



**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All



# Working and Living Conditions of Low-Income Migrant Workers in the Hospitality and Construction Sectors in Qatar

**A Survey among Migrant Workers through Focus Group Discussions**

GLMM - RR - No. 1/2019

**RESEARCH REPORT**

**Terms of use:** By using any information from Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM), the user: (a) acknowledges having read the legal notices concerning copyright, terms of use and disclaimers and agrees to comply with them in full; (b) agrees to assure himself/herself whether and to what extent copyrights exist on information published by GLMM prior to using this information; (c) agrees not to use information published by GLMM in any way that would result in the infringement of existing copyrights; (d) agrees to always follow precisely and fully the citation instructions provided by GLMM. GLMM publications may be copied and distributed only in their entirety and together with any copyright statements they may contain, as long as they are properly attributed and used for non-commercial, educational, or public policy purposes. Photographs, logos, graphs, tables or any other images from GLMM publications may not be used separately.

**Copyright:** © European University Institute (EUI) and Gulf Research Center (GRC), 2019. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of European University Institute and Gulf Research Center.

**Disclaimer:** The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) cannot be held responsible in any way for the correctness and accuracy of the information and data published on its website, on paper and in other forms, including the database and its publications. GLMM strongly encourages users to verify the correctness and accuracy of the information and data with the source, which is always indicated with the greatest accuracy and detail possible. Any opinions expressed in any GLMM publication are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily state or reflect the opinions or position of the Migration Policy Centre, the European University Institute or the Gulf Research Center.

**Support:** The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) receives support from the International Migration Initiative (IMI) of the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the National Priority Research Program (NPRP) of the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP - Kuwait) and relies on the institutional resources of GLMM partners.

# Working and Living Conditions of Low-Income Migrant Workers in the Hospitality and Construction Sectors in Qatar

Philippe Fargues, Nasra M. Shah, and Imco Brouwer

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

Migrants form 87 per cent of Qatar's resident population and 95 per cent of its workforce, and 71 per cent of them are employed in low-income occupations. The country has a GDP per capita which is among the world's highest. It also has a fairly good reputation regarding rule of law and justice, which has significantly improved in recent years, in particular since the embargo imposed on the country by other Arab countries. Yet, according to numerous reports by media, human rights activists, international organisations and academics, low-income migrant workers in Qatar can be subjected to poor conditions and their rights violated. In November 2017, the Government of Qatar and ILO signed a technical cooperation agreement to gradually ensure compliance with ratified labour conventions and achieve fundamental rights at work in a gradual manner during the period 2018-2020. Since this research was done in the period March-November 2018, it provides a neat ex ante picture of the situation in Qatar before the reform programme was implemented.

### Objectives of the survey

What are the actual living and working conditions of the millions of low-income migrants in the country? For lack of empirical knowledge across sectors, this question cannot be accurately answered.

While anecdotal stories are plenty, no solid survey has been conducted so far to document practices detrimental to the migrants, notably in the following matters:

- Unethical recruitment
- Contract substitution
- Substandard living conditions
- Exploitation at the workplace
- Lack of access to information
- Obstacles to accessing justice

Asking the migrants themselves is the best way to capture their situation. While three important surveys were done in Qatar (two in 2012 and one in 2014), our survey is not only more recent (2018) but either applies a different methodology or applies it to a larger number of low-income migrants and targets specifically the hospitality sector, which has so far received less attention, and the construction sector.

### **Methodology of the survey**

Our survey consisted of focus group discussions (FGDs), each of them lasting approximately two hours, held in Doha with a total of 88 migrant workers—64 in the hospitality (hotel; restaurants; taxi; cleaning) and 24 in the construction sector—between March and August 2018. We have transformed the answers of these 88 interviewed workers into percentages. However, these 88 migrant workers cannot be considered representative of the roughly 2 million foreign workers in Qatar. Therefore, the results cannot be compared to similar studies done with exactly the same methodology in Qatar or other countries. However, in order to get as close as possible to statistical representativeness, workers were selected according to precise guidelines, guaranteeing some form of homogeneity within each FGD and diversity between the FGDs. Moreover, migrants with problems were over-sampled in order to better understand the nature and scope of problems. While our survey cannot provide unbiased estimates of the proportion of migrants who face a particular problem, it provides a wealth of details about the nature of the problems faced by migrants.

### **Findings of the survey on working conditions**

Work is the main reason for migrants to be in Qatar, and this is why their judgement in this matter is essential. Asked to evaluate their working conditions on a scale from 1 to 10, 22 per cent of the migrants in our sample gave a score of 7 or more, 52 per cent a score of 5 or 6, and 26 per cent a score of 4 or below.

Yet, there is a widespread sense among the migrants that their working and living conditions are suboptimal:

- Sixty-two per cent of the interviewed workers consider their workload too heavy for the income it brings
- Twenty-two per cent of the interviewed workers (29 per cent of males but only 9 per cent of females) reported unpaid sick leaves

- While doing as much overtime as possible to compensate for a low base salary would be a necessity (particularly for workers in the construction sector and drivers), non-payment of overtime is a frequent form of exploitation
- Only the fact that wages are high in comparison with home countries makes hard and difficult working conditions acceptable in the eyes of some workers

The kind of work migrants are requested to perform in Qatar often differs from what they were told before taking the job.

Seventeen per cent of the workers in our sample report lack of appreciation and respect from their employers.

### Findings of the survey on contracts

Sixty-seven per cent of the interviewed migrants (68 per cent males and 66 per cent females) stated that they were charged unofficial money by brokers in their home country in order to obtain their job in Qatar.

Visa trading—an illegal practice by which work visas are sold to prospective migrants in sending countries—is a widespread reality.

Eighty-four per cent of the interviewed migrants signed a contract for their job in Qatar.

About 30 per cent of the interviewed migrants signed the same contract in Qatar that they were offered in the home country but 28 per cent signed a contract in which the terms were not the same.

Only 13 per cent of the FGD participants reported that their salary was the same as written in the contract, while 32 per cent said it was less.

Thirty-two per cent of the interviewed workers received a lower salary than promised, 38 per cent among males and 22 per cent among females.

The difference between expected and actual salary is often due to deductions that were not adequately explained to the worker when offered the job.

Erroneous information provided by networks and recruitment agencies to the prospective worker often explains discrepancies between expected and actual contracts.

Thirty-six per cent of the interviewed migrants reported working hours in excess to that in their contract, and this percentage rises to 41 per cent among males and 48 per cent among mid-skilled workers.

About 30 per cent of the interviewed workers reported that they were stressed because of their inability to take annual leave at the time they wanted (this should have changed after Law 13/2018 entered into force at the end of October 2018).

### Findings of the survey on salary and payments

Fifty-seven per cent of the interviewed migrants (54 per cent of the low-skilled and 60 per cent of the mid-skilled) reported that their salary is not adequate while only 5 per cent said it is.

The Wage Protection System (WPS) is not fully implemented as 16 per cent of the interviewed workers said that they do not receive their salary through the bank, while 7 per cent said they did not have a bank card.

Thirty-six per cent of the interviewed migrants do not receive their salary on time while 38 per cent do and the remaining 26 per cent did not provide a clear answer to the question implying that for at least 20 per cent of the interviewed workers who are included in the WPS, the salary is paid with delay.

Interviewed construction workers were more often subjected to delayed payment than hospitality workers (46 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively) and males more than females (41 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively).

Forty-nine per cent of the interviewed migrants (67 per cent in the construction sector against 43 per cent in the hospitality sector) did not receive adequate overtime payments.

As a result of the above, 63 per cent of the interviewed migrants (63 per cent in the construction sector and 56 per cent in the hospitality sector) stated that they were not satisfied with their capacity to remit money home, which was the primary goal of their move.

## Findings of the survey on living conditions

Almost all the interviewed migrants in our survey (approx. 90 per cent) were accommodated by their employers in camps or shared flats.

About 10 per cent of the interviewed migrants were positive about accommodation, 34 per cent were negative and the rest were either neutral or did not participate in this specific discussion.

The occupancy level of not more than six persons per room stipulated by the law appears to have been followed in several cases. However, 53 per cent of the interviewed migrants (63 per cent of the females vs. 47 per cent of the males) reported that there were too many persons for the size of their room.

Regarding bathrooms, 51 per cent of the interviewed migrants were dissatisfied with the number of persons per bathroom shared by them (56 per cent of females vs. 48 per cent of males).

Thirty-nine per cent of the interviewed workers in our sample reported that they were dissatisfied with the kitchen facilities or food provided to them. Dissatisfaction was higher among construction workers than hospitality workers (46 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively).

While according to the law each accommodated migrant worker must have a closet with a lock, about 14 per cent of those interviewed were not satisfied with the storage facilities provided to them.

About half the interviewed workers were satisfied with the transportation services provided to them, while 33 per cent were not.

## Findings of the survey on migrants' overall appreciation of their migration to Qatar

Knowing this actual conditions in Qatar, 43 per cent of the interviewed migrants would definitely have come, 33 per cent would have hesitated, 15 per cent would not have come, and 9 per cent did not participate in the discussion.

For a majority of the FGD participants, reasons that make Qatar attractive are stronger than hardships they endure as migrants. The reasons many of them put forward include:

- Safety in the public space
- Strong rule of law
- Job opportunities

## Findings of the survey on problems and recommended action

It emerged from the FDGs that insufficient salary and poor living conditions were the major problems faced by migrants. When faced with problems, workers felt that little help was available to them. About 24 per cent of the interviewed workers said they would not complain since they were afraid they might lose their job, or their visa might be cancelled.

The migrants' main recommendations were to:

- Better implement the law
- Institute labour inspections by the government
- Improve living conditions
- Ensure a minimum wage, increase salary with experience, and pay overtime

## Findings of stakeholders' interviews

To complement the survey among workers, stakeholders were interviewed in Qatar.

Government officials asserted that the objective was to become the most advanced country in terms of labour legislation and practices in the Gulf, the Arab world and beyond.

Representatives of countries of origin, international organisations, advocacy organisations and researchers agree that in recent years legislation on foreign labour has significantly improved-including WPS, reform of the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, the establishment of the Workers' Dispute Settlement Committees (WDSC), abolishment of the exit visa, and the establishment of a Worker's Support and Insurance Fund (WSIF). Also, the adoption of well-defined standards by the Qatar Foundation (QF) and the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SCDL) are viewed positively. Furthermore, accessibility of officials of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) system for representatives of countries of origin is seen as very positive.

For some stakeholders and researchers, the focus should not be so much on signing agreements, adopting new legislation, establishing committees, making press announcements, but more on effective implementation, control and punishment with timely reparation for workers.

Key concerns of stakeholders include the following.

**Recruitment** is still too costly for migrant workers. The establishment of the Qatar Visa Centres (QVCs) is seen as potentially a positive step for migrant workers to avoid contract substitution but would need further evaluation to assess impacts on the effective recruitment costs charged to the workers.

The government of Qatar should do much more to check the owners and business plans for new businesses in terms of viability, capacity and willingness to offer effectively the work for which recruitment of foreign labour is requested.

The issue of free visas is considered a huge problem that persists. Too many workers are said to come to Qatar without eventually having any job ending up in extreme difficulty and exploitation. The Qatar government should make much more effort to eradicate free visas.

Stakeholders stress that it is virtually impossible for recruitment companies to fully comply with the regulations. Ethical recruiters in Qatar have very limited business because of the higher costs of recruitment to the employer.

In early 2018, representatives of countries of origin received an increasing number of complaints from their nationals about contract violations, including contract substitution, and payment issues by companies operating in the hospitality and cleaning sectors. Therefore, advice was issued for their nationals to seek employment directly in hospitals, schools, and hotels without using recruitment companies.

**Wages and payments** are two other areas of concern for a number of stakeholders who stress the following wrong practices:

- Agreed pay for or provision of various items such as food and transportation is not provided
- Untimely payment especially in the domestic work sector but also in cleaning services which are partially replacing in-house domestic services
- Unpaid overtime and abuses such as no bank cards, withdrawals by third parties, and pay back
- Difficulties of transfers (No Objection Certificates – NOCs – are not given)

**Government labour inspection** is considered poor in terms of frequency, depth, and ultimately, efficiency, notwithstanding the fact that the Qatar government produced detailed statistics on labour inspections covering the first semester of 2017 for the ILO in order to show its commitment. Stakeholders found that there are too few labour inspectors (recently the number has increased) and they are not trained well to detect problems.

One interviewed stakeholder with inside knowledge said that there are specific loopholes which allow employers who have been found treating their workers poorly to circumvent blacklisting and continue to recruit and employ new workers.



According to some interviewed stakeholders, problems are said to be more frequent in smaller companies than in larger, international ones, which seem to be abiding better by the rules. One of the reasons given is that the latter are subject to more scrutiny given the attention Qatar receives in the international press.

**Redress** for workers has, according to interviewed stakeholders, improved significantly by the introduction of the Workers Dispute Settlement Committees (WDSC) at the MADLSA to the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) and, more recently, the ILO Qatar Office as places where workers could seek assistance to file complaints.

While admitting that the WDSC would need some more time to make a full assessment, several issues were mentioned by various interviewed stakeholders. It was said that the timetable to handle cases and appeals was not observed. This was partially because of insufficient capacity to process the complaints efficiently and partially because there were too many instances when employers did not show up. However, one stakeholder estimated that eventually 80 per cent of the cases were decided in favour of the worker.

However, one interviewed stakeholder stated that not only outcome but also time is a crucial element for workers who, while the case is pending, will often not receive any payment (which generally was already delayed for weeks and often months) while the case is processed and often do not have accommodation or food and have very limited savings, if any.

Various interviewed stakeholders cited major obstacles for workers to access redress, including fear of retribution by the employer. Cases were cited in which a worker was reported as absconding by his/her employer when (s)he was seeking information or intended to file a complaint, ending up in the worker being deported.

It was further stated that the Qatari government should be faster in its reactions. If a company does not pay within seven days of the established date (the limit imposed by the WPS law), an immediate reaction should be triggered.

## PART 1: BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Qatar, a country of migrants

Nowhere in the world are migrants such an overwhelming majority as in Qatar (and in the United Arab Emirates). In Qatar, foreign nationals numbered 2,395,453 and represented an estimated 87.3 per cent of the total population which stood at 2,743,932 according to the most recently published count (October 2018).<sup>1</sup> Despite relatively active and focused “indigenisation” policies aimed at replacing migrant workers by nationals, especially in some sectors such as banking and the government sector, the population of foreign nationals has continuously grown faster than that of nationals over the last five decades and particularly since the early 2000s, when the proportion of foreign nationals jumped from 76 per cent in 2000 to over 87 per cent in 2018.

For decades, Qatar’s private sector has attracted foreign workers at all levels of the occupational ladder, while nationals would seek employment in the public sector for it offers higher wages and better security. As a result, at present, foreign workers comprise 95.0 per cent of the total workforce and 97.5 per cent of the private sector workforce. Their proportion varies according to occupation, from 76.3 per cent among clerks to 99.2 per cent and 98.9 per cent, respectively, among craft and related workers and plant and machine operators and assemblers (Labour Force Survey 2016). Around two thirds of all foreign workers in Qatar are employed in low-income occupations. The two sectors analysed in this study, hospitality and construction, comprise a significant portion of all low-income occupations in the country. Our sample in this study consisted of in-depth interviews with 24 construction workers and 64 hospitality workers, adding to a total of 88 migrant workers.

Qatar is viewed by migration scholars as well as international organisations as a country characterised by a marked discrepancy between legislations, which are overall regarded as becoming better and more protective, and the actual situation of low-income migrant workers whose rights can be poorly respected. The cause of such a discrepancy could be that legislations are insufficiently implemented, and not all employers and companies comply with laws that govern the recruitment, work and life of their employees.

The rule of law and human rights are enshrined in Qatar’s Constitution and national strategic frameworks, and the country has enacted a range of laws aimed at strengthening human rights and the judicial system.<sup>2</sup> It has ratified 5 of the 8 ILO fundamental conventions (Forced Labour Convention, Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (but not the 2014 protocol), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, Minimum Age Convention, Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention,) as well as the Labour Inspection Convention. It is worth noticing that ILO inaugurated its first project office in Qatar in April 2018 to support the implementation of a three-year (2017-2020) comprehensive technical cooperation programme on working conditions and labour rights in Qatar.

According to governance indicators provided by Global Economy, Qatar ranks fairly well in terms of rule of law (39th among 193 countries and 2nd among the Arab countries), government effectiveness (46th), regulatory quality (47th) and civil liberties (54th), but not in terms of voice and accountability

---

1. Numbers of migrants include their sons and daughters born and still living in Qatar (i.e., persons who are not themselves ‘migrants’).

2. United Nations: [https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/portfolio\\_category/access-to-justice/](https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/portfolio_category/access-to-justice/).

(163rd).<sup>3</sup> However, these indices are aggregates of several indices that may or may not adequately represent the actual situation of migrant workers.

However, the reported experiences of migrant workers whose rights are violated by private employers in Qatar are plentiful in international media and NGO reports. Violations happen at all steps of the migration process, and the most often mentioned include undue recruitment fees charged to the migrants, placing them in a situation of heavy debt before departing from the origin country; unpaid, partially paid or delayed wages, in connection or not with debts contracted at recruitment; differences in terms of pay and/or occupation between the contract actually signed at destination and the contract that was offered before leaving the origin country; precarious working conditions entailing risks for health and safety; freedom of movement restricted or denied by practices such as passport retention; forced labour (e.g., unpaid overtime); wretched and unhealthy housing and living conditions; and inaccessibility of legal redress.

## **1.2 Universal rights and specific expectations**

In all countries, international migrants are exposed to risks and vulnerabilities specific to their condition as migrants, including violations of their rights. For action to be taken, it is important to acknowledge that some rights are more challenged than others and not all rights are equally useful to all individuals irrespective of their specific circumstances.

In the case of migrants, the importance that they attach to a given right may greatly vary according to individuals and migration corridors, linking an origin to a destination and to status. A whole spectrum of situations can be found, from migrants who contemplate only a short-term expatriation to those who plan a permanent settlement in a host country and expect that they, or their born-abroad children, will eventually become full members of that country's society.

Persons engaged in long-term migration and settlement at destination are usually expected to gain rights and duties, opportunities and responsibilities equal to those of nationals in a gradual process of integration which according to destination countries is, or is not, supported by state policies. By contrast, persons with short-term migration plans do not seek full integration and are attached to those rights that serve their plans.

Low-income migrant workers to the Gulf states typically belong to the second category. Return to the home country is for them at the centre of their migratory project, even before departing from their country. They expect to earn an income that will allow them to save and remit money to families and communities in the home country, enjoy fair conditions at places of work and accommodation; be respected as human beings; and eventually bring back home enhanced skills and prospects for their future. Gulf migrants are well aware that their migration is essentially temporary in nature and that permanent settlement is almost impossible for a large majority of all migrants.

