



International Labour Organization
Regional Office for Arab States



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US\$2.5 million to improve labour migration governance in the Middle East

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation funds ILO initiative to improve working conditions for migrants in the Middle East

Beirut (ILO News) – Low skilled migrants in Middle East can look forward to better labour migration governance and improved protection mechanisms, the objectives of a major regional project launched by the ILO this month, and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The US\$2.5 million project, the first of its kind in the region, targets policy reform on labour migration, strengthened service delivery to migrant workers, and improved capacity to respond to cases of forced labour and trafficking.

Over a two-year period, the ILO will engage governments, workers, employers, law enforcement officials, labour attaches and other stakeholders to secure better working conditions for foreign workers in the Middle East. Legal reforms, improved data collection, enhanced policymaking and partnerships with sending countries are some of the changes envisaged.

As part of the project, the ILO will support tripartite partners to address the shortcomings of the Kafala or sponsorship system – which currently governs migration in most Arab countries. In addition, a Migration and Governance Network (MAGNET) will bring together leading Arab researchers and academic institutions to develop a research platform and database to inform policy formulation on migrant working and living conditions.

The ILO will also work with trade unions, civil society and the media on closer cooperation with Asian and African counterparts, advocacy for the right of migrant workers to unionise, and enhanced social dialogue and media coverage.

The project complements other ILO initiatives on labour migration in the Arab states, including an SDC-funded regional project promoting [Convention 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers](#), adopted at the International Labour Conference in June 2011, and a US-funded project on the protection of migrant workers' rights in Jordan.

Major Middle Eastern destinations for migrant workers from Asia and Africa include Bahrain, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

For more information contact:

Farah Dakhllallah
Regional Communication and Public Information Officer
ILO Regional Office for the Arab States
+961 1 752400 ext 117; +961 71 50 59 58 dakhllallah@ilo.org
www.ilo.org/arabstates

Aresco Center
Justinien Street - Kantari
P.O.Box 11- 4088 Riad El Solh 1107- 2150
Beirut - Lebanon
Tel: +961 1 752 400
Fax: +961 1 752 405
www.ilo.org/arabstates