurement procedures. Public procurement practices have the scope to change the structures and incentives that lead to workers paying recruitment fees, for example by requiring bidders to provide detailed information on how workers are recruited, including submission of service agreements signed with recruitment agencies, or requiring them to submit financial proposals with detailed obligatory line items related to fair recruitment. These discussions have also led to an innovative pilot project with Qatar's public works authority, Ashghal, requiring prospective contractors to present a compliance certificate from the Wage Protection System as part of their bid.

The MOL is a member of the Advisory Committee of the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative, and is using this platform to share its experience, and also learn good practices from other countries.

► Key data and facts





9 Domestic work

The Domestic Workers' Law of 2017 stipulates the rights and responsibilities of domestic workers and employers. However, challenges in the application of the legal framework remain, largely due to the unique nature of the employment relationship and limited awareness amongst domestic workers and employers.



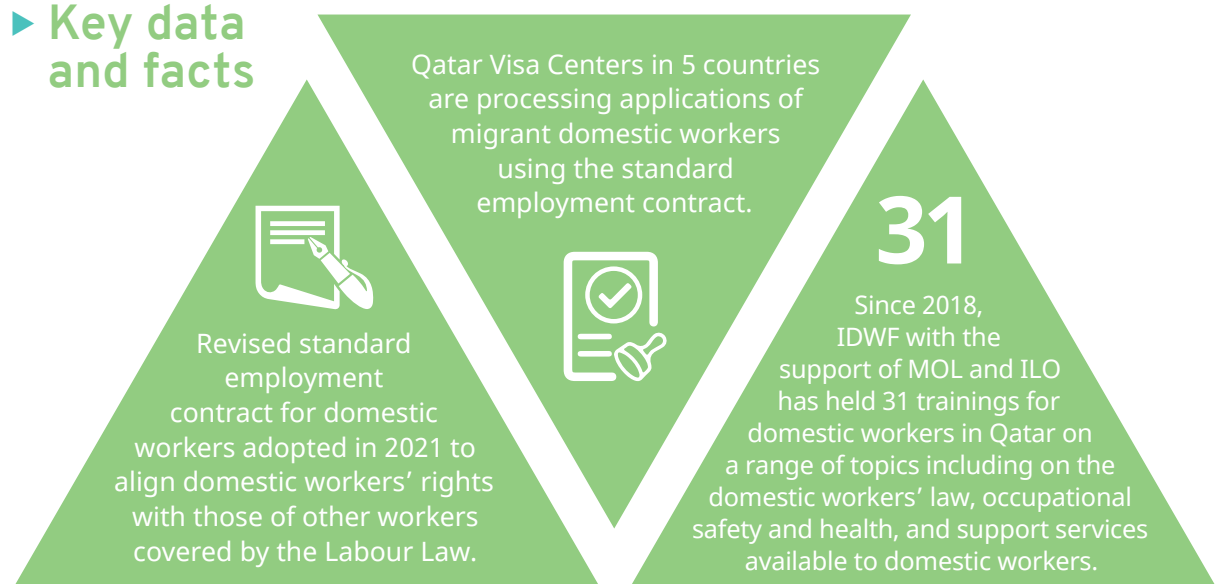
In Qatar, domestic workers, men and women, are covered by Law No. 15 of 2017 on Domestic Workers. With increased female labour force participation and demographic changes, the domestic work sector in Qatar is expected to continue to grow. Over the past few years, Qatar has implemented many labour reforms to protect the rights of migrant workers including domestic workers. Notably, these relate to removal of the exit permit, labour mobility, Qatar Visa Centres and access to justice.

MOL adopted a revised standard employment contract for domestic workers in 2021 to align domestic workers' rights with those of other private sector employees in relation to overtime payment, termination of employment and sick leave entitlements. Domestic workers migrating to Qatar from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are now signing their employment contract, based on the revised standard contract, at the QVCs prior to their departure. Raising awareness has been a key strategy to promote decent work in the domestic work sector. The Ministry published and disseminated the Know Your Rights booklet for domestic workers in Qatar in 12 languages, and the Guide to Employing Migrant Domestic Workers in Qatar booklet for employers in two languages. In addition, MOL and ILO continue to engage with communities of domestic workers in Qatar as facilitated by the International Domestic Workers' Federation. These meetings aim at increasing awareness of domestic workers and also act as a platform for domestic workers to share their challenges and specific grievances.

Recruitment agencies play a vital role. Employers and workers tend to rely on agencies to navigate complex recruitment processes. Even after the employment starts, some agencies play a role in managing conflicts that can stem from differing expectations between employers and workers. The MOL together with ILO and the Philippines Overseas Labour Office engaged with licensed recruitment agencies to increase their awareness of the relevant laws and to equip them to conduct better job matching, due diligence and conflict prevention.

Despite these efforts, decent work within the sector remains a challenge. Globally, domestic work is still undervalued: formal regulations are piecemeal, and imperfectly applied to live-in employment relationships. In Qatar, regulating working hours – and the worker's right to a weekly paid day off, as stipulated by national law – are key challenges still faced by domestic workers. It is clearly vital to raise awareness of legislation on the part of employers and workers alike, but the context demands more than that, because enabling change will often require a fundamental unpacking of attitudes and practices.

► Key data and facts



The way forward: building on success

Qatar has made significant progress in reforming its labour market over the past few years, with support from the ILO Technical Cooperation Programme. Major milestones were reached, clearly marking the way forward, towards decent work in a competitive and diversified economy.



The reforms are transforming the labour market, with more protection for workers, and increased productivity for employers. Workers have the right to change jobs or leave the country without their employers' permission; they are guaranteed a minimum wage with decent food and accommodation; their workplaces are safer; and their voices are increasingly being heard. This leads to more motivated and more productive workforces.

The labour reforms will also help companies draw on a pool of workers who have the necessary skills and experience. More attractive living and working conditions are key to competing in the global competition for talent, and thus competing for foreign investment. An improved reputation that comes from compliance with international labour standards is another important factor for companies and investors in Qatar.

There is a universal recognition that the work is not complete. This is not surprising given their magnitude. It takes time to build institutions and change deep-rooted practices.

Among the remaining priorities, there is a need to ensure that all workers and employers can benefit from the laws around labour mobility. The mechanisms for workers to lodge complaints and recover their due wages must be strengthened to ensure fair and timely access to justice. And domestic workers rights must be better protected, including their rights on working and rest time.

Qatar has shown its determination to push forward with its labour reform agenda. And the ILO and other partners will continue supporting the reforms to ensure their continued progress and success.





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