---

3. [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/wb\\_ruleoflaw/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/wb_ruleoflaw/).

In order to fulfil these expectations, the rights that matter, as reported by our study participants, include the following:

- Economic and social rights including: access to safe and nutritious food; access to healthcare; right to housing, right to dignified work under safe and healthy conditions with fair wages; and right to social security assistance for those unable to work due to sickness, disability, maternity, employment injury, unemployment or old age. The right to education that would apply to their children in Qatar is of lesser relevance to low-income migrant workers for, in most cases, their children do not accompany the migrant and live in home countries as the right to family accompaniment is based on salary. However, the right to education is important in respect of migrants' children left at home as, more often than not, their education (and particularly their higher education) is supported by remittances.
- Labour rights and core labour standards including: freedom of association, collective bargaining, protection from forced labour, equality of opportunity and treatment, and social security.
- The rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration of Human Rights and particularly the right to work and free choice of employment, which implies the possibility to transfer sponsorship.
- Right to the protection of the law.

On the other side, gaining political rights strictly defined as the right to participating in the establishment or administration of a government and eventually acceding to citizenship with a right to vote and be elected are not on the agenda of low-income migrant workers to the Gulf states, unlike the case of migrants going to countries where such options are open.

### 1.3 The need for empirical knowledge<sup>4</sup>

In the Gulf countries, studies on migrant workers have mainly focused on the *kafala* (sponsorship) system in force in all GCC states and the various forms of exploitation it produces, particularly in the context of migrant domestic workers. Further studies are required to understand the living and working conditions of low-income migrant workers and document the following aspects.

#### *Illegal/Unethical Recruitment*

The migrant exploitation starts in the destination countries at the point of tendering for a project where there is a refusal by employers to pay recruitment costs - and expect kickback payments from the agencies in countries of origin which charge the workers contributing to migrant workers' vulnerability and debt bondage.

#### *Contract Substitution*

Contract substitution is not only a critical factor of the exploitation of migrant workers' rights and welfare but also a product of the state's failure to enforce labour laws and legislation in the host country. Qatar's construction and hospitality sectors are plagued with contract substitution practices. While the

4. This section refers to the following studies: Alhashemi and Habib 2018; Amnesty International 2016; Babar 2011; Bjornsson 2015; Business and Human Rights Centre 2018; Dito 2015; Gardner and Pessoa 2014; Human Rights Watch 2014, 2016; ILO 2016; IOM 2014; Jayaweera, Shlala 2015; Jones 2016, Jureidini 2016; Jureidini 2017; Keanne and McGeehan 2008; Malit and Naufal 2016; Malit, Ledesma, Naufal, forthcoming; Martin and Malit 2017; Parennas and Sylvey 2016; Segall and Labowitz 2017; Zahra 2015.

Qatar government has amended its laws to stop contract substitution (Ministerial Resolution 764), such practices seem to continue. The newly established Qatar Visa Centers (QVCs) aim, among other things, to eliminate contract substitution who are processed through these QVCs.

### ***Living Conditions***

Substandard living conditions—lack of healthcare protection, poor housing, overcrowded accommodation, inadequate sewage, unsanitary living environment and unhygienic food preparation, low-quality drinking water—have been criticised in connection with the government’s failure to monitor, inspect, and protect migrant workers’ human rights and welfare.

### ***Working Situation***

Frequently, work conditions have been denounced as poor and unsafe. In Qatar, practices such as passport confiscation, illegal deduction of wages, or failure to pay overtime wages have been evidenced.

### ***Workers’ Access to Information***

The lack of pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programmes and the limited or non-existent access of migrant workers to information about labour laws and regulations exacerbate their exploitation in the Gulf countries. Bureaucratic obstacles hamper the implementation of such programmes.

### ***Access to Justice***

Migrant workers’ access to justice is limited by the *kafala* (sponsorship) system as well as by their limited knowledge of dispute resolution systems and weak command of the Arabic language, though the Qatar government has taken initiatives to improve the situation.

What are the working and living conditions of low-income migrant workers? To what extent does their actual situation conform to rules in force in Qatar and to international standards? How do migrant workers view the way they are treated? Have their initial expectations been met? What sort of action could be taken for improving their situation?

This report aims to provide answers to such questions through a survey of low-income migrants employed in the hospitality and construction sectors in Qatar. For the purpose of the present survey, the hospitality sector—that caters for tourists, business persons, expatriate communities, etc.—is defined in an inclusive way that covers: accommodation (hotels, bed and breakfast enterprises, and other places offering lodging); food and beverage (restaurants, fast food chains, coffee shops, etc.); taxi companies; and cleaning service providers. The hospitality sector employs a variety of workers ranging from maintenance workers, servers, waiters, porters and cooks to marketing agents, administrative staff and managers. Our survey focuses on the lower and middle levels of skills.

A comprehensive statistical survey consisting of face-to-face structured interviews of a representative sample of migrants would have been the most suitable, but this was not feasible for GLMM in the context of Qatar. In this country, like in many others, conducting a statistical survey among the population is subject to administrative authorisation. For this, the survey’s questionnaire must successfully pass through a detailed screening process by the authorities. On a highly sensitive topic—the situation of migrant workers in the GCC states which is often under the scrutiny of human rights organisations and occasionally in the spotlight of global media—no company capable of implementing the survey was even

willing to seek authorisation as they were sure that the survey would be censored and they would attract negative attention from the authorities. Efforts to seek the cooperation of an academic partner in Qatar did not succeed either. Thus, the best alternative option was to conduct focus group discussions (FGDs), since this did not require detailed pre-authorisation from concerned official bodies, as a statistical survey requires. A survey consisting of eleven FGDs with a total of 88 migrant workers was carried out between March and August 2018.

The survey among migrant workers was complemented by a series of interviews with major migration stakeholders in Qatar. The full methodology is detailed in Appendix A. In summary, our study was based on 11 FGDs, distributed as follows. Three groups included male construction workers, primarily from Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Four groups included male hospitality workers and the remaining four female hospitality workers. Hospitality workers were selected from India, the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda. These nationalities were selected because they constitute most low-skilled workers in Qatar. A further breakdown was made according to the level of skill to capture any differences present. A discussion guide was prepared in advance and the moderator followed this guide in all cases. Workers from large companies as well as smaller companies were included in the survey.

## PART 2: WORKING CONDITIONS

### 2.1 Introduction

Work is the primary reason for most low-income migrants to be in Qatar. How do they evaluate their working situations and conditions on a scale from 1 to 10? As shown in Table 2.1, responses are contrasted: a majority (56 per cent) of the interviewed migrants gave a neutral or mitigated score (5 or 6), 26 per cent a low score (between 1 and 4) and 22 per cent a high score (between 7 and 10). Whatever the sector, gender, and level of skills, neutral scores dominate. While there are no significant differences according to gender, scores vary noticeably with the sector of employment and the level of skills: low-skilled workers and those employed in the hospitality sector report the most negative experience, as compared with those employed in mid-skilled occupations and/or in the construction sector.

**Table 2.1: Interviewed workers' overall level of satisfaction with working conditions (%)**

Group / Level of Satisfaction		+	=	-	N/A	T
Total (N=88)		22	52	26	0	100
Sector	Hospitality - Both sexes (N=64)	22	44	34	0	100
	Construction - Males (N=24)	21	75	4	0	100
Gender	Males (N=56)	21	55	23	0	100
	Females (N=32)	22	47	31	0	100
Skills level	Low-skilled - Both sexes (N=48)	6	48	46	0	100
	Mid-skilled - Both sexes (N=40)	40	58	3	0	100

\* Scoring for the level of satisfaction is as follows: 1-4 is negative, 5-6 is neutral and 7-10 is positive

All FDGs were conducted the same way. Before going into the details of recruitment, contract and payment, the conversation focussed on the general reasons why migrants are satisfied or unsatisfied with their work. Most migrants in our sample expressed nuanced views on this question.

*“It is medium, neither sad nor very happy”* (Low-skilled Bangladeshi in the construction sector, four years in Qatar)

*“Positive is that my company has (brought me) here, (but) we are not getting the salary that they had promised”* (Low-skilled Indian in the construction sector).

*“I would give it a 6. I love my work but there are no fixed work timing, sometimes it’s in the morning sometimes at night”* (Mid-skilled Nepali in the construction sector)

Many workers regard the country positively but express negative feelings about the companies that employ them.

*“Country is good but I’m not happy with the work”* (Indian low-skilled mason)

But others are satisfied with their job;

*“I give 10; my work is too good”* (Nepali low-skilled female cleaner)

## 2.2 Too much work for too little money

There is a widespread feeling of being exploited among the interviewed migrants. Whatever the sector of employment, gender, and skills level, close to two thirds of the migrants report a workload too heavy for the income it brings. Only a tiny minority (on average 7 per cent: 2 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women) consider that their salary is fair for the work they do, while close to one third of the migrants stay neutral. Much depends on the company, not on the country and its rules.

*“I will say that Qatar is good, in small companies not getting good salary but in big companies and the famous companies we get good salary and there is no issue of timing”* (Low-skilled Indian construction worker)

*“Work is good, boss is good, not company. They are not giving salary on time”* (Low-skilled Indian female hospitality worker)

*“I don’t get any bonus; salary is very less; work is no good; I don’t get any respect so I would give it a double 0 [...] nothing is nice about the job, humans cannot do it”* (Low-skilled Indian male hospitality worker)

Though they regard their salary as too low, most of the interviewed migrants appreciate the fact it continues to be paid when the migrant falls sick. Taking sick leave is easy and not subject to salary deduction according to 57 per cent of the workers, a fact particularly appreciated by women (75 per cent) and the mid-skilled (90 per cent). Moreover, in some FDGs, unequal treatment of different nationalities was reported, with some nationalities receiving higher wages than others for the same job (on the economic consequences of such inequalities, see Alfarhan 2018). However, we did not collect detailed data on wage levels according to nationality of the workers.

## 2.3 Actual vs. promised job

The work a migrant expects to do is always specified at recruitment. But once they arrive in Qatar, some are given a different, less rewarding work. Cases of deception and abuse were not unusual in our sample.

*“They told me [that I will have] a waiter’s job in a hotel, but when I came here, they put me in cleaning”* (Nepali low-skilled male cleaner)

*“I came here especially as a carpenter [but] when I came here, they did not employ me as a carpenter, they took me in building construction work and then they made me sign a bond”* (Bangladeshi low-skilled male construction worker)

*“[You] should first check whether they are paying the salary properly. And are they giving the same work that they had promised you”* (Indian low-skilled male construction worker)

*“I thought I will get good work, that’s why I paid so much money. After coming here, they put me in cleaning, and I got very less salary”* (Indian low-skilled male cleaner)

Dignity and freedom are fundamental principles defining human rights. Workers expect to receive appreciation and respect from their employers. In our sample, more migrants reported cases of disrespect (17 per cent) than appreciation and respect (5 per cent). This was particularly the case with males (23 per cent), workers in the construction sector (25 per cent) and those with low levels of skills (25 per cent).

Freedom of choice in terms of employment is another critical right. However, the sponsorship system still in force in Qatar limits the migrant’s ability to move from one employer to another. Is it easy or difficult to change employers? On average, 23 per cent of the migrants in our sample, but 38 per cent of the low-skilled and 5 per cent of the mid-skilled, complained about their lack of mobility. One can only transfer after completion of contract, or with an NOC before expiration. NOC in practice is only accepted after one year (to make it difficult for those with free visas).

**Table 2.2A: Interviewed workers’ views on their working conditions (%)**

Topic	Total (N=88)				
	+	=	–	N/A	T
Different nationalities treated the same	1	20	6	73	100
Easy to transfer from one employer to another	1	31	23	45	100
Appreciation and respect given by employer	5	51	17	27	100
Taking sick leave is easy and not subject to salary deduction	57	22	22	0	100
Adequate workload and salary	7	31	62	0	100
No disagreements with co-workers	1	27	8	64	100



**Table 2.2B: Interviewed workers' views on their working conditions, by sector of employment (%)**

Topic	Sector									
	Hospitality (N=64)					Construction (N=24)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Different nationalities treated the same	2	28	8	63	100	0	0	0	100	100
Easy to transfer from one employer to another	2	23	25	50	100	0	50	17	33	100
Appreciation and respect given by employer	6	67	14	13	100	0	8	25	67	100
Taking sick leave is easy and not subject to salary deduction	56	17	27	0	100	58	33	8	0	100
Adequate workload and salary	8	27	65	0	100	4	42	54	0	100
No disagreements with co-workers	2	38	11	50	100	0	0	0	100	100

**Table 2.2C: Interviewed workers' views on their working conditions, by gender (%)**

Topic	Gender									
	Males (N=56)					Females (N=32)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Different nationalities treated the same	0	25	4	71	100	3	13	9	75	100
Easy to transfer from one employer to another	0	38	20	43	100	3	19	28	50	100
Appreciation and respect given by employer	2	46	23	29	100	9	59	6	25	100
Taking sick leave is easy and not subject to salary deduction	46	25	29	0	100	75	16	9	0	100
Adequate workload and salary	2	32	66	0	100	16	29	55	0	100
No disagreements with co-workers	0	18	11	71	100	3	44	3	50	100

Table 2.2D: Interviewed workers' views on their working conditions, by skills level (%)

Topic	Skills Level									
	Low - Skilled (N=48)					Mid - Skilled (N=40)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Different nationalities treated the same	0	15	2	83	100	3	28	10	60	100
Easy to transfer from one employer to another	2	44	38	17	100	0	15	5	80	100
Appreciation and respect given by employer	4	38	25	33	100	5	68	8	20	100
Taking sick leave is easy and not subject to salary deduction	29	35	35	0	100	90	5	5	0	100
Adequate workload and salary	6	28	66	0	100	8	35	58	0	100
No disagreements with co-workers	0	0	0	100	100	3	60	18	20	100

## PART 3: MIGRANTS' VIEWS ON CONTRACTS

### 3.1 Introduction

A long-standing problem faced by migrants to the Gulf concerns the unofficial money that the prospective worker has to pay the intermediaries located in sending and/or receiving countries to arrange a job (Abella 2018; Jureidini 2018). Research from a World Bank/ILO project focusing on multiple migration corridors showed that Pakistani workers to Saudi Arabia paid an average amount of \$4,460, while Indians to the same destination paid an average amount of \$1,386 for securing a work visa (Abella 2018). One of the major reasons for the existence of such fees paid by many migrants is the fact that intermediaries can buy work visas from Gulf sponsors (or *kafeel*, that every worker is obligated to have) and sell these visas to migrants in sending countries; these transactions are illegal under the laws of the sending as well as receiving countries (Shah 2018; Shah 2006). Despite efforts by the Gulf countries to curb the practice of visa trading, it remains rampant.

In our survey of 88 hospitality and construction workers, 67 per cent reported that they had to pay an agent to find a job, indicating that migrants to Qatar are faced with situations similar to other Gulf countries (Table 3.1A). This was true of male as well as female workers in each sector of activity and skill level. In relative terms, slightly larger percentages of the interviewed construction workers compared to interviewed hospitality workers paid an agent (71 per cent and 66 per cent, respectively), and more of the mid-skilled than low-skilled interviewed workers did so (73 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively). About two-third of the interviewed males as well as females paid an agent to obtain a job in Qatar. Some interviewed construction workers from Bangladesh paid as much as half a million taka (\$5,961) for their job in Qatar, while some interviewed Nepali construction workers paid about 150,000 in Nepali rupees

(\$1,333). Some interviewed low-skilled male Indian hospitality workers paid about Rs400,000 (\$5,176). Several of the interviewed mid-skilled hospitality workers from various African countries also paid large sums to procure the visa.

### 3.2 Written (promised) contracts and reality

The Qatari Labour Law (2004) mandates that the Arabic language is to be used as the official language in drafting labour contracts. Translations may be attached to the original contracts but where there is inconsistency, the Arabic text prevails (Art. 9). Furthermore, the contract must be signed in three copies to be kept by the employer, employee, and Labour Department, respectively. It should specify the dates of commencement and conclusion; the nature, type, and place of work; and the agreed upon remuneration (no reference to allowances is made in the law) as well as the method and date of payment (Art. 38).

Thus, according to the law, a written contract is required both to specify the terms and conditions of work and to protect the worker (as well as the employer) in case of any violations by either party. A majority of the respondents in our survey (84 per cent) said that they had signed a contract in Qatar, regardless of whether they had a copy or not (Table 3.2A). Larger percentages of the interviewees in the hospitality industry compared with the those in the construction sector had signed a contract (86 per cent and 79 per cent, respectively), and larger percentages of interviewed females compared with interviewed males had done so (94 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively). While most of them signed a contract, some pointed out specific problems related to such contracts, as exemplified by the statements below:

*"I signed the basic contract; the latter includes end-of-service gratuity, tickets and everything... However, the sponsor obliged me to sign a waiver, because it is just a fake company, the contract is good but it is simply a piece of paper"* (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)

*"No, it was the offer letter and not the contract. It was the offer letter which I signed when I came here; for me the one I signed here I read it but I was not given the copy. I don't have it right now, but they had sent me through my email and I signed it and send back to them"* (African female hospitality worker)

A group of mid-skilled male Filipino hospitality workers expressed their views about the contract as follows:

Participant 1: *"They made the contract, but was different contract; I signed it to make sure that you will pass from the airport;*

Participant 2: *"What I signed when I was in the Philippines, there is another contract to sign when I came here"*

Participant 3: *"The contract is different... just like a fake contract what I signed in Philippines"*

Among the leading problems highlighted in previous research regarding contracts and salaries in the Gulf, two major ones relate to violations of the terms and conditions laid down in the contract and the non-payment or delayed payment of salaries (Jureidini 2016). Also, the terms specified in the contract the worker signs (or is shown, or told about) in the home country are not necessarily the same as those specified in the contract they sign (or receive, or are shown) in the Gulf. Data gathered from the 11

FGDs in Qatar generally support the findings of earlier research. About 30 per cent of the participants reported the contract to be the same, while 28 per cent reported it to be different, and 24 per cent did not comment on this issue.

### 3.3 Salary and working hours

The salary was frequently lower than what the interviewed workers had been told, or promised, or had signed for. Only 3 per cent of the participants reported that their salary was the same as written in the contract, while 32 per cent said it was not. A notable gender difference was present; about 38 per cent of the interviewed males said the salary/leave was less than the contract compared with 22 per cent of the interviewed females. The following examples illustrate the discrepancies:

*“I signed the contract, it is written in the contract that you will get salary of 1,600. The manager came and told that you will be given 1,200 and not 1,600”*(Low-skilled male South Asian construction worker)

*“The salary specified in my contract is 1,800 then 1,800 should be basic; when I arrived here they change 1,800 to 1,500 after that 300 for meal”* (Mid-skilled female hospitality worker)

Participants in a group of mid-skilled Filipino hospitality workers stated that:

*“Salary from the beginning is written 3,000 riyals but when I reach here in Qatar they changed the offer and it was dropped to 1,500 riyals only”*

*“When I signed in the Philippines 3,500 everything but when I reach here 1,800 only and they remove the food allowance just they are giving food only now”*

*“There in the Philippines you signed salary 2,800 but when you are here 1,800; transportation is provided by the company and also the food allowance”*

Qatari Labour Law sets the maximum number of working hours at forty-eight hours for a six-day week of eight hours per day, except for the month of Ramadan when it is reduced to a maximum of thirty-six hours for a six-day week of six hours per day (Art. 73).

In accordance with Ministerial Decision No. 16 of 2007 Determining the Working Hours in Exposed Work Places During the Summer, work under the sun or in exposed places must not exceed five hours during the morning shift, which ends by 11:30. The evening shift may not start before 3:00 pm. This applies to the period between June 15 and August 31 (Art. 1).

For the interviewed workers, the number of working hours was frequently more than what the contract stated, and a larger percentage of males expressed this compared with females (41 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively).

One-quarter of the interviewed workers stated that their working hours were the same as specified in the contract, while 36 per cent stated that they had to work longer hours. A larger percentage of interviewed hospitality workers than construction workers reported longer working hours (39 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively). Similarly, more males reported longer hours than females (41 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively), and mid-skilled workers more than low-skilled ones (48 per cent vs 27 per cent, respectively [Table 3.2A-D]).

*“The working hours are 10 hours a day. Because I questioned that 8 hours is working hours how about the 2 hours, is it overtime, its paid or not. They said yes, it’s paid. But when you arrived here, they will not paid”* (Mid-skilled Filipino female worker)

*“They had said 8 hours but when I came here, they made me work for 10 hours and made me work beyond my hours”* (Low-skilled male South Asian hospitality worker)

These examples indicate that there is sometimes a wide gap in the information provided to the prospective migrant about the salary and benefits and the reality upon arrival in Qatar. In several cases, migrants take extensive loans to finance their migration often based on the assumption of a higher salary than they actually obtain upon arrival in the Gulf. In case of differences in the promised and procured salary, it is often unclear to the worker whether the difference is due to some deductions that are made from the salary, and it appears that the details are not adequately explained to the worker and they do not get pay-slips.

### 3.4 Annual leave and off days

Employees whose employment is governed by the Qatari Labour Law are entitled to annual leave with remuneration. The length of leave is determined to be no less than three weeks for employment of less than five years and four weeks for those employed for five years or more. The employee is entitled to leave for parts of the year in proportion to the period of service (Art. 79). The employer is entitled to determine the date of annual leave for the worker taking into consideration the requirements of work but may not divide it into more than two periods in a year. The worker may request that up to half of his annual leave be transferred to the following year (Art. 80). After the interviewing for this research was terminated, Law 13/2018 entered into force at the end of October 2018 according to which workers can take their annual leave whenever they prefer, except for up to 5 per cent of the workers of a company who the company has included in a list submitted to MADLSA for approval. Thus, the situation described below may have changed, but only research can demonstrate whether this is effectively the case.

At the time of interviewing, the legal framework entitles the employer to determine the timing of the annual leave, regardless of the desires and preferences of the worker. In terms of leave being the same as in contract, about 24 per cent of the interviewed workers were neutral while 28 per cent said it was the same and 11 per cent said it was not (Table 3.2A-D).

When asked if they could take annual leave according to their wished timing, about 22 per cent of the interviewed workers said they could while 30 per cent of them said they could not. The inability to take leave at the time they wanted was expressed by 33 per cent of the interviewed hospitality workers compared with 21 per cent of the construction workers. A considerably larger percentage of interviewed males as compared to females said that they could not take leave as they wished (54 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively). Also, more of the mid-skilled than low-skilled workers stated that they could not do so (45 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively). The opinions of some of interviewed workers were as follows:

*“We ask to go at 1st of next month they will say that you have to go next to next month”* (South Asian male construction worker)

*“I would like to go for 4 to 5 months in December, so I have to inform them much in advance; so that sometimes becomes a problem because they need to check if there is another person to cover my position. So they discuss about that and inform if not December then January”* (Low-skilled hospitality South Asian male)

A mid-skilled group of male hospitality workers expressed their views about their ability to take annual leave as desired in the following manner:

*“In our company if I want to go vacation on festival time... I tell them now my month complete why are you not sending me... then our supervisor or managers say don't worry next month I will send u. Then they will take two more months to send me”*

*“We have to submit if we need to go like, for example, April so we supposed to submit in January because the process it will take time”*

*“Just imagine your parents passed away and you need emergency leave to attend funeral ceremony but you could not...”*

**Table 3.2A: Interviewed workers' assessment of their contract (%)**

Topic	Total (N-88)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T
Money paid to agent for job in Qatar	67	13	20	0	100
Money paid to (fake) company in Qatar	5	0	95	0	100
Working hours same as in contract	25	39	36	0	100
Contract signed (whether have copy or not)	84	14	2	0	100
Salary/leave same as in contract	3	47	32	18	100
Same contract to what was originally given in their home country	30	24	28	18	100
Can take annual leave whenever wish	22	22	30	27	100
Promised leave given as stated in contract	28	24	11	36	100

**Table 3.2B: Interviewed workers' assessment of their contract by sector sector (%)**

Topic	Sector									
	Hospitality (N=64)					Construction (N=24)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T	+	=	--	N/A	T
Money paid to agent for job in Qatar	66	14	20	0	100	71	8	21	0	100
Money paid to (fake) company in Qatar	6	0	94	0	100	0	0	100	0	100
Working hours same as a contract	19	42	39	0	100	42	29	29	0	100
Contract signed (whether have copy or not)	86	13	2	0	100	79	17	4	0	100
Salary/leave same as in contract	5	41	30	25	100	0	63	38	0	100
Same contract to what was originally given in their some coutry	30	11	34	25	100	29	58	13	0	100
Can take annual leave whenever wish	11	19	33	38	100	50	29	21	0	100
Promised leave given as stated in contract	30	19	2	50	100	25	38	38	0	100

**Table 3.2C: Interviewed workers' assessment of their contract by gender (%)**

Topic	Gender									
	Males (N=56)					Females (N=12)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T	+	=	--	N/A	T
Money paid to agent for job in Qatar	68	7	25	0	100	66	22	13	0	100
Money paid to (fake) company in Qatar	4	0	96	0	100	6	0	94	0	100
Salary/leave same as in contract	5	57	38	25	100	0	28	22	50	100
Working hours same as in contract	21	38	41	0	100	31	41	28	0	100
Contract signed (whether have copy or not)	78	18	4	0	100	94	6	0	0	100
Can take annual leave whenever wish	27	32	27	14	100	13	3	34	50	100
Promised leave given as stated in contract	30	19	2	50	100	25	0	0	75	100
Same contract to what was originally given in their home country	25	36	25	14	100	38	3	34	25	100

Table 3.2D: Interviewed workers' assessment of their contract by skill level

Topic	Skills Level									
	Low-Skilled (N=48)					Mid-Skilled (N=40)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T	+	=	--	N/A	T
Money paid to agent for job in Qatar	63	19	19	0	100	73	5	23	0	100
Money paid to (fake) company in Qatar	8	0	92	0	100	0	0	100	0	100
Working hours same as in contract	25	48	27	25	100	25	28	48	0	100
Contract signed (whether have copy or not)	83	13	4	0	100	85	15	0	0	100
Salary/leave same as in contract	2	48	33	17	100	5	45	30	20	100
Promised leave given as stated in contract	6	40	21	33	100	55	5	0	40	100
Same contract to what was originally given in their home country	10	44	13	33	100	53	0	48	0	100
Can take annual leave whenever wish	8	25	17	50	100	38	18	45	0	100

## PART 4: MIGRANTS' VIEWS ON SALARY, INCREASE AND PAYMENTS

### 4.1 Introduction

About 57 per cent of all interviewed workers said their salary and increase in salary was not adequate, while only 5 per cent said it was. The dissatisfaction with salary level was expressed by roughly similar percentages of those in hospitality and construction sectors, and by male as well as female workers (Tables 4.1A-D). Some interviewed workers expressed their views about salary/increase as follows:

*"Now salary is better, earlier it was too less, and they increase 50 per year but inflation rate is high, and expenditure also has increased"* (Low-skilled male South Asian construction worker)

*"The issue is about salary, we worked for 650 in the beginning, and thereafter every year increasing by 50, and now also it is just 1,200 to 1,300 salary"* (Low-skilled male South Asian construction worker)

*"I went to modir and told him that these were my expenses, please increase my salary. So, he said that he gave me the visa for free; so when I came here I got 300 as my salary, he cut my salary for visa"* (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)

*"Yes, they said it will be more than 1,800 but when I came here I got 1,200 and that too they don't give it on the 1st they give it on the 10th or 12th...there is a lot of stress"* (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)

*"They are not committed to the contract, the salary is insufficient, and there are always delays. It is unfair to hire holders of university degrees with a salary of 1,500. How can I live with this salary?"* (Low-skilled male Arab worker)



*For me, like I don't receive any money if I work extra after eight hours of duty, the overtime works like I am not paid for regular days, for example. As I said earlier my shift is for 8 hours but if I do overtime then I won't be paid; but if let's say they call me to work on my off day, then I would be paid overtime" (African female hospitality worker)*

*Friday is off but if I work from morning for five hours, they would pay me 30 riyals for every hour. But they don't pay cash they pay with salary. For me my company gives me 70 riyals per day for overtime, this is like thrice in a month. So, I get 70 times three in a month for overtime" (African female hospitality worker)*

In addition to the adequacy of salary and salary increase, the respondents were also asked whether they were paid their salary during annual leave. Almost half of them said that they receive salary for annual leave, while 18 per cent said they did not (Table 4.1A). A significantly larger percentage of interviewed hospitality workers stated that they got paid during their annual leave compared with construction workers (55 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively). A larger percentage of interviewed females received their salary during annual leave than males (59 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively). In the case of mid-skilled and low-skilled workers, the difference was especially large, with 63 per cent of the former and 35 per cent of the latter receiving their salary during annual leave.

Of the interviewees who stated that they did not get salary during annual leave, some said that:

*"I have an annual leave, but it's not paid" (Low-skilled Arab male hospitality worker)*

*"It appears that they are providing us a free ticket for our annual leave, but in fact, our own salary during that month is used by the company to purchase the ticket for the annual leave (Low-skilled Arab male hospitality worker)*

Another worker expressed a more favourable view, as follows:

*"They cut from my salary and tickets are expensive during Eid. Company won't give 700 and it goes to 1,800–1,900. They say they will give the money so it's ok. If I go once a year, I get one-year bonus (Low-skilled South Asian male hospitality worker)*

## 4.2 Salary payment through bank and delayed salary payment

Qatar enacted Ministerial Decision No. 4 of 2015 Issuing Regulations for the Wage Protection System for Workers Subject to the Labour Law, after enacting Law No. 1 of 2015 Amending Provisions of the Labour Law No. 14 of 2014, in order to ensure the proper payment of wages. Under this decision, employers are required to transfer the wages of their employees to their Qatari bank account within seven days of their due date through the Wage Protection System (WPS) instituted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Art. 2). The penalties for failing to meet these requirements include a ban on the issuance of new work permits and halting all paperwork submitted by the employer to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (now MADLSA) – excluding the approval of employment contracts. Furthermore, the Qatari Labour Law stipulates that workers shall be paid at least once a month if they have been employed on the basis of an annual or monthly wage. All other workers must be paid at least once every two weeks (Art. 66 as amended by Law No. 1 of 2015 Amending Some Provisions of the Labour Law No. 14 of 2004). In accordance with article 70 of the Labour Law, retaining any part of the

payment due to a worker or stopping the payment is prohibited unless it is done in execution of a judicial decision. In those cases, the retained amount shall not exceed 35 per cent of the full remuneration (Art. 70 of the Labour Law). Additional grounds for legal deductions and different limits are established by Art. 59, Art. 64, and Art. 71 of the Labour Law.

It seems that the implementation of the WPS in terms of providing bank cards to workers has been quite effective. About 84 per cent of all interviewed workers said they had a bank card and received their salary through the bank. The percentage who had a bank card was especially high among construction workers (92 per cent), females (94 per cent) and mid-skilled workers (95 per cent) (Tables 4.1A-D).

With regard to delay in salary payment, 36 per cent of the interviewees said that the salary was not paid on time, while 38 per cent said it was. Delayed salary payments were more frequent in the case of construction workers than hospitality workers (46 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively), males compared with females (41 per cent and 28 per cent), and low-skilled compared with mid-skilled workers (44 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively).

Respondents who received their salary late reported the following:

*“Every three months, sometimes every two months’ salary is delayed for one week”* (Mid-skilled Filipino male hospitality worker)

*“We get salary once in three months”* (Low-skilled South Asian male hospitality worker)

*“It’s been two, three months they haven’t been giving salary on time. If I tell them they say they will give once they receive the money. Now if we don’t get money from there, they can’t pay us”* (Low-skilled South Asian male hospitality worker)

*“My company is delaying three months, four months, two months -- sometimes three months, sometimes four months, then we will get because we complain”* (Mid-skilled male hospitality worker)

### 4.3 Overtime payments

Overtime work is permitted under Qatari Labour Law provided that the actual working hours per day do not exceed ten hours, unless continuation of work is necessary for the prevention of gross loss, there is a dangerous accident, or the mitigation of the effects of either. The employer is required to compensate the employee for additional working hours at a rate that is no less than the basic wage and an additional 25 per cent thereof. Employees who work between the hours of 9pm and 3am shall be paid in addition to the basic wage rate, an additional 50 per cent thereof. If the circumstances of the work necessitate the employment of the worker during the rest day the worker shall be compensated for the rest day by another day, and shall be paid for working that day the wage payable to him for the ordinary weekly rest day or his basic wage plus an increase of not less than 150%.

Despite the apparently clear guidelines for overtime payment by employers, lack of overtime payment for work outside the normal working hours was a widely prevalent occurrence, as illustrated below.

Almost half (49 per cent) of all participants reported that they did not receive adequate overtime payments, while 15 per cent said they did (Table 4.1A-D). Those in the construction sector were

considerably more dissatisfied than those in the hospitality sector (67 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively). A larger percentage of interviewed males were dissatisfied with overtime payments than interviewed females (59 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively). In terms of sector, only 4 per cent of interviewed low-skilled workers and 27 per cent of interviewed mid-skilled workers reported that they got adequate overtime payments.

A group of low-skilled South Asian construction workers stated that:

*“Nothing is good in this company. My company is small, they ask us to do overtime of 4–5 hours but never pay for overtime”;*

*“We don’t get overtime, even if we do overtime we will not get money, anyhow have to do duty of 10 hours”*

*“In agreement it is mentioned duty of 8 hours but even if we work for 10 to 12 hours we do not get any overtime”*

Some other workers expressed their views as follows:

*“They say they will give but later they don’t, they say they will pay overtime, but they don’t. (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)*

*We just get our basic salary in the bank. There is no overtime from past 10 years” (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)*

*“They used to pay us very less for the overtime and now they don’t pay us for the overtime, so we are also not interested to work for overtime” (Low-skilled female hospitality worker).*

*“For me, I don’t receive any money if I work extra after 8 hours of my duty but if I work on my off day then I would be paid over time, with my salary...” (African female hospitality worker).*

#### 4.4 Satisfaction with savings and remittances

The ability to save money to support families in the home country is the overwhelming motivation for a majority of low-skilled Gulf migrants. Of the 88 respondents, 44 per cent stated that they were not satisfied with their capacity to send money home (Table 4.1A). A larger percentage of hospitality workers were dissatisfied with their ability to send desired amount of money home compared with construction workers (56 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively); a similar situation was present in terms of interviewed males vs. interviewed females (54 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively) and in terms of interviewed mid-skilled vs. interviewed low-skilled workers (58 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively). The satisfaction with the amount that the workers were able to remit probably depends on the expectations the various groups had about the amount they would have liked to remit. The following opinions by various workers illustrate the level of satisfaction with the amount of money sent home.

*“In Qatar, we can save money, and if we go to Dubai, then expenditure is more, liquor bottle is costly and Indian man cannot survive without drinking liquor. And whatever we earn we will spend over there” (Indian male construction worker)*

*“Not enough because you have son and family and need to send for them because they need to pay for tuition fee, aside from your wife and your mother”* (low-skilled male hospitality worker)

*“Not enough because you have a lot of payment specially here the cost of living now is very expensive not only in the Philippines* (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)

*“If someone is a driver, he needs ironed clothes, shoes need to be polished, he needs everything fresh, have to get a haircut once a week. It costs 10 riyals for a haircut so my 50 riyals just goes in that. How much can I save in 1,000 riyals?”* (Low-skilled male hospitality worker).

“It’s been eight months since I’m here but only once was I able to send money to my loved ones (Low-skilled female hospitality worker)

*“I can manage my finances here better than in Dubai. There is no too much place where you go and spend. I definitely saved more in 1 year in Qatar, more than in Dubai. And life here is like heaven on earth for me. It is sufficient, what I am sending it is enough, I am doing all the things I want to do and here what I have as extra I can have a decent life. But you also know that money is never enough, if you get 20,000 then you would want to have 40,000”*(African female hospitality worker)

“Before it’s enough, now it’s not enough. It is not enough to go to Nepal, to buy a home, some land, some car. When I came here, I found I cannot” (mid-skilled male hospitality worker)

**Table 4.1A: Interviewed workers’ assessment of payment (%)**

Topic	Total (N-88)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T
Adequate of salary/salary increase	5	39	57	0	100
Timely payment of salary	38	26	36	0	100
Adequate payment of overtime	15	36	49	0	100
Salary bank card with worker	84	9	7	0	100
Ability to send desired money home/ save money	14	33	44	9	100
Salary given during annual leave	48	25	18	9	100

**Table 4.1B: Interviewed workers' assessment of payment by sector (%)**

Topic	Sector									
	Hospitality (N=64)					Construction (N=24)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T	+	=	--	N/A	T
Adequate of salary/salary increase	3	41	56	0	100	8	33	58	0	100
Timely payment of salary	41	27	33	0	100	29	25	46	0	100
Adequate payment of overtime	18	38	43	0	100	4	29	67	0	100
Salary bank card with worker	81	13	6	0	100	92	0	8	0	100
Ability to send desired money home / save money	9	22	56	13	100	25	63	13	0	100
Salary given during annual leave	55	17	16	13	100	29	46	25	0	100

**Table 4.1C: Interviewed workers' assessment of payment by gender (%)**

Topic	Gender									
	Males (N=56)					Females (N=32)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T	+	=	--	N/A	T
Adequate of salary/salary increase	5	39	55	0	100	3	38	59	0	100
Timely payment of salary	32	27	41	0	100	47	25	28	0	100
Adequate payment of overtime	11	30	59	0	100	21	45	33	0	100
Salary bank card with worker	79	14	7	0	100	94	0	6	0	100
Ability to send desired money home/ save money	13	34	54	0	100	16	31	28	25	100
Salary given during annual leave	41	30	29	0	100	59	16	0	25	100

**Table 4.1D: Interviewed workers' assessment of payment by skills level (%)**

Topic	Skills Level									
	Low-Skilled (N=48)					Mid-Skilled (N=40)				
	+	=	--	N/A	T	+	=	--	N/A	T
Adequate of salary/salary increase	2	44	54	0	100	8	33	60	0	100
Timely payment of salary	15	42	44	0	100	65	8	28	0	100
Adequate payment of overtime	4	48	48	0	100	27	22	51	0	100
Salary bank card with worker	75	17	8	0	100	95	0	5	0	100
Ability to send desired money home/ save money	4	46	33	17	100	25	18	58	0	100
Salary given during annual leave	35	42	23	0	100	63	5	13	20	100

## PART 5: MIGRANT WORKERS' REPORTS ON THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

With the exception of one group of low-skilled Arab hospitality workers, all the participants included in our study lived in accommodation provided by the company employing them. Aside from the group of Arab workers, none of them were renting their accommodation. The low-skilled male construction workers were typically housed in camps especially designed for them. As shown by the narratives of FGD participants, the accommodation for low-skilled hospitality workers often consisted of buildings or flats rented by the concerned company. Most workers shared the living space with several other workers, and the level of crowding, cleanliness, and comfort varied slightly across the different groups.

The respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their living conditions on a scale from 1-10. Their responses were then categorised as low if the score was 1-4, neutral if score was 5-6, and positive if score was 7-10. When asked to assign a score from 1-10 to their living conditions, only 10 per cent gave a score of 7-10, 26 per cent gave a score of 5-6, 34 per cent gave a score of 1-4, while 30 per cent did not assign a numerical score (Tables 5.1A-5D). Thus, about one-third rated their living conditions to be fairly low.

Responses of our participants about specific living conditions are shown in Tables 5.1A-D.

### 5.2 Number of persons to a room, per bathroom, and cleanliness

The specifications set by Ministerial Decision No. 18 of 2014 Setting the Conditions and Specifications for Workers' Accommodations require that each bed within a shared room must be allocated at least six meters of space (Art 2(1)), up from no less than four meters of empty space (Ministry of Civil Affairs and Housing Decree No. 17 of 2005 on Workers' Living Quarters). Each room must host no more than four workers in residential units and no more than eight workers in temporary residences (*ibid*). The Qatar Foundation standards (p. 29) states maximum four persons per room. Each worker must have a bed, mattress, and sheets [Art 3(1)].

Employers are required to ensure that one bathroom is allocated for every six workers, which should be well lit, ventilated, and regularly supplied with appropriate sanitisers and cleaning supplies. They are further obligated to ensure that workers are hired to clean and supervise all the buildings used for workers' residence. The supervisor is tasked with the duties of supervising and guarding the building and notifying the employer of any needed maintenance (Art. 11).

In general, the mandated occupancy level of not more than four to eight persons per room appeared to be followed in several cases. However, we were unable to obtain a clear picture of the space available per person, and thus the degree of crowding. An estimate of respondent satisfaction with the crowdedness of their accommodation can be made from the narratives of workers. When asked whether the number of persons with whom they shared the room was adequate, 53 interviewees stated that it was not. Dissatisfaction with the number of persons per room was higher among interviewed females than males (63 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively). There was no difference between the interviewed mid-skilled and low-skilled workers, with about 53 per cent of each group stating that there were too

many persons per room. Thus, it appears that, according to the workers' perceptions, the government's guidelines about the minimum accommodation space per person is being violated in many cases by employers who provide housing for their workers.

About 51 per cent of the interviewed workers stated that the number of persons per bathroom was too high. Larger percentages of hospitality workers than construction workers (53 per cent and 46 per cent), females than males (56 per cent and 48 per cent) and low-skilled than mid-skilled workers held a negative view about the number of persons per bathroom.

The following statements reflect the perceptions and sentiments of various participants in terms of the crowdedness and cleanliness of their accommodation:

*"We have two toilets but ten persons are using it"; "for us, there are two toilets and sixteen persons to use them"* (Mid-skilled male hospitality workers)

*"We have 10 people in a small room and only one bathroom. The one who gets up first it is his duty and who gets up last he just leaves without brushing his teeth... what to do, we have to be on time for our job"* (Low-skilled South Asian hospitality worker).

A mid-skilled hospitality worker stated:

*"Because there are too many people in the room you don't have any privacy. We are 10 people in one room and the room is not enough for that much people, since people also have their luggage, bag, uniform, shoes and they have one cupboard"*

Another one noted:

*"They are just making 8, 9, 10 persons live in the same room even though the capacity of the room is 4 or 5 persons but they are adding more people; when we are going on duty, we are just having trouble for toilet, like 25 people are using one toilet"*

Some African female hospitality workers expressed similar experiences, summarised below:

*"We are around 7 in the room, and before they promised us that it will be 3 or 4, but we are 7 in my room and this is a very big problem because it is very hard to interact with everyone"*

*"We live on a floor where there are other rooms so we find ourselves sharing the bathroom and the toilet with 9 other people so that makes us a total of 12. Someone doesn't want to clean the toilet and still wants to use the same"*

Lack of cleanliness was pointed out as a problem resulting from overcrowding and sharing of rooms and bathrooms. Only about 3 per cent of the interviewees were satisfied with the level of cleanliness of their accommodation. However, most of the interviewed workers (57 per cent) did not provide any response to this question.

Finally, a mid-skilled Filipino female hospitality worker mentioned that she was uncomfortable with her living conditions because the regulations on gender segregation were violated:

*"Men and women live in the same building. Some boys they sleep over in the ladies' room. Then some of the ladies they will sleep in the room of the boys. Of course, not ok to me the boys will sleep in our room. I'm not comfortable for the other nationalities. If someone will come to check,*

*the management will announce that there is checking. So, the management they know what is happening inside the accommodation”*

### 5.3 Food and kitchen facilities

The 2014 Ministerial Decision requires that kitchen walls be covered with porcelain up to the ceiling and that the floors be covered with a non-slippery material. It further lists the facilities that must be available in each kitchen, which include filtered water for cooking, a fridge for storage of food, and a cooking stove. The number of each should be proportionate to the number of workers in the accommodation (Art. 4). Temporary Workers’ Accommodations must have dining halls, which are equipped to host the number of workers residing in it. It must also have the necessary facilities to ensure the healthy and regular disposal of sewage and garbage (Art. 7).

We found that the situation of workers differs according to whether they are provided food or not. Construction workers housed in camps are usually provided food. Most of the hospitality workers are provided kitchen facilities to cook their own food. Some are provided food allowances. Table 5.1A shows that 23 per cent of the 88 interviewed workers were satisfied with their kitchen facilities or food provided, while 39 per cent were not. Construction workers were more dissatisfied than hospitality workers (46 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively), and the low-skilled workers were more dissatisfied than the mid-skilled workers (44 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively).

Dissatisfaction with food and kitchen facilities was expressed by various respondents in the following terms:

*“At 9, I have dinner and go to sleep. Then get up at 5 in the morning. I find it very difficult to make food at night then take it to the site in the morning. Sometimes it gets spoilt, there are no shops near the site. We can only buy a little since it is very expensive”* (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)

*“We are 20 persons and we have only one small kitchen, it’s a disaster!”* (Low-skilled Arab male hospitality worker)

*“The food is not good, too oily”* (Mid-skilled male hospitality worker)

*“We have one kitchen for 10 persons. We wait for our turn. One girl will finish and then the second one will cook. When she gets over, the third one will cook”* (Low-skilled South Asian female worker).

### 5.4 Air-conditioning and recreational facilities

The Planning Regulations issued by the Ministry of Municipality and Environment requires that mechanical air-conditioning is provided in all habitable rooms and that it has sufficient capacity to ventilate and cool a fully occupied room (Item 29). Mechanical ventilation is to be provided for all toilet and bathing spaces (Item 32(a)). In addition, all sleeping quarters, dining and indoor recreational areas must be air-conditioned and the occupants should be able to control the temperature setting (Item 42).

With regards to recreational facilities, the Planning Regulations, which expand on the Ministerial Decision but are not necessarily obligatory, divide recreational facilities into three categories: Indoor passive, indoor active, and outdoor recreational facilities with requirements set for each category. Indoor



recreational facilities must be a minimum of 50 square meters in area and include a television room with DVD player and a reading room (Item 54). The indoor active recreational room must be a minimum of 2,000 square meters in area for every 501 - 5,000 persons to be used for indoor active recreational activities (Item 55). Finally, the outdoor recreational area must be a minimum of 1,440 square meters per 500 persons capable of hosting a soccer/cricket pitch, basketball, or volleyball courts (Item 56).

Thus, the Qatar Law provides specific and extensive guidelines regarding air conditioning and recreational facilities.

Relative to some other aspects such as crowdedness of their accommodation, workers were generally more satisfied with air-conditioning in their accommodation. About 41 per cent of all participants were satisfied while 13 per cent were dissatisfied and 35 per cent were neutral. A larger percentage of the interviewed construction workers were dissatisfied compared with hospitality workers (50 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively). Also, a notably larger percentage of interviewed mid-skilled than low-skilled workers were satisfied (60 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively).

Some respondents who were not satisfied observed:

*"Sometimes we have fan only"* (Mid-skilled Filipino male hospitality worker)

*"We have AC, sir, but not working. I think there is problem; air is hot, sir, I don't know maybe there is problem, maybe from the maintenance"* (Mid-skilled Filipino female worker)

*"It's working sometimes and not working sometimes but we have maintenance, we complain to them"* (Mid-skilled male hospitality worker)

In terms of recreational facilities, 25 per cent of all respondents were dissatisfied and about 18 per cent were satisfied, while 27 per cent were neutral (Table 5.1A). A larger percentage of interviewed hospitality workers than construction workers were satisfied (22 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively). In terms of dissatisfaction, the percentage was larger among females than males (34 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively). None of the interviewed low-skilled workers and 40 per cent of the interviewed mid-skilled workers reported satisfaction with recreational facilities.

In terms of a recreational room in the accommodation, a mid-skilled Filipino hospitality worker noted:

*"There is sala (hall or TV room) but for sleep"*

## 5.5 Space for storing valuables

In accordance with Ministerial Decision No. 18 of 2014 Setting the Conditions and Specifications for Workers' Accommodations, employers must fit each accommodation with facilities and places that have lockable closets, which are easily and freely accessible to workers and in which they can store documents and personal belongings (Art. 3).

About half of the 88 respondents did not provide an answer to the question on adequacy of space for storage purposes. Of those who did, 23 per cent were satisfied while 14 per cent were not. A larger percentage of females than males were satisfied with the storage facilities (47 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively). Furthermore, none of the low-skilled and 50 per cent of the mid-skilled workers were satisfied.

The following quotes illustrate the views of various workers regarding their storage facilities:

*“I keep my valuables under the bed in a cupboard I made”; “I lock them in my luggage”; “We don’t have but in Labor City everyone has cupboard and there is cctv camera”* (A group of mid-skilled male hospitality workers)

*“We have a locker in our rooms where we stay”* (African female hospitality worker)

## 5.6 Transportation

The site requirements of “The Planning Regulations” require that designated bus pick-up and drop-off points are situated so as to minimise the walking distance for workers (Item 10).

Relative to all other aspects, satisfaction with transportation was higher. About 51 per cent reported that they were satisfied with their transportation facilities while 33 per cent said they were not. One worker made the following remark regarding transportation facilities:

*“Transportation is neither provided nor paid by the employer”* (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)

**Table 5.1A: Interviewed workers’ assessment of their living conditions (%)**

Topic	Total (N=88)				
	+	=	–	N/A	T
Level of Satisfaction with Living Conditions (Score) <sup>2</sup>	10	26	34	30	100
Adequate number of persons per room	25	20	53	2	100
<b>Facilities</b>					
Adequate number of bathrooms	14	24	51	11	100
Adequate kitchen facilities or food provided	23	36	39	2	100
Adequate air conditioning	41	35	13	11	100
Adequate recreational facilities	18	27	25	30	100
Satisfied with the cleanliness of the facility	3	27	13	57	100
Adequate laundry services, washing machines	14	10	38	39	100
Adequate space for storing valuables	23	16	14	48	100
Adequate transportation	51	16	33	0	100

\* Scoring for the level of satisfaction is as follows: 1-4 is negative, 5-6 is neutral, and 7-10 is positive

Table 5.1B: Interviewed workers' assessment of their living conditions by sector (%)

Topic	Sector									
	Hospitality (N=64)					Construction (N=24)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Level of Satisfaction with Living Conditions (Score) <sup>2</sup>	6	31	47	16	100	21	13	0	67	100
Adequate number of persons per room	20	22	55	3	100	39	13	48	0	100
<b>Facilities</b>										
Adequate number of bathrooms	13	31	53	3	100	17	4	46	33	100
Adequate kitchen facilities or food provided	19	42	36	3	100	33	21	46	0	100
Adequate air conditioning	38	31	16	16	100	50	46	4	0	100
Adequate recreational facilities	22	22	28	28	100	8	42	17	33	100
Satisfied with the cleanliness of the facility	5	38	17	41	100	0	0	0	100	100
Adequate laundry services, washing machines	19	14	39	28	100	0	0	33	67	100
Adequate space for storing valuables	31	22	19	28	100	0	0	0	100	100
Adequate transportation	59	14	27	0	100	29	21	50	0	100

Table 5.1C: Interviewed workers' assessment of their living conditions by gender (%)

Topic	Gender									
	Males (N=56)					Females (N=32)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Level of Satisfaction with Living Conditions (Score) <sup>2</sup>	9	16	30	45	100	13	44	41	3	100
Adequate number of persons per room	35	16	47	2	100	9	25	63	3	100
<b>Facilities</b>										
Adequate number of bathrooms	20	16	48	16	100	3	38	56	3	100
Adequate kitchen facilities or food provided	29	32	38	2	100	13	44	41	3	100
Adequate air conditioning	39	43	16	2	100	44	22	6	28	100
Adequate recreational facilities	14	36	20	30	100	25	13	34	28	100
Satisfied with the cleanliness of the facility	2	23	16	59	100	6	34	6	53	100
Adequate laundry services, washing machines	14	4	52	30	100	13	22	13	53	100
Adequate space for storing valuables	9	25	21	45	100	47	0	0	53	100
Adequate transportation	43	21	36	0	100	66	6	28	0	100

**Table 5.1D: Interviewed workers' assessment of their living conditions by skills level (%)**

Topic	Skills Level									
	Low-Skilled (N=48)					Mid-Skilled (N=40)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Level of Satisfaction with Living Conditions (Score) <sup>2</sup>	17	25	42	17	100	3	28	25	45	100
Adequate number of persons per room	23	23	53	0	100	28	15	53	5	100
<b>Facilities</b>										
Adequate number of bathrooms	6	23	54	17	100	23	25	48	5	100
Adequate kitchen facilities or food provided	13	44	44	0	100	35	28	33	5	100
Adequate air conditioning	25	50	8	17	100	60	18	18	5	100
Adequate recreational facilities	0	29	21	50	100	40	25	30	5	100
Satisfied with the cleanliness of the facility	2	21	10	67	100	5	35	15	45	100
Adequate laundry services, washing machines	0	0	50	50	100	30	23	23	25	100
Adequate space for storing valuables	0	15	19	67	100	50	18	8	25	100
Adequate transportation	19	29	52	0	100	90	0	10	0	100

## PART 6: MIGRANTS' OVERALL APPRECIATION OF MIGRATION TO QATAR

### 6.1 Introduction

Leaving home to work and live in a foreign country is a decision that individuals make after a careful evaluation of the expected costs and benefits of their expatriation. Expectations play a critical role in the choice to migrate or stay home. Migrants' overall evaluation of their migratory experience in Qatar and whether their initial expectations have been met or not are vital issues on which most migrants are keen to engage.

At the beginning of each FGD, the discussion leader asked participants to say why they chose to come to Qatar and, should they go back in time, would they still come knowing the actual conditions in the country and would they encourage or discourage friends to come to Qatar?

### 6.2 Not all migrants have the same experience

Should they have to decide in full knowledge of the facts, 43 per cent of the participants declare that they would still migrate (or recommend friends to migrate) to Qatar than stay home; 33 per cent expressed no particular preference and 15 per cent of the interviewed workers responded negatively (Table 6.1). The

highest proportions of satisfied interviewed workers were found amongst the mid-skilled (70 per cent), women (50 per cent) and those employed in the hospitality sector (47 per cent).

**Table 6.1: Interviewed workers’ response to the question on whether they would still come/encourage friends to come to Qatar (%)**

Group / Level of Satisfaction		+	=	–	N/A	T
Total (N=88)		43	33	15	9	100
Sector	Hospitality - Both sexes(N=64)	47	27	14	13	100
	Construction - Males (N=24)	33	50	17	0	100
Gender	Males (N=56)	39	45	16	0	100
	Females (N=32)	50	13	13	25	100
Skills level	Low-skilled - Both sexes (N=48)	21	40	23	17	100
	Mid-skilled - Both sexes (N=49)	70	25	5	0	100

While opinions about the country are on average good, employers make the difference between a good and a bad experience. Much of the migrant’s overall evaluation depends upon the company for which they work. Some migrants also insist that job opportunities are not sufficient to compensate for an otherwise poor quality of life.

*“For me, Qatar proved to be very nice. I cannot comment on the kind of salary or company that you will work for, but if you work for my company, you will be very happy”* (Mid-skilled Nepali construction worker)

*“I will tell (my friend) first see how the company is, who will be hiring you. Some companies pay well and (provide) good facilities but some don’t pay. So, it’s necessary that before coming to Qatar, you find out what the company will pay you”* (Low-skilled Indian female cleaner)

*“There is another thing in my company which makes me feel like...hmm...it makes me feel down. It’s racism because the people who work with me, at times they give you attitude because you are black you know”* (Mid-skilled Kenyan female employed in a hotel)

*“Qatar is developing now, it is at its peak, and there is work as per your qualifications. It’s a peaceful country with broad-minded people and a good government, the crime rates are low, and its per capita income is high. So, I would advise my friends to choose and come to Qatar”* (Mid-skilled Indian male construction worker)

*“In Algeria, for example, you can get a job in Europe and there is a good taste of life there, you got me? But here in Doha, even if you have a good job, Europe still better 25,000 times”* (Low-skilled Algerian male worker in a cleaning company)

### 6.3 What makes Qatar attractive to migrants?

Table 6.1A-D provides the main positive factors given by migrants. Not all participants expressed an explicit opinion on each factor but, strikingly, only positive or neutral opinions were expressed, no overall negative opinion.

#### a) *Safety and the rule of law*

Fifty-two per cent of the interviewed migrants in our sample praised the absolute safety in public space as a strong component of the quality of life in Qatar. This was particularly the case with women (69 per cent) and the mid-skilled (68 per cent). Fourteen per cent of the interviewed migrants highlighted the strict rules in Qatar, which they said was the reason for the secure environment the country offers to all, both citizens and migrants.

*“There are three reasons for me choosing Qatar. First is peace, secondly it’s safe and thirdly, there is a lot of construction work here”* (Mid-skilled Indian male construction worker)

*“I will tell Qatar is a Muslim country, ladies go around Muslim culture. For example, I am from India so we are very open, but you can’t go around there like this. Here we respect the rules and regulations. If we do that people will give us respect. That’s why Qatar is really good”* (Low-skilled Indian female cleaner)

*“The laws here are nice. People who do wrong will be punished. The Qataris don’t make you feel that you are from a different country [...] They always greet assalamu alaikum”* (Mid-skilled Bangladeshi male construction worker)

*“It’s a nice country to work in and earn money and it’s also safe. There are not many problems here”* (Mid-skilled Indian male construction worker)

#### b) *Social networks*

Though they live far from their spouses and children, a number of migrants don’t feel isolated in Qatar. Forty one per cent of the workers mention the presence of relatives and friends through whom they found their job, 25 per cent the existence of large communities of fellow citizens and 8 per cent the good interaction with other nationalities as positive elements of their daily lives in Qatar.

#### c) *Job opportunities*

Finding employment in Qatar’s hospitality sector and obtaining a visa, even if it is through illegal ways, has been easy for respectively 34 per cent of the interviewed males and 30 per cent the interviewed females in this sector. Some of the migrants also mentioned the possibility of finding part time jobs in addition to their full-time job as an attractive feature of the country.

*“As an Algerian, it’s easy to get a visa to Qatar unlike France, for example”* (Mid-skilled male worker in a hotel)

*“Nowadays, people are coming illegally here. For example, if I cannot come direct here, then they will make me come from some other place. If I cannot get visa from India, so go to some other country and come here”* (Low-skilled Indian male construction worker)

In brief, a paradox seems to emerge from migrants' overall evaluation of their experience. On the one side, their reaction to working and living in Qatar ranges from frustration and unhappiness to overall satisfaction. On the other side, there is unchallenged recognition of several factors that make Qatar an attractive place for migrants.

**Table 6.1A: Interviewed workers' reports on things they like about Qatar (%)**

Topic	Total (N=88)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T
Safe and secure, good and respectful	52	39	0	9	100
One of the richest country in the world	13	33	0	55	100
Easier and better job opportunities	27	50	5	18	100
Good interactions with other nationalities, easier to travel to other countries	7	30	0	64	100
Rules are strict and implemented well	14	41	0	45	100
Salary much higher than home country	27	42	3	27	100
Easier to get visa	26	47	0	27	100
New developing country	8	38	0	55	100
Ability to find part time jobs in addition to their full time job	8	26	3	63	100
Family/friends informed/found job	41	49	1	9	100
Family members living in Qatar	24	58	0	18	100
Many from same country in Qatar	24	58	0	18	100

**Table 6.1B: Interviewed workers' reports on things they like about Qatar, by sector (%)**

Topic	Sector									
	Hospitality (N=64)					Construction (N=24)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Safe and secure, good and respectful	53	34	0	13	100	50	50	0	0	100
One of the richest country in the world	9	28	0	63	100	21	46	0	33	100
Easier and better job opportunities	34	59	6	0	100	8	25	0	67	100
Good interactions with other nationalities, easier to travel to other countries	8	30	0	63	100	4	29	0	67	100
Rules are strict and implemented well	16	47	0	38	100	8	25	0	67	100
Salary much higher than home country	25	45	5	25	100	33	33	0	33	100
Easier to get visa	30	45	0	25	100	17	50	0	33	100
New developing country	5	33	0	63	100	17	50	0	33	100
Ability to find part time jobs in addition to their full time job	11	35	5	49	100	0	0	0	100	100
Family/friends informed/found job	42	44	2	13	100	38	63	0	0	100
Family members living in Qatar	25	50	0	25	100	21	79	0	0	100
Many from same country in Qatar	27	61	0	13	100	17	50	0	33	100

**Table 6.1C: Interviewed workers' reports on things they like about Qatar, by gender (%)**

Topic	Gender									
	Males (N=56)					Females (N=32)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Safe and secure, good and respectful	43	57	0	0	100	69	6	0	25	100
One of the richest country in the world	18	39	0	43	100	3	22	0	75	100
Easier and better job opportunities	23	41	7	29	100	34	66	0	0	100
Good interactions with other nationalities, easier to travel to other countries	5	38	0	57	100	9	16	0	75	100
Rules are strict and implemented well	9	34	0	57	100	22	53	0	25	100



**Table 6.1C: Continued**

Salary much higher than home country	32	48	5	14	100	19	31	0	50	100
Easier to get visa	25	46	0	29	100	28	47	0	25	100
New developing country	11	46	0	43	100	3	22	0	75	100
Ability to find part time jobs in addition to their full time job	4	21	4	71	100	15	33	3	48	100
Family/friends informed/found job	43	57	0	0	100	38	34	3	25	100
Family members living in Qatar	20	66	0	14	100	31	44	0	25	100
Many from same country in Qatar	25	61	0	14	100	22	53	0	25	100

**Table 6.1D: Interviewed workers' on things they like about Qatar, by skills level (%)**

Topic	Skills Level									
	Low-Skilled (N=48)					Mid-Skilled (N=40)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T	+	=	-	N/A	T
Safe and secure, good and respectful	40	44	0	17	100	68	33	0	0	100
One of the richest country in the world	4	13	0	83	100	23	58	0	20	100
Easier and better job opportunities	23	35	8	33	100	33	68	0	0	100
Good interactions with other nationalities, easier to travel to other countries	2	15	0	83	100	13	48	0	40	100
Rules are strict and implemented well	13	21	0	67	100	15	65	0	20	100
Salary much higher than home country	27	33	6	33	100	28	53	0	20	100
Easier to get visa	40	44	0	17	100	10	50	0	40	100
New developing country	4	29	0	67	100	13	48	0	40	100
Ability to find part time jobs in addition to their full time job	2	10	4	83	100	15	44	2	39	100
Family/friends informed/found job	35	48	0	17	100	48	50	3	0	100
Family members living in Qatar	19	48	0	33	100	30	70	0	0	100
Many from same country in Qatar	19	48	0	33	100	30	70	0	0	100

## PART 7: PROBLEMS FACED AND ACTION RECOMMENDED BY MIGRANTS

### 7.1 Introduction

Migrants are in the best position to know what is good and what is bad for them. Listening to their voice is necessary to recommend action on their working and living conditions. At the end of each FDG, by way of wrap up, participants were asked to highlight problems that particularly compromise their working and living conditions. They were also asked to suggest possible solutions for improving their working and living conditions and whether they felt they could approach their consulate or any other agency for help if needed. Discussions about these issues are summarised in Tables 7.1 and 7.2.

**Table 7.1: Problems stressed by interviewed workers (%)**

Topic	Total (N=88)				
	+	=	-	N/A	T
Salary not received for more than a month	20	35	17	27	100
Favouritism in promotions, bonus etc.	6	40	0	55	100
Misinformation about salary/job by friend/relative/agent	20	34	0	45	100
Threat to cancel visa if complain/ afraid to lose job if complain	24	49	0	27	100
Salary and living conditions have been reduced due to the siege	7	30	0	64	100
Workers are unprotected from abusive employers/sponsors	16	20	0	64	100

Respondents were asked to highlight specific problems they felt compromised their working and living conditions. As shown above, 20 per cent of the interviewees complained about not receiving their salary in full and on time and about initial misinformation about their salary and their job. About 24 per cent of all participants stated that they would be afraid to complain because their job and visa could be terminated if they did so. Some of the major problems identified by respondents were as follows.

### 7.2 No help available

Several respondents felt that they could not get help from anyone, including their embassy, employer, or labour courts, as illustrated below. The labour courts are expected to settle disputes between workers and employers in the most fair and amicable manner possible.

*“Yes, some people are scared, and if we say anything, we might lose our job. We are helpless, modir (manager) scares us beforehand that if anyone goes to the labour court, they will put him in jail. So, no one goes. As I told you, ma’am, even if I have a complaint I don’t know English or to type. So, I*

*have to go to different people with a paper and if I take an off and anyone tells my company that I have gone to the labour court, there are CEOs and Directors of the company, modir will reach there first” (Low-skilled male hospitality worker).*

*“We three had planned that we would complain, but we were told that our names would be blacklisted if we tried to complain and we would never be allowed to enter any other country, due to which we didn’t complain” (Low-skilled female hospitality worker)*

### 7.3 Rising cost of living

*“Salary is not enough because you have a lot of payment, specially here the cost of living now is very expensive not only in the Philippines” (Mid-skilled male hospitality worker)*

### 7.4 Misinformation by intermediaries

Among the problems, misinformation about the salary was mentioned by 24 per cent of all participants, exemplified by the opinions of some workers:

*“I was told that it is a good company and having all the facilities.... But after coming here I realised that the company he had told, that company didn’t exist” (Low-skilled construction worker)*

*“They (agents) get visa of big company and they take that visa and they hire employees for small companies that do not have the facilities promised” (Low-skilled construction worker)*

*“The visa guy told me there that I would get 1,200 as salary. When I came here, he gave me 600..... (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)*

### 7.5 Suggested solutions

The three main suggestions about improvements were related to improvement in living conditions by reducing crowding in rooms and bathrooms, instituting more inspections by the government, and increasing salaries according to experience, in addition to paying overtime. Some of the following suggestions were given:

*“(Rules) should be strictly enforced by law. Regulations about accommodation are not implemented properly”; “Men and women are not in separate accommodation” (Mid-skilled Filipino female worker)*

*“If (the government) checks one or two companies, then eventually all companies would better themselves due to fear. In this way, he doesn’t have check every camp” (Low-skilled construction worker)*

*“It is a problem to live with so many people. If we all are sleeping and one guy comes late, he is not allowed to put on the light. I wake up even if there is slightest sound, now can’t fight with him also as there are so many of us. They should make a rule of four or five people in one room and should follow up on it. There was a checking once for double bed, and he said there should be no double bed and he left. Then another man came, and he cut the double bed; but sometimes they only check” (Low-skilled male hospitality worker)*

**Table 7.2: Views of interviewed workers on what should be done (%)**

Topic	Total (N=88)				
	+	=	–	N/A	T
Need labour inspections by government	19	44	0	36	100
Appoint trained health care professional in camp/assign health benefits or insurance	3	6	0	91	100
Improve living facilities	26	38	0	36	100
Set up a minimum wage and working hours, salary increase with experience and pay for overtime	17	38	0	45	100
Cancel the sponsorship system	3	6	0	91	100

## PART 8: STAKEHOLDERS' VIEWS

### 8.1 The stakeholders

For this report, a diverse set of stakeholders were interviewed, ranging from representatives of the Qatar government to those of governments of the countries of origin of migrants and related actors including recruitment and training companies/organisations, human resource managers of businesses, international organisations, and advocacy organisations. In a very few cases, when there was no access to some key stakeholders, their statements in their own official publications were used.

These stakeholders had different and often opposing views which, of course, reflect their divergent objectives which range from improving the situation of migrant workers to maximising profit. Actually, stakeholders often have competing objectives and therefore a trade-off needs to be found, e.g., regulating and limiting the size of the foreign workforce while ensuring reasonable working and living conditions (Qatar government officials); placing as many nationals as possible in Qatar and ensuring that all these nationals receive adequate salary and treatment (labour attaches); hiring as many workers as necessary with the necessary skills, minimising the costs of labour, and fully abiding by the law (business).

Thus, stakeholders have perspectives that differ from those of individual low-income workers who generally have limited school education and are in Qatar primarily to earn an income and remit it back to their families usually left behind in the country of origin.

All stakeholders were asked their opinion about the Qatari legislation relevant for low-income foreign workers, and whether there had been positive developments over the recent years and what were the issues that needed to be addressed most urgently.

See Appendix A Methodology for more detailed information on how many stakeholders were interviewed, how they were identified, and the questions asked. The interviews took place between May and November 2018 (a few were done in December 2018 and early January 2019).

## 8.2 General assessment

Generally speaking, representatives of countries of origin agreed that in recent years legislation for (foreign) labour has significantly improved - including the Wage Protection System, the reform of the *kafala* system, the establishment of the Workers' Dispute Settlement Committees (replacing the labour court) and, most recently, the modification of the exit visa and the establishment of a Worker's Support and Insurance Fund for private sector and domestic workers. Albeit not the subject of this research, stakeholders also praised the new law on domestic workers. This assessment was shared by a substantial number of others, including persons working for international organisations and advocacy organisations, as well as by researchers.

They generally also stressed that their remarks were aimed at helping Qatar improve further.

Some stakeholders praised the positive attitude of MADLSA and specifically the fact that the labour relations department is available 24 hours a day on WhatsApp.

One stakeholder stated that the study prepared by the Qatar Foundation on Migrant Labour Recruitment has eventually set the bar very high for all those working with Qatar Foundation and the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SCDL), making sure that a large number of construction workers are more likely to be treated according to the law.

At the same time, representatives of countries of origin shared the opinion that (much) more should be done in terms of introducing legislation and especially in terms of effective implementation, effective control, accessible and effective redress for workers, and effective sanctioning of those who do not observe the law (for example, employers, recruiters).

In interviews with business representatives instead, human resource managers complained about the burden put on them by the new regulations. However, there are also human resource managers in the construction sector complaining that contract substitution exists and that this creates unfair competition among companies between those that practice contract substitution and those that don't.

A senior official of the Qatar government said that it is the ambition of the country to become the best country in the Gulf, the wider Arab region and beyond in terms of labour legislation and that Qatar would be capable of implementing all elements of the cooperation programme with the ILO as outlined in the agreement.

A number of stakeholders think that this time Qatar may be more determined in reforming its labour legislation and practices than it was in the initial period since it was assigned the organisation of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in December 2010. Many believe that without the case brought against Qatar at the ILO in 2014, changes would have continued to be minimal and less effective.

The opinion of some stakeholders is that the reform programme became more challenging after the blockade enforced by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain and other states in June 2017 because of the resulting downturn of the Qatari economy and the crisis faced by a substantial number of companies (by which many migrant workers are affected negatively). However, some see also an opportunity for Qatar to effectively outdo their neighbours in terms of labour reform, in particular the UAE and Saudi, which could be a powerful motivation for Qatar to be more determined about the reforms than it was previously.

A few government officials stated that there were too many loopholes (legal and illegal) that allowed employers who mistreated their workers and were blacklisted to continue to recruit. One of them indicated that the electronic system allows in specific time windows to override the blacklist.

Some stakeholders and researchers said that the focus should not be so much on signing agreements, adopting new legislation, establishing committees, and making press announcements, but more on effective implementation, control and punishment with verified improvements for workers.

### 8.3 Recruitment

Most countries with a large number of nationals working in low-income jobs in Qatar have specific regulations and official channels through which workers may be recruited for foreign employment. Their regulations, among other things, may require minimum wages for their nationals in order to be authorised to migrate and for contracts to be approved by them. These regulations were put in place to enhance working conditions and reduce exploitation, for example the paying of unofficial recruitment charges.

However, payment by workers for recruitment is widespread according to many stakeholders and researchers, including officials of both countries of origin of migrants as well as Qatar. Qatar government officials generally claim that these problems occur exclusively in the countries of origin and therefore are beyond their responsibility. Some representatives of countries of origin, while to some extent acknowledging that there may be problems in their countries for those who migrate outside the official channels, are convinced that the problems are generated largely by Qatari employers (and recruiters) who simply refuse to pay recruitment costs and are enabled by the lack of effective control on the Qatari side.

According to a stakeholder who has long worked in the recruitment sector, of the approximately 900 recruitment agencies operating, none follows fully the law, and many have set up rather complex systems to continue to make money illegally. This stakeholder said that no recruitment company was blacklisted. Agencies and Qataris are benefitting from illegal payments made by foreign workers. The transactions are hard to detect because workers are reluctant to name an agent or an agency.

According to multiple stakeholders, the issue of free visas is a major problem. According to them, there are many workers (by estimates of some representatives of countries of origin of migrants, there are thousands of their nationals every year) coming to Qatar, as one stakeholder put it, “without being able to find the company” and, as another indicated, there are specific places in the city where many of the free visa holders sojourn and hangout under miserable conditions. According to stakeholders, it may be unfair to exclusively blame Qataris for any poor living or working conditions of low-income workers. For example, while large hotels with an international brand are locally-owned, their management is largely foreign-owned.

Another stakeholder indicated that visas are transformed from dependence to work visa and that some of these operations take place neither in the country of origin nor in Qatar but in a third country (e.g., Singapore).

The Qatar government recognised that there are problems in the recruitment process and has contracted a private firm to establish Qatar Visa Centers (QVCs) in many countries starting with Sri

Lanka and then Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Tunisia (the first QVC was opened in Colombo in October 2018). QVCs would do all medical and security checks that otherwise, in part, would have been done upon arrival in Qatar. They will also make sure that the contract signed before leaving for Qatar will not be altered or substituted in Qatar. Some stakeholders said that this, in principle, is a positive development but were doubtful whether the QVCs will actually be able to cut, let alone eliminate, the recruitment costs incurred by migrants. Others admitted that maybe some costs (e.g., those concerning medical test) may be cut but others may not.

Representatives of countries of origin of migrants have at least two mandates. One is the protection of their nationals from exploitation and abuse. The other is to promote the employment of their nationals in Qatar. This is especially the case with countries having a large population and high unemployment. These countries face a challenge to increase the hiring of their nationals in Qatar in the face of competition from other countries of origin.

A major concern for the Qatar government is to make sure that foreign workers have the necessary skills to work efficiently in the positions they take up in Qatar.

The general opinion of several human resource managers in companies is that they abide by all the rules but do favour less regulation instead of more. For any new regulation that is adopted, they want the legislator to make sure that it does not add an unreasonable burden on their costs for recruitment and management of workers. Some human resource managers prefer more control in order to punish those who do not abide by the rules.

Stakeholders committed to ethical recruitment stated that they have very limited business because there is no interest from employers to pay more for recruitment.

In early 2018, one representative of a country of origin received an increasing number of complaints from their nationals about contract violations, including contract substitution and payment issues by recruitment companies, subcontracting companies as well as companies operating in the hospitality and cleaning sectors. Therefore, advice was issued for their nationals to seek employment directly in hospitals, schools, and hotels without using recruitment companies.

## 8.4 Wages and payments

The responses received from various stakeholders and researchers confirm many of the issues that were learned from the FGDs:

- It is very frequently from the agreed amount that deductions are made, e.g. for various items such as food, transportation, etc.
- Timely payment is a major issue for many workers; many are not paid on time. This seems to be especially true in the domestic work sector but also in the case of cleaning services which partially have taken over from in-house domestic services.
- Working hours are often longer than those specified in the contracts. Overtime is not paid.
- Even with many workers registered in the WPS, many abuses (no bank cards, withdrawals by third parties, pay back) are taking place.
- Obtaining transfers is also a major issue for a substantial number of workers.

The countries of origin favour the introduction of minimum wages. In fact, an increasing number of countries have introduced their own minimum wages. In the fall of 2017, Qatar instituted a temporary minimum wage of QR750. It also started a qualitative research in India and Nepal to assess what the minimum wage would effectively need to be for making the migration experience worthwhile. Some stakeholders, while welcoming the introduction of a minimum wage as positive, stressed that one should also take into account the effective recruitment costs for workers and address the deductions that are made.

While welcoming the introduction of payment of gratuity at the end of contract, stakeholders criticised the fact that the calculation of gratuity started only from the day of introduction of the new law.

One key issue according to stakeholders is that employers, in order to get permission to employ, show a contract of two years but already know that effectively the work is only for a few months.

## 8.5 Control

Effective inspection by stakeholders of the countries of origin, researchers, international organisations and some Qatari officials is key to making sure that labour regulations are effectively implemented. The Qatar government produced detailed statistics for ILO on labour inspection covering the first semester of 2017 to show that it was committed to reform.<sup>5</sup> Many stakeholders stress that labour inspection is one of the weakest points in the Qatari system. According to them, there were too few labour inspectors and they were not equipped to actually detect problems (recently, the number has increased and a training programme has been designed for them).

As elsewhere in the Gulf, the relatively small number of inspectors vis-à-vis the number of companies and (foreign) workers and the lack of data sharing by various ministries and agencies are major obstacles to effectively inspect. Also, it was mentioned that labour inspector jobs are not among the most wanted and that the salaries may not be sufficient to effectively attract enough inspectors.

Representatives of countries of origin of migrants do their own checks on those who want to employ their nationals (the minimal check is often the companies' WPS statements, or in the case of a new company, contracts and subcontracts). Some pointed to their limited resources in doing checks on employers. But sometimes they also faced resistance from Qatar government officials as these background checks of companies would be an infringement of Qatari sovereignty and from business owners who felt that this was an unwanted intrusion in their business. One stakeholder's reply to these objections was that he simply helps the employer to correctly implement Qatari laws. Last but not the least, stakeholders said that employers in Qatar may exert significant pressure on labour attaches to circumvent procedures and background checks.

A couple of stakeholders mentioned that the chances of problems for low-income workers were higher in smaller companies than in larger, international ones. This is because larger international companies seem to be abiding better to the rules. They are also subject to more scrutiny given the attention Qatar receives in the international press. Also, large Qatari companies do inspections of the contractors working for them. For that reason, the conditions in the large construction companies are considered generally better than in the hospitality sector.

5. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_586479.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_586479.pdf)



According to some stakeholders, inspection of accommodation should also be intensified, and not only contractual issues.

One stakeholder stressed that the country is small and that labour inspectors are likely to know the owner which may take away the effectiveness of the inspection. The same stakeholder said that there is the impression that companies owned by large Qatari families are not seriously inspected.

Also, stakeholders and researchers indicated that the commitment of the Qatar Foundation and the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SCDL) to high international standards have provided for more control and compliance of companies that are contracted by them, especially larger construction companies.

However, a few stakeholders, including a government official, stated that companies/employers who have been blacklisted because they were caught operating outside the law are still able to hire because of some loopholes in the system (including a specific time window in which applications for the recruitment of new workers can be filed, overriding the blacklist).

One stakeholder in the recruitment sector said that it is impossible to operate if one sticks 100 per cent to law, partially because of the requests by the companies (or families) where the workers need to be employed.

One stakeholder insisted that it is too easy to establish a company in Qatar (at least 1,000 per month according to him) and that there are no serious institutional checks on them, while it is impossible for representatives of countries of origin to check all those who want to recruit their nationals. Thus, companies can be established with the main or unique purpose to obtain free visas and recruit workers. This may even be possible for owners who have been blacklisted because, as one stakeholder put it, blacklisting is per company not per owner.

A few stakeholders said that representatives of the countries of origin should get more resources to check on employers/companies before allowing them to hire their nationals and after hiring must see whether their national continue to work and receive the agreed salary.

One stakeholder stated that if Qatar would check the issue of free visas that leave workers in extremely difficult situations wherein they have no or only low-paid work while having to pay their employer/sponsor to ensure they can stay in the country, petty crime would be reduced.

## **8.6 Redress**

Until the end of 2017, there were a number of redress venues in the Qatari system: The Ministry of Labour (MADLSA), The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) and the Qatar court system.

In March 2018, Qatar set up the Workers Dispute Settlement Committees (WDSC) at the MADLSA which aim at providing additional and better opportunities for redress. According to the law, amicable settlements are sought within seven days. Committees meet within three days. Decisions are made in 21 days. Appeals take 30 days.

The ILO, after opening its office in Doha in April 2018, helps workers to file their complaints at the Ministry of Labour.

Stakeholders admit that more time is needed to make a full assessment of the WDSCs. However, some concerns were voiced. The employees dealing directly with the workers are not sufficient in number and are not sufficiently well trained and willing to help. Language poses an obstacle for workers (employees not speaking their language, documents not available in the worker's language). The committees only want to look into payment issues and refer any other issues (e.g., accommodation, threats, etc.) to the NHRC.

The work of NHRC is praised by a number of stakeholders as it is able to connect to all sorts of actors (employers, sponsors) and institutions (MADLSA, CID) and has native speakers at the front desks.

In October 2018, a stakeholder stated that effectively the 21-day limit was not respected and that cases got stuck for months. One of the issues, as pointed out by a stakeholder, is that employers do not show up. Another stakeholder said statistics on cases (numbers, type of complaint, decisions, etc.) should become publicly available. An assessment of one stakeholder was that approximately 80 per cent of the cases brought to the WDSC were decided in favour of the worker. Another stakeholder said that even if the process takes more time, it is the outcome that counts. This idea is very much contested by representatives of countries of origin: time is essential for low-income workers who may not have been paid for months, have no reserves to pay costs for translations etc., and have no money to continue to stay in Qatar for a long procedure to effectively be paid.

According to some stakeholders, there should be a single place to file all sorts of complaints instead of the worker having to go to multiple places. As mentioned previously, language is also a barrier for those who do not speak Arabic or English well. Besides, there is the issue of translation costs.

Other stakeholders insisted that there should be a mechanism for a single company/employer to file collective complaints instead of multiple individual complaints.

It has further been stated that the Qatar government should be faster in its reactions. If a company does not pay within seven days of the established date (the limit imposed by the WPS law), an immediate reaction should be triggered. It should not be necessary for the workers to come forward for the government to act.

The establishment of a fund for workers to be paid in case their employer did not pay them was advocated by a number of stakeholders. As one stakeholder put it, the worker should not have to wait until the end of the process but should be compensated quickly as time is crucial for low-income workers who often are forced to leave Qatar before their case has been heard and compensation has been paid. In the fall of 2018, the Worker's Support and Insurance Fund for private sector and domestic workers was established.

Another stakeholder stressed that once there is a solid case against an employer, workers should be facilitated in transferring to another job. Workers are relatively low paid if you take into account the cost of living in Qatar, and they have little reserves and, therefore, cannot be idle for long.

At any rate, various stakeholders cited major effective obstacles for workers to access redress, including fear of retribution by the employer. Numerous cases were cited in which a worker was reported to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) as absconding by his/her employer when (s)he was

seeking information or intended to file a complaint. It ended up in the worker being deported, even if this is legally not allowed to happen. If a worker has formally filed a complaint, (s)he should be automatically be protected against the accusation of absconding and, instead, the employer must be persecuted. No statistics are available on how many workers who were seeking to inform or complain were denounced as absconding and were deported nor how many employers were punished for falsely filing an absconding report against an employee who filed a complaint. Stakeholders referred to two different cases in which persons were reported to be absconding while the worker had been apprehended at the company's accommodation or a domestic worker at the house of the employer.

## **8.7 Representatives of countries of origin and the relationship of Qatar government**

The Qatar government and the governments of the countries of origin of migrants, as demonstrated in this section, have multiple interests to cooperate with their counterpart on a number of issues. While multilateral cooperation exists in the form of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD), the preferred way expressed by both sides is bilateral. Qatar has signed a large number of such bilateral agreements.

Generally, representatives of countries of origin praise the communication with officials at MADLSA to explain new legislation and address critical issues and expected the situation to improve over the coming years.

The Qatar government provides representatives of countries of origin with the numbers of their nationals in the country and in which sector they are employed.

Some stakeholders praise the positive attitude of MADLSA and specifically the fact that the labour relations department is available 24 hours a day on WhatsApp.

According to one stakeholder, meetings of labour attaches with MADLSA take place on a regular basis (mostly, every two months).

## **8.8 Stakeholders' suggestions for fixing problems**

Among the suggestions we heard from the various stakeholders we interviewed are the following:

- Make more serious efforts to enforce existing laws
- Increase the number of labour inspectors, as well as their capacity and independence, avoiding even the impression that large local companies are exempt from serious labour inspection
- Provide positive publicity to companies that do ethical recruitment and fully abide by the law
- A one-stop-shop for all labour complaints, salaries, accommodation, maltreatment should be established, so that workers do not have to go to more than one place
- Allowing for class cases against employers by employees who want to file a complaint to a single employer
- Countries of origin should empower their representatives in the embassies in Qatar.
- If a company has been caught as a result of non-compliance with the laws not only should it be effectively blacklisted, it should not have the chance to recruit/hire again. This includes the owner.

- If one company of a larger business group has been blacklisted, other companies of the same group should also be blacklisted.
- Blacklisted companies should be publicised – this should work as an additional deterrent.
- More ATMs should be provided for workers to avoid queues and especially the practice of other persons imposing themselves to withdraw money.
- Make sure that irregular labour camps (including farms) are closed as soon as possible.
- Not only should minimum wage be effectively implemented but regulations should cover all other issues (accommodation, transportation, food, medical assistance, etc.)
- Control of recruitment agencies should be intensified and be more in depth
- Employers should feel more responsible and be forced to pay costs for workers to be recruited directly (medical, visas, airfare, etc.). This could cut the costs to workers at least by 50-60 per cent. Employers should be asking recruited workers what they paid to whom to be recruited.
- Make sure that the QVCs investigate how much workers were paid before showing up at the QVCs and seeking to actively cut these costs. If the QVCs would only deal with medical testing and contract registration, they could save two days of processing in Qatar, may counter contract substitution (but there is no certainty), and will cut very little on the recruitment costs to the worker.
- Create sports facilities around large labour camps (e.g., Asian Town) and organise sports events as well as cultural events for the workers. This would prevent workers from hanging out in an inhospitable terrain and would also cut alcohol consumption.
- Create skill upgrading courses physically (not too distant from accommodation) and financially (no costs) accessible to all migrant workers.
- There should be more checks on the establishment of new companies to make sure that they are not owned by someone who is blacklisted and they effectively start a new activity and do not simply obtain free visas.

## PART 9: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

Overall, Qatar's legislation seems to provide several different guidelines, if implemented effectively, to ensure reasonably good working and living conditions for low-income foreign workers in the country.

However, the apparent weakness of labour inspections of both the working and living places of the workers allows for numerous violations of the existing laws and their widespread non-observance.

This seems to be the case for a large number of companies, both in the hospitality and the construction sectors. It also appears that working and living conditions in the relatively larger companies are somewhat better than in the smaller companies.

One example of potentially good legislation is the Wage Protection System (WPS) which was introduced in 2015. Among the workers we studied, only 16 per cent were paid in cash and not through the bank. However, 36 per cent of the workers said that their payments were late, which shows that WPS does not guarantee timely payment. Furthermore, even in cases where their dues are transferred to the workers' personal bank accounts, frequently camp/company staff withdraws money for them, generally charging a commission. Statistics on how many workers effectively have a bank account to which all the payments are made (and withdrawn by the worker himself/herself) are not publicly available (except for the report of the Qatar government to the ILO, 2017). But even these figures would not be able to tell how many workers manage their account in full and how many do not.

One area where legislation is absent is overtime work. Most workers reported that they had to work a substantial number of hours more than written in their contract, very often without any financial or other compensation.

From stakeholder interviews, we have learned that the redress system does not work sufficiently well yet. The system, including the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), the ILO Representation, and the Workers Dispute Settlement Committees (WDSC), on paper protects workers but the workers, in fact, are not sufficiently informed about these institutions and do not have the instruments or skills to navigate the system. With or without legal assistance, the system is not easy to access and even if the outcome eventually is in favour of the workers, it takes too much time. However, often workers do not make a complaint because of misinformation and fear of retribution, but even if they make a complaint, they may not get timely redress (generally payments) and may have to leave Qatar without the issue being resolved. Workers frequently said that they were afraid that they might lose their job or would be declared as absconding if they lodged a complaint with the authorities.

From the workers' and stakeholder interviews we know that the housing situation for low-income workers in the hospitality sector is poor. There are too many loopholes for companies to not comply with the law. There are cases in which workers prefer to get a housing allowance from their employer instead of housing provided by the employer and decide themselves to live with more people in an apartment than the law indicates. One stakeholder suggests that the reason is to save as much as possible. Another stakeholder said that housing is very expensive, and workers are forced to live in crowded poorly equipped apartments. At any rate, all except one group of interviewed workers in this project lived in company provided housing. Control by authorities of housing is considered limited at best.

Another major concern are the finances of the workers. Low-income workers seem to accept the fact that they pay substantial fees to be recruited and that it takes them, on average, one year to pay off their debts. This issue is not sufficiently addressed by companies, countries of origin, or Qatar.

But also, beyond the recruitment costs, workers have other financial challenges. Often, they are paid less than originally agreed, they are not paid extra or not paid at all for overtime, they are charged fees they should not be charged, and they pay for expensive medical and other certificates while their income may not have risen for years, even after contract renewal. In addition, the cost of living in Qatar has continuously been rising.

## Recommendations

We have the following recommendations for three categories of stakeholders.

### *A. Companies*

1. Abide by rules. Ensure that the terms of the contract are not violated, workers are not asked to work longer hours without adequate compensation, and workers are provided accommodation in line with the legal prescriptions;
2. Conduct internal monitoring and reporting to make sure that the workers are treated fairly;
3. Use good practices to advertise job openings to minimise misinformation and fraudulent hiring by intermediaries.

### *B. Governments of countries of origin*

1. Increase efforts to eliminate all recruitment costs incurred by workers to procure a job in Qatar;
2. Invest more in assistance to nationals, especially in cases where mediation between employers and the workers is needed, and any other kind of protection and aid is required;
3. Engage the Qatar government through establishing bilateral agreements, with effective follow-up and implementation. Get as much data as possible on their nationals in Qatar.

### *C. Qatar government*

#### General recommendations

1. Critically review legislation and practices in Qatar using standards based on principles spelled out in the Global Compact on Migration (GCM);
2. Understand that adopting legislation is not sufficient to address issues;
3. Monitor adopted legislation using various sorts of data, do widespread unannounced labour inspections, and conduct (and commission) independent surveys among workers;
4. Publish much more data that would facilitate more research, better understanding, and more efficient and effective knowledge-based policies;
5. Engage proactively with stakeholders (business community and countries of origin of migrants) as well as with (independent) researchers.

#### Specific recommendations for the Qatar government

1. Evaluate critically and extensively the WPS system, going beyond counting the number of worker's bank accounts and the number of workers. Do confidential interviews with workers to ascertain effective implementation of the system. Check the entire procedure and electronic system for loopholes and eliminate them. Make sure that the results of the evaluation are used in reviewing the WPS system and the way inspections are done. Publish the results.
2. Continuously evaluate the entire redress system, focussing on all the cases brought to NHRC, ILO and WDRC. Focus on the number of cases; the type of complaint; the complainant; the

employer; the outcome of the complaint, how much time it took from the first complaint to the final decision; how the worker sustained him- or herself; whether the workers actually obtained their dues and got justice. Make sure that a person who seeks information to file a complaint and those who effectively file a complaint are fully protected against any repercussions, including deportation.

3. Take labour inspection seriously by better training of inspectors, their monitoring and evaluation instruments, etc. Design a system that minimises the chances that labour inspectors can be corrupted without being detected. Make labour inspection accessible to workers. Protect whistle-blowers. After a seven days' delay in payment, make sure that immediate inspection is triggered.
4. Introduce legislation on overtime, clocking for measurement, and institute effective payment as part of the contract.
5. Make more efforts to ensure that workers understand their rights and the system of redress, also by designing a bilingual contract, and make sure the workers actually get a copy.
6. Design a mechanism of mandatory increase of salary every year on the basis of increasing cost of living and time on the job.
7. Review the documents needed by workers to obtain sick leave and other issues and the costs associated with them (including typing and translation) and seek to simplify and reduce costs.
8. Inspect and improve housing conditions, especially persons per room, room size, and cleaning, regularly and unannounced.
9. Compare what labour (and migration) related data are published by Qatar and what data are published by European countries, the US, Canada as well as by other countries such as Singapore and design and implement a plan to make sure the existing gaps are closed.
10. Make full use of the reform programme proposed by the ILO in order to provide fair and rewarding working and living conditions for workers to reap the greatest benefits for Qatar as well as the migrant workers.
11. Finally, continuously conduct research to evaluate in-depth the living and working conditions of workers and publish the data.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abella, Manolo. "The High Cost of Migrating for Work to the Gulf." In *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries*, eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2018. <http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/book/GRM%202017%20-%20Volume%20-%20Definitive%20-%202018-06-15.pdf>.
- Adnan, Wifag, Christine Zenker. "Reforming the Recruitment Process of Low-Skilled Labor in the UAE." Zayed University, Working Paper No. ZU-WP 2016-002, 2016. [https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/\\_documents/Reforming%20the%20Recruitment%20Process%20of%20Low-skilled%20Labor%20in%20the%20UAE.pdf](https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/_documents/Reforming%20the%20Recruitment%20Process%20of%20Low-skilled%20Labor%20in%20the%20UAE.pdf).
- Alfarhan, Usamah F. "Earnings Differentials and Nationalisation Policies in GCC's Private Labour Markets." In *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries*, eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2018. <http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/book/GRM%202017%20-%20Volume%20-%20Definitive%20-%202018-06-15.pdf>.
- Alhashemi, Ahmed and Dina Habib. "Exploring Links between Post-Arrival Initiatives and Labour Market Outcomes of Migrants." In *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries* eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Cambridge Research Centre, 2018. <http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/book/GRM%202017%20-%20Volume%20-%20Definitive%20-%202018-06-15.pdf>.
- Alkhouri, Ali M. "The Challenge of Identity in a Changing World: The Case of GCC Countries." Conference Proceedings, "The 21st-Century Gulf: The Challenge of Identity," University of Exeter, UK. June 30 - July 3, 2010.
- Amnesty International 2016. "The Ugly Side of the Beautiful Game: Exploitation of Migrant Workers on a Qatar 2022 World Cup Site." 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/3548/2016/en/>.
- Babar, Zahra. "Free Mobility Within the Gulf Cooperation Council." Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University, 2011. <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/558290/CIRSOccasionalPaper8ZahraBabar2011.pdf>.
- Bjornsson, Olof. "Shattered Dreams: Migrant Workers and Rights Violations in the Dubai Tourism Sector." Swedwatch, 2015. [https://fairaction.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/75\\_dubai\\_lowres\\_new.pdf](https://fairaction.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/75_dubai_lowres_new.pdf).
- Bruslé, Tristan. "What Kind of Place is This? Daily Life, Privacy and the Inmate Metaphor in a Nepalese Workers' Labour Camp (Qatar)." *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* (2012: 6). <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3446>.
- Business and Human Rights Centre. "Walls of Silence: Construction Industry Failing to Tackle Abuse of Migrant Workers in the Gulf." 2018. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/>



- en/%E2%80%9Cwall-of-silence%E2%80%9D-construction-industry-failing-to-tackle-abuse-of-migrant-workers-in-the-gulf.
- Clemens, Michael. "Seize the Spotlight: A Case for Gulf Cooperation Council Engagement in Research on the Effects of Labor Migration." Centre for Global Development, 2013. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/ft/seize-spotlight-case-gulf-cooperation-council-engagement-research-effects-labor>.
- Diop, Abdoulaye, Trevor Johnston and Kien Trung Le. 2018. "Migration Policies across the GCC: Challenges in Reforming the Kafala." In *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries*, eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Cambridge Research Centre, 2018.
- Diop, Abdoulaye, Kien Trung Le, and Darwish Alemadi. "Attitudes toward Expatriate and Labor Migrant Workers in the Arab Gulf Countries: Mixed Results from Qatar." Qatar Foundation Annual Research Forum Proceedings: Vol. 2010, AHO6.
- Diop, Abdoulaye, Mark Tessler, Kien Trung Le, Darwish Alemadi, and David Howell. "Attitudes towards Migrant Workers in the GCC: Evidence from Qatar." *Journal of Arabian Studies* (2012: 2): 173-187.
- Dito, Mohammad. "Kafala: Foundations of Migrant Exclusion in GCC Labour Markets." In *Transit States: Labour, Migration & Citizenship in the Gulf*, eds. Abdulhadi Khalaf, Omar Alshehabi, Adam Hanieh. Pluto Press, 2015.
- Fargues, Philippe, Françoise De Bel-Air. "Migration to the Gulf States: The Political Economy of Exceptionalism." In *Global Migration: Old Assumptions, New Dynamics*, eds. D. Acosta Arcarazo and A. Wiesbrock. Praeger, 2015. Fargues, Philippe, Nasra M. Shah (eds.) 2018. *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries*. Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2018 <http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/book/GRM%202017%20-%20Volume%20-%20Definitive%20-%202018-06-15.pdf>.
- Fargues, Philippe, Nasra M. Shah (eds.) *Skilful Survivals: Irregular Migration to the Gulf*. Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2017. <http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/book/GLMM%20-%20IM%20Volume%20-%20Complete.pdf>.
- Forstenlechner, Ingo, Emilie Jane Rutledge. "The GCC's 'Demographic Imbalance': Perceptions, Realities and Policy Options." Middle East Policy Council, 2011. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00508.x>.
- Gardner, Andrew. *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain*. Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press, 2010. <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=books>.
- . "Why Do They Keep Coming? Labor Migrants in the Gulf States." In *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf*, eds. Mehran Kamrava and Zahra Babar. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. [https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1736&context=faculty\\_pubs](https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1736&context=faculty_pubs).

- Gardner, Andrew, Silvia Pessoa and Laura M. Harkness. "Labour Migrants and Access to Justice in Contemporary Qatar." University of Puget Sound/LSE Middle East Centre, 2014. [https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.ae/&httpsredir=1&article=4291&context=faculty\\_pubs](https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.ae/&httpsredir=1&article=4291&context=faculty_pubs).
- Gardner, Andrew, Silvia Pessoa, Abdoulaye Diop, Kaltham AlGhanim, Kien Trung Le, and Laura Harkness. "A Portrait of Low-Income Migrants in Contemporary Qatar." *Journal of Arabian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2013): 1-17. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21534764.2013.806076?journalCode=rjab20>.
- Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme Demographic and Economic Database. 2018. <http://gulfmigration.eu/glmm-database/demographic-and-economic-module/>.
- Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme. Legal Database. 2018. <http://gulfmigration.eu/glmm-database/legal-module/>.
- Herb, Michael. "Understanding the Politics of Labour Market Policies in the GCC States." Paper prepared for the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, December 1-4, 2011.
- Human Rights Watch. *I Was Sold: Abuse and Exploitation of Migrant Domestic Workers in Oman*. 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/13/i-was-sold/abuse-and-exploitation-migrant-domestic-workers-oman>.
- . *I Already Bought You: Abuse and Exploitation of Female Migrant Domestic Workers in the United Arab Emirates*. 2014. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/10/22/i-already-bought-you/abuse-and-exploitation-female-migrant-domestic-workers-united>.
- . *Building Towers, Cheating Workers: Exploitation of Migrant Construction Workers in the United Arab Emirates*. 2006. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/11/11/building-towers-cheating-workers/exploitation-migrant-construction-workers-united>.
- . *The Island of Happiness: Exploitation of Migrant Workers on Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi*. 2009. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/05/19/island-happiness/exploitation-migrant-workers-saadiyat-island-abu-dhabi>.
- International Labour Organisation. 2017. "Employer-Migrant Worker Relationships in the Middle East: Exploring Scope for Internal Labor Market Mobility and Fair Migration." 2017. [http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS\\_552697/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_552697/lang--en/index.htm).
- . "The Bali Declaration." Adopted at the 16th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting in Bali, Indonesia, December 6-9, 2016. [http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/regional-meetings/asia/aprm-16/reports/WCMS\\_537445/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/regional-meetings/asia/aprm-16/reports/WCMS_537445/lang--en/index.htm).
- International Organization for Migration. "Research on the Labour Recruitment Industry between United Arab Emirates, Kerala (India), and Nepal." 2016. [https://gfmf.org/files/documents/research\\_on\\_labour\\_recruitment\\_industry\\_between\\_uae\\_kerala\\_and\\_nepal\\_1.pdf](https://gfmf.org/files/documents/research_on_labour_recruitment_industry_between_uae_kerala_and_nepal_1.pdf).
- Jayaweera, Hiranthi and Elizabeth Shlala. "Access to Healthcare, Insurance Provision and Health Status of Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers." Center on Migration, Policy and Society

- (COMPAS), University of Oxford, 2015. [https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/media/PR-2015-Health\\_Sri\\_Lankan\\_Migrant\\_Domestic\\_Workers1.pdf](https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/media/PR-2015-Health_Sri_Lankan_Migrant_Domestic_Workers1.pdf).
- Jones, Katherine. "Recruitment Monitoring and Migrant Welfare Assistance: What Works?" International Organization for Migration, 2014. [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/migrated\\_files/What-We-Do/docs/Recruitment-Monitoring-Book.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/migrated_files/What-We-Do/docs/Recruitment-Monitoring-Book.pdf).
- Jureidini, Ray. "Wage Protection Systems and Programmes in the GCC." In *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries*, eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2018.
- . "Ways Forward in Recruitment of Low-Skilled Migrant Workers in the Asia-Arab States Corridor." International Labour Organisation. Beirut, 2016. <https://www.migrant-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Jureidini-ILO-White-Paper-Labour-Recruitment-Reform.pdf>.
- "Irregular Migration in Qatar: The Role of Legislation, Policies, and Practices." In *Skilful Survivals: Irregular Migration to the Gulf*, eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2017.
- . "Transnational Culture of Corruption in Migrant Labour Recruitment." International Organization for Migration, 2017. [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/transnational\\_culture.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/transnational_culture.pdf).
- . "Migrant Labour Recruitment to Qatar." Qatar Foundation's Migrant Worker Welfare Initiative, 2014. [http://www.qscience.com/userimages/ContentEditor/1404811243939/Migrant\\_Labour\\_Recruitment\\_to\\_Qatar\\_Web\\_Final.pdf](http://www.qscience.com/userimages/ContentEditor/1404811243939/Migrant_Labour_Recruitment_to_Qatar_Web_Final.pdf).
- Keane, D. and N. McGeehan. "Enforcing Migrant Workers' Rights in the United Arab Emirates." *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 15, no.1 (2008): 81-115.
- Khalaf, Sulayman, and Saad Alkobaisi 1999. "Migrants' Strategies of Coping and Patterns of Accommodation in the Oil-Rich Gulf Societies: Evidence from the UAE." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 271-298.
- Longva, Anh Nga. *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait*. Michigan: Westview Press, 1997.
- Lori, Noora. "Temporary Workers or Permanent Migrants? The Kafala System and Contestations over Residency in the Arab Gulf States." IFRI (Institut français des relations internationales), 2012.
- Malit, Froilan. "Frontlines of Global Migration: Philippine State's Bureaucrats Role in Migration Diplomacy and Workers' Welfare in the Gulf Countries." In *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries*, eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Cambridge Research Centre, 2018. <http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/book/GRM%202017%20-%20Volume%20-%20Definitive%20-%202018-06-15.pdf>.
- Malit, Froilan, and George Naufal. "Asymmetric Information under the Kafala Sponsorship System: Impacts on Foreign Domestic Workers' Income and Employment Status in the GCC Countries." *International Migration* 54 (2016): 76-90.

- Malit, Froilan, Dulce Ledesma, and George Naufal. Forthcoming. "Post-Arrival Orientation Services in the Gulf Countries: Lessons from the Philippines."
- Martin, Philip and Froilan Malit. "A New Era for Labor Migration in the Gulf Countries?" *Migration Letters* 14 (2016): 113-126.
- Martin, Philip. *Merchants of Labour: Recruiters and International Labour Migration*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Parennas, Rachel and Rachel Silvey. "Domestic Workers Refusing Neo-Slavery in the UAE." 2016. *Contexts* 15 (2016): 36-41.
- Rahman, Anisur. "Migration and Human Rights in the Gulf." In *Migration and the Gulf, Viewpoints*, The Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., 2010.
- Rajan, Irudaya and Arya Sureshi. "Institutional Strengthening of the Offices of Labour Attaches of India in Gulf: Field Experiences from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar." In *India Migration Report 2016*.
- Segall, David, and Sarah Labowitz. "Making Workers Pay: Recruitment of the Migrant Labor Force in the Gulf Construction Industry." New York Center for Business and Ethics, 2017. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/547df270e4b0ba184dfc490e/t/58ec1e9ed1758e3915cb4c5b/1491869348464/FINALFINAL-MakingWorkersPay-Report-Digital.pdf>.
- Shah, Nasra M. "Emigration Policies of Major Asian Countries Sending Temporary Labour Migrants to the Gulf." In *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries* eds. Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah. Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2018.
- . "Restrictive Labor Immigration Policies in the Oil-Rich Gulf: Effectiveness and Implications for Sending Countries." Proceedings of United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities. Beirut, May 15-17, 2006. UN/POP/EGM/2006/3.
- Wells, Jill. "Improving Employment Standards in Construction in Qatar." Engineers Against Poverty, 2014. <http://www.engineersagainstpoverity.org/documentdownload.axd?documentresourceid=25&ccc=gb>.
- Zahra, Maysa. "The Legal Framework of the Sponsorship Systems of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: A Comparative Examination." GLMM-EN-No.10/2015. [http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM\\_EN\\_2015\\_10.pdf](http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2015_10.pdf).

## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

### 1. Relevant previous studies

Scholars have used three methods to analyse the working and living conditions of low-income migrant workers in the Gulf: participant observation, semi-structured individual or group interviews, and statistical surveys based on structured questionnaires.

One of the rare examples of participant observation is the study carried out by Bruslé in Qatar (2012). It provides a unique understanding of the daily lives and practices of a group of migrants, but no systematic assessment of their working and living conditions.

A good example of semi-structured individual interviews, again in Qatar, can be found in Gardner, Pessoa and Harkness (2014). Twenty-five interviews with migrant workers who had some interaction with the justice system and 24 with experts provide a detailed picture of how low-income workers relate to justice. However, this material says nothing about the experience of those who could not or did not get access to justice or about the web of individual and contextual factors that bring migrants to the justice system.

Finally, a Qatari survey of 2012 (SESRI, 2015; Gardner, Pessoa, Diop, Al-Ghanim, and Le Trung 2013) provides detailed descriptive statistics of a large number of individual variables.<sup>6</sup> It contains only univariate analyses, however: each variable is described separately by the distribution of the sample among broad categories and, for quantitative variables, the mean and standard error. Key questions on “What conjunction of individual and contextual factors result in what particular experience?” are not asked and therefore not answered. The survey does not inform about processes. It provides a “portrait”: a high-resolution snapshot, but still a static picture.

### 2. Survey among migrant workers: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The first methodology that we thought of was a statistical survey consisting of face-to-face structured or semi-structured interviews of a representative sample of migrants in the hospitality and construction sectors. Such a survey, however, proved not to be feasible in the context of Qatar. In this country, like in many others, conducting a statistical survey in the population is subject to administrative authorisation. For this, the survey’s questionnaire must successfully pass through a detailed screening process. Tackling a highly sensitive topic—the situation of migrant workers in GCC states which every now and then comes under the scrutiny of human rights organisations and in the spotlight of global media—it seemed that the questionnaire could be censored and the whole survey would be undoable. The best alternative option was to conduct focus group discussions (FGDs).

The FGD methodology we applied is expected to fill some of the gaps of the survey method as well as the case study method. While in some ways it has limitations compared to quantitative surveys (small

---

6. Age, nationality, marital status, number of dependent children, education, religion, duration of stay, recruitment process, fees paid in the process of obtaining first employment, passport withholding; moving to GCC despite being aware of difficulties; signing a contract prior to arriving to the GCC Housing Accommodations; Food Allowances; Transportation to and from work Weekly Rest Days; Annual Leave; Health & accident insurance provided by employer financial situation and Remittances; Amount of Money Sent in the Past 12 Months Remittance Methods; Satisfaction with the workplace; Level of migrant workers satisfaction towards wages / salaries, housing, food, transportation and medical care; Nationalities of workers’ friends; Future intentions.

samples gathered in FGDs do not allow detailed statistical analysis or quantitative conclusions), it also has significant advantages:

- Interviewed persons have plenty of room for pointing out critical issues that a fixed questionnaire may have missed such as, for example, coping strategies of migrant workers;
- The collective dynamics and exchange of experience within a group of peers is well adapted to capture processes and not only situations;
- Comparative analysis is built in the informed selection of individuals in a way as to maximise the internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of the groups; in particular, the proposed distribution of FGDs by nationality/age/and skills level within the sectors of hospitality and construction work offers a good substitute for representativeness;
- Discussion procedures can be adjusted from one FGD to the next in order to maximise the quantity and quality of information collected;
- It is expected that the relatively informal and secure setting of the FGD would enable respondents to speak more freely than they might in a labour camp situation or a mall. The FGDs in our study were held at the office of the company which assisted us in doing them, a neutral and secure location where the participants could be brought for the group discussion accompanied by refreshments.

For the purpose of the present survey, the hospitality sector—that caters for tourists, businessmen, expatriate communities, etc.—is defined in an inclusive way that covers: accommodation (hotels, bed and breakfast enterprises, and other places offering lodging); food and beverage (restaurants, fast food chains, coffee shops, etc.); taxi companies; cleaning service providers. The hospitality sector employs a variety of workers from maintenance workers, servers, waiters, porters and cooks to marketing agents, administrative staff and managers. Our survey focuses on the lower and middle levels of skills.

### *a) Sampling*

FGDs are carried out with a small number of participants in each group, ideally between seven and nine persons, in order to give sufficient time for each participant (10-20 minutes) without exceeding a total reasonable duration beyond which the participants' attention inevitably decreases (ca. 1.5-2 hours). On the other hand, the number of FGDs is itself limited by budgetary constraints. In the case of Qatar, 11 FGDs were conducted with a total of 88 participants. Because this number is at the same time too small for allowing statistics but big enough for capturing a wide spectrum of situations, sampling is a crucial step.

A representative sample is usually constructed by randomly selecting individuals in a list containing all the eligible individuals in the population (sampling frame). Moreover, in order to allow meaningful univariate as well as multivariate analyses, a sample must have sufficient size to be calculated on the basis of the desired accuracy of survey estimates. In our case, none of these two conditions is present: no list of all migrant workers in the hospitality and construction sectors in Qatar is available, and budget constraints limit the sample size to a number of individuals too small to make it possible to calculate basic statistics, beyond percentages.

In order to take full advantage of the FGD methodology, we opted for an informed sample based on our prior knowledge about the composition of the population by key characteristics and insights on

their possible relationship with the migrants' working and living conditions. The resulting sample, while not fully representative of the population of interest, adequately reflects the diversity of situations.

***b) Distribution of FGDs***

Groups were constructed separately for the hospitality and construction sectors. Each group was assembled in order to build trust and stimulate frank and open discussions between all participants about sensitive issues. Sharing a language was a first condition: it could be the migrants' native tongue (then limiting the diversity of nationalities around the table) or English for those whose occupation presupposes a good knowledge of this language (mid-skilled workers in the hospitality sector). Being of the same sex and having the same level of skills were other conditions. Within these constraints, 11 groups of eight participants each were constructed as follows:

- FGD1 - Construction - Low-Skilled - Males - South Asian
- FGD2 - Hospitality - Mid-Skilled - Males - Filipino
- FGD3 - Hospitality - Mid-Skilled - Females - Filipino
- FGD4 - Construction - Low-Skilled - Males - South Asian
- FGD5 - Hospitality - Low-Skilled - Males - South Asian
- FGD6 - Hospitality - Low-Skilled - Females - South Asian
- FGD7 - Hospitality - Low-Skilled - Males - Arabs
- FGD8 - Construction - Mid-Skilled - Males - South Asian
- FGD9 - Hospitality - Mid-Skilled - Males - South Asian
- FGD10 - Hospitality - Mid-Skilled - Females - African
- FGD11 - Hospitality - Low-Skilled - Females - South Asian

***c) Screening***

Characteristics used for screening individuals were the following:

- Sex
- Age
- Family composition in the origin country (marital status and number of children)
- Duration of stay in Qatar
- Citizenship and native language
- Occupation
- Company's name and size
- Contract signed in the home country and in Qatar
- Salary paid in bank or by bank transfer
- Problems faced by migrants

Regarding the last item in the list, because the goal was to understand the nature of work-related problems that migrants face and not all migrants have such problems, it was decided to add the fact of having experienced problems as an additional screening condition. Therefore, while our survey cannot

provide unbiased estimates of the proportion of migrants who face a particular problem, it provides a wealth of details about the nature of the problems experienced by migrants. An example of screening is provided in Table A1.

**Table A1 - Screening example: FGD5 - Hospitality - Low-Skilled - Males - South Asian**

Nationality	Marital status	No. of Kids	Occupation	Company Name	Education	Duration of Stay in Qatar	Age	Payment for Recruitment	Signed Contract in Home Country	Signed Contract in Qatar	Difference between Contracts	Salary Payment	Problems Experienced	Accommodation
Bangladeshi	single		cleaner	refused to disclose	Elementary	1 y	32	500000 takka	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	don't listen our problems	camp
Indian	single		cleaner	refused to disclose	Elementary	4 y	29	50000 rs	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	There is no bonus	camp
Indian	single		cleaner	refused to disclose	Elementary	5 y	30	400000 rs	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	low salary, much work	camp
Indian	married	1	cleaner	refused to disclose	Elementary	7 y	35	400000 rs	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	salary issue	camp
Bangladeshi	single		cleaner	refused to disclose	Elementary	7 y	33	500000 takka	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	not paid in time	camp
Nepali	married	2	waiter	refused to disclose	illiterate	2 y	30	1,80,0000nc	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	salary issue	camp
Nepali	single		helper	refused to disclose	illiterate	3 y	29	1,60,000	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	mistreatment	camp
Nepali	married	5	cleaner	refused to disclose	illiterate	7 y	42	1,50,000	No	Yes	N/A	bank transfer	mistreatment	camp



#### **d) Discussion guide**

At the beginning of each FGD, the discussion leader reads a statement explaining the academic purpose of the survey; who are the sponsors; what is researched (working and living conditions as they are perceived by the worker); for what purpose (understanding the reality and providing scientifically sound information for potentially improving situations); that their identity and answers will be protected; and then formally asking permission (informed consent) of each participant.

The discussion itself is structured along the following lines (see Discussion Guide in Appendix B):

- Part 1: Introduction of the participants
  - o Individual characteristics
  - o General appreciation of migration to Qatar
- Part 2: Working Conditions
  - o Recruitment: Who (agency, mediator...) and How (charges, contract ...)?
  - o Salary: Paid in full and on time? Cash or bank transfer? Allowances?
  - o Annual Leave: How many days? Paid? When?
  - o Working Hours: As stated in the contract? Overtime? Sick leave?
  - o *Kafeel*: Evaluation? Negative incident? Change of *kafeel*?
- Part 3: Housing and Living Conditions
  - o Level of satisfaction
  - o Specific questions for construction workers/other categories
- Part 4: Engagement with Fellow Citizens
  - o Solving problems
  - o Referring to embassy ...
- Part 5: Conclusion
  - o What should be done to improve working and living conditions?

Each FDG was recorded (audio and video) with consent of the participants. The audio was transcribed in its original language and subsequently translated into English if the discussion was held in a migrant's native language. As soon as the transcripts and translations of an FGD was fully checked, the audio and video tapes were destroyed by the company (in addition, all records used to recruit the participants into the FGDs were destroyed immediately after the FGDs had taken place).

#### **e) Method of analysis**

FGD transcripts provide a wealth of qualitative information (approximately 500 pages) that is used for the analysis in the following ways: coding and quoting.

**Coding:** The entire content of each FGD transcript is transformed into a series of simple statements corresponding to the list of topics in the discussion guide. Opinions expressed by participants on each topic are interpreted and coded in three categories: positive (statement reflects satisfaction), neutral (opinion expressed cannot be classified), and negative (statement reflects disapproval). It must be noted that not all participants in a given FGD express an opinion about each of the topics that were tackled in the course of the discussion, as some participants may stay silent if they consider the topic irrelevant to them or they generally agree with others but did not verbalise their opinion. Results of coding are summarised in our EXCEL database providing, by FDG and statement, the following indicators:

- + Number of positive views
- = Number of neutral views
- Number of negative views

N/A: Number of participants in FDGs in which the particular statement was not made.

**Quoting:** Whenever the words of the migrants themselves are quoted to reflect the exact opinions of the participants, we cite them verbatim as far as possible. Punctuation or minor addition is sometimes provided within brackets for achieving greater clarity of meaning

### 3. Stakeholders' interviews

#### a) Objectives

The objectives of stakeholder interviews included:

- Obtaining information essential to making a comprehensive assessment of the working and living conditions of the low-income workers
- Obtaining views of actors that formulate, implement and enforce policies or try to change them
- Establishing direct relationships with the stakeholders as one of the main channels of outreach for communicating the findings and recommendations of the project

#### b) Categories of stakeholders

Persons interviewed included representatives of:

- Qatar government (4)
- Countries with nationals working in Qatar (6)
- Hospitality and construction companies (4)
- International organisations (3)
- Recruitment companies (3)
- Training and certification agencies (1)
- International advocacy organisations (4)
- Researchers (4)

It should be clarified that representatives of international organisations and international advocacy organisations were not formally interviewed (except one) but informal discussions were held with them on the working and living conditions of low-income workers in Qatar.

While researchers may not be considered as stakeholders, they were also approached to discuss the focus of this research because they are very well informed about the subject and their insights could provide useful input.

***c) Identification of and access to stakeholders***

Institutions/persons to be interviewed were identified as follows:

- Using GLMM's address book
- Looking at institutional websites
- Asking stakeholders for suggestions of other stakeholders to be interviewed

On average, the stakeholders who were approached for an interview accepted, notably the labour attachés and international stakeholders but others were more reluctant, notably the business sector.

***d) Interviews***

- Interviews with Qatar-based stakeholders were all conducted in person by a GLMM staff member.
- The interviews with non-Qatar-based stakeholders took place either in person by a GLMM staff member, via email or via Skype.
- The interviews in Qatar took place between May and December 2018 while those with some international actors not based in Qatar took place in the period June-September 2018.
- All interviewees were guaranteed anonymity. Therefore, the names and institutions of stakeholders do not appear in this report. Also, the information contained in this report has been worded, as far as possible, in a manner that will not allow identification of individuals.

***e) Approach to stakeholders***

The approach used in the interviews included:

- Clarifying upfront: the identity of GLMM; the purpose of the research; that we focus not only on Qatar; that we attempt to interview all categories of stakeholders; that we also interview workers; that we also rely on written documents (laws) and materials published by others
- Guaranteeing anonymity of the interviewee (that we will not publish the list of interviewees, nor quote or cite, nor allow for indirect identification)
- Asking four questions to all interviewees, tweaking them where necessary
- Interfering as little as possible and letting interviewees speak freely
- Picking-up new information and leads that were relevant for the project
- Asking additional, specific questions, based upon what the interviewee said or what other

interviewees had said in previous interviews

- Asking for other stakeholders who might be interested in being interviewed

**f) Questions asked to stakeholders**

In all interviews, the following four basic questions were asked:

- What is your general opinion about the working and living conditions of low-income workers in Qatar, especially of those in the construction and hospitality sectors?
- During the last 5-10 years, has Qatar made sufficient efforts to improve the working and living conditions of workers in the above two sectors?
- If you were to identify three major problems faced by workers in the above two sectors, what would they be?
- What else, from your perspective, is important to mention/focus on concerning the working and living conditions of low-income migrant workers?

**g) Limitations and advantages of stakeholder interviews**

Stakeholder interviews have several limitations:

- Access to certain stakeholders is limited, notably to the ones based in Qatar and, among these, the ones working in the business sector in particular because of the sensitivity of the topic.
- Stakeholders cannot be selected randomly and are approached either directly (email, phone)—something which had little success—or through third parties. Thus, there is a strong selection bias.
- Generally, stakeholders who accept to be interviewed are well prepared and may give only a “polished” version from their perspective.

Stakeholder interviews also have a number of advantages:

- One may succeed in accessing persons who are strategically located and therefore their answers may be considered important and adequately representative.
- Stakeholders likely convey information that otherwise might not have been available.

## APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Introduction

Thank you for coming tonight, we are glad that you accepted our invitation.

Our discussion will last for around one hour and a half and it will be addressing the working conditions of people like you living and working in Qatar. We would love to listen to your success stories and address the problems or obstacles that you have faced during your stay here.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers, whatever you say is of importance to us. Just feel free to say what you feel, and rest assured that your answers will be treated with extreme confidentiality.

The whole session will be recorded just for the sake of report writing. No third party will be allowed to listen to the tapes or have access to the material. Recording is important only to make sure that we do not miss any idea while preparing our report.

Please put your mobiles on the silent mode. And I want every one of you to participate in the discussion.

Let's start by introducing ourselves.

### Section I: Participants' Profile

- General Introduction
  - Name (just for communication purpose)
  - Social status (Married/Single)
  - If married: do you have kids? How many?
  - Do your kids live with you in Qatar or do they live back home?
  - Occupation/nature of work
  - Education (grades completed)
- For how long have you been in Qatar?
- Why did you choose Qatar in specific? Probe
- If you went back in time, would you still have come to Qatar? Why? Why not?
- If you were to describe Qatar to your friends in few words, what would you say? Probe
- Would you encourage them to come to Qatar?
  - Why? Why not?
  - Which aspects would you emphasise on, in both cases? Probe
- Do you ever get any spare time to do things for yourself? What activities do you engage in during your spare time? What are your Hobbies? Do you practice these hobbies?
- What do you do in your holidays? (Weekends/Public Holidays)

## Section II: Working Conditions

- If you were to measure your level of satisfaction with the current working conditions, on a 10-point scale, how would you rate it?
- Why do you say so? What are the aspects<sup>7</sup> that instigated you to give this rating?
  - What are the liked aspects about your working conditions? Probe
  - Are there any disliked aspects? Probe

*Moderator: Let us talk in detail about some aspects related to your work:*

### Recruitment

- What were the procedures followed by you to come to Qatar?
  - How did you know about the job?
  - How did you apply? Through which means? (Through a recruitment agency? The employer himself? A mediator such as friend or relative? Through other means: the web? Social media? Any other means)
  - Did you have to pay a certain amount of money to be brought to Qatar?
- What was the amount paid?
- To whom was it paid?
  - Did you sign a contract with your employer?
  - Do you have a copy of the contract? If not, did you read it?
  - Did the contract give you sufficient details about aspects like:
- Salary?
- Annual Leave?
- Working hours?
- Overtime?
  - In reality, do you get the items that were stated in the contract? Probe

### Monthly Salary and Payment/Remittances

- Do you think that what you earn as a monthly salary is sufficient for you to live a decent life and send money back home? Probe
  - Are you satisfied with what you earn as a monthly salary from your current job? Why? Why not?
  - Does it match with the efforts that you put into the job?

---

7. Participants might spontaneously indicate to the housing issues, salary issues, contract...etc.

- Compared to your initial expectations, is the amount that you earn monthly from your work is it about the same as you expected? Less than you expected? More than you expected?
- In addition to your basic salary, are you entitled to any other allowances? What are they? Probe
  - o Bonus
  - o Housing Allowance
  - o Transportation
  - o Food Allowance
  - o What else?
- Do you usually receive your salary on time, or do you encounter delay in getting your salary? How frequent are the delays?
- How do you get paid your salaries? In cash/ in cheques /directly in the account by a bank transfer...etc.
- Is this job the only source of income for you? (Probing will be done to know whether they do another part time job)

### **Annual Leave**

- How many days of annual leave are you entitled to per year?
- Is it paid leave?
- Does it happen on yearly basis? Or once every two years?
- Are you given the freedom to select the period of your annual leave or is it determined by the management?

### **Working Hours**

- How many hours on an average day do you actually work?
- Was this clearly stated in the contract? Probe
- Do you have to work overtime?
- How often are you asked to work overtime?
- Are you paid for the overtime? Probe
- Are you entitled to sick leave? How many days per year?

### **Kafeel**

- Is this your first employer or have you had other employers previously? Is it the second one?
- If the second one, how did the change (transfer) take place?
- Were there any obstacles faced by you?
- What can you say about your current *kafeel*? How would you describe him?

- Was there any disagreement/negative incident with your *kafeel*?
- Can you talk more about that incident? What happened? Why? Probe

### Section III: Housing and Living Conditions

- If you were to measure your level of satisfaction with the place where you are currently staying (housing) and the current living conditions in that place, using a 10-point scale, where 10 indicates the best conditions and 1 indicates the worst conditions, and 5 is just average, what number would you give it?
  - Why did you say so? What are the aspects that led you to give this number? Probe
- Does your employer provide you with the accommodation? Probe

### For Construction Workers

- Can you describe your living place, please? Mod: give everyone a chance to freely talk about their place of living, then probe the following:
  - How many individuals like you share the same bedroom? The same bathroom?
  - How many beds are there in the room?
  - Do you have enough bedsheets and pillow covers?
  - Is the room equipped with an AC? Is the AC working properly?
  - Do you have a safe place to keep your private items?
  - Is there a kitchen in your place of living? Is it a common kitchen?
  - Do you prepare your own food?

### For Other Categories

- Can you describe your living place? How is the accommodation designed? How many rooms is it comprised of?
  - Is it spacious enough? Probe
    - Is it well maintained?
    - What about the furniture?
    - Do you have all the facilities needed?
    - Do you have Internet connection?
    - Do you have Satellite TV connection?
- How can you describe the area around your living place?
- Do you have facilities in the area like restaurants? Malls? Laundry?
- Do you do the cleaning yourselves? Or does the company hire someone to do it?



- If you do it yourselves, do you share the cleaning?
- What about transportation to and from work, is it provided by the company? Probe
- If provided by the company, how can you describe the vehicle? Fully equipped (clean seats, spacious, AC, comfortable seats...etc.)

#### **Section IV: Engagement with Fellow Citizens**

- Have you ever encountered a problem that needed you to ask for assistance or help from someone else?
  - o If yes, what was it about? Can you describe briefly what you ran into?
  - o Did you refer it to your embassy or national association?
  - o Was there any action taken?
  - o Were the results satisfying?
- For those who said No (did not encounter problems): If in future you ever encounter a certain problem, to whom would you refer to help you solve or settle the problem? (The embassy/ private national clubs or associations / private organizations, National Association...etc.)
- Do you think that referring to this specific place/party might help you? In what sense? Probe
- Generally speaking and thinking of stories that other people relate, what are the common problems that people get into? What else?
- Who provides help to solve these problems? How does it usually end?

#### **Section V: Conclusion**

- In your opinion, what should be done to improve your working and living conditions?
- What else? Probe...
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Philippe Fargues** is a French demographer. He is a part-time Professor at the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute and an Affiliate at the Middle East Initiative of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School. He was the founding Director of EUI's Migration Policy Centre. He is a founding member and Scientific Director of GLMM.



**Nasra M. Shah** recently joined the Lahore School of Economics, Pakistan, as Professor of Migration and Development. Prior to returning to her homeland, she was Professor of Demography at the Department of Community Medicine and Behavioral Sciences at the Faculty of Medicine, Kuwait University for about 30 years. Prof. Shah received her doctoral degree in Population Dynamics from the Johns Hopkins University, School of Public Health, Baltimore, USA, in 1974. She is a founding member and Scientific Director of GLMM.



**Imco Brouwer** is a political scientist specialised in the Arab World and Migration and has focused on the GCC countries for the last seven years. He has managed programmes and projects on the Arab World and Migration for more than 30 years and is affiliated with the GRC since 2009. He is a founding member and Executive Director of GLMM.



**Publication Reference:** Citations and quotations should always include either the long or the short reference provided here. Generally the long reference should be used but in exceptional cases (e.g., not enough room), the short reference may be used.

**Long Reference:** Philippe Fargues, Nasra M. Shah, Imco Brouwer, "Working and Living Conditions of Low-Income Migrant Workers in the Hospitality and Construction Sectors in Qatar," Research Report No. 01/2019, Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) of the Migration Policy Center (MPC) and the Gulf Research Center (GRC), <https://gulfmigration.org>.

**Short Reference:** Philippe Fargues, Nasra M. Shah, Imco Brouwer, "Working and Living Conditions of Low-Income Migrant Workers in the Hospitality and Construction Sectors in Qatar," Research Report No. 01/2019, GLMM, <https://gulfmigration.org>.

**GLMM Mission:** The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) is an international independent, non-partisan, non-profit joint programme of a major Gulf think tank, the Gulf Research Center (GRC - Jeddah, Geneva, Cambridge), and a globally renowned academic migration centre, the Migration Policy Centre (MPC - Florence). The GLMM programme provides data, analyses, and recommendations contributing to the improvement of understanding and management of Gulf labour markets and migration, engaging with and respecting the viewpoints of all stakeholders.

**GLMM Activities:** The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme has a wide range of activities, including: Collecting and elaborating data and documents; Researching and analysing key issues; Publishing various types of papers; Training; and Organising panels and workshops.

**GLMM Publications:** The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) produces an array of publications addressing all major issues in different formats: Explanatory Notes, Research Reports, Policy Briefs, and Volumes.

**Downloading and Further Information:** This report can be downloaded from the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population programme website: <https://www.gulfmigration.org>. For further information: [info.glmm@grc.net](mailto:info.glmm@grc.net).

