



International
Labour
Organization

► **Progress report on the technical cooperation programme between the Government of Qatar and the ILO**

ILO Project Office for the State of Qatar

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► Background

1. During the first phase of the technical cooperation programme between the Government of Qatar and the ILO (2018-2021), an annual progress report was presented to the ILO Governing Body (GB) at its November sessions in 2018, 2019, and 2020.
2. In line with the expressed commitment of the Government of Qatar to continue building on the significant reforms undertaken in the first phase of the technical cooperation programme, and further to a series of exchanges with other national and international partners, a second phase of the programme was developed, to run from July 2021 to December 2023.
3. Although this second phase does not require formal annual reporting to the GB, it was agreed that the annual progress report continue to be published in the same format to present the key developments and priorities, and keep interested parties informed about the broad scope of the work under way. The following annual progress report covers the period from November 2022 to October 2023 – but primarily focuses on 2023.
4. As this is the last annual progress report of Phase 2 of the technical cooperation programme, some of its sections also provide a summary of the progress made over recent years, and point to the remaining challenges. Detailed information on activities from 2018-2022 is available in the previous annual reports, all accessible on the ILO Qatar website.¹
5. The report covers progress on the programme's priorities under its four pillars:
 - Pillar 1. Labour Market and Labour Migration Governance
 - Pillar 2. Enforcement of Labour Law and Access to Justice
 - Pillar 3. Workers' Voice and Social Dialogue
 - Pillar 4. International Cooperation and Exchange of Experience

The report concludes with a section on programme management.

6. The administrative data presented in this report comes from Government of Qatar sources unless specified otherwise. Some elements of this report also reflect developments that were not strictly part of the technical cooperation programme between the Government of Qatar and the ILO. However, they are included to provide further context on the labour reforms.

¹ The previous annual reports are available here: [2022](#), [2021](#), [2020](#), [2019](#) and [2018](#).

► 2023: A changing context

7. In the run up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup, there was a lot of speculation about what would happen to the labour reforms in Qatar after the tournament. The Government has always maintained that these reforms were never about hosting the World Cup, but rather they are aligned with the National Vision 2030. In the past year, the ILO has witnessed continued commitment from, and cooperation with, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) and many other institutions in Qatar. There are undoubtedly significant challenges that remain. As the ILO has observed in countries around the world, reforms on this scale require continued efforts over time.
8. The context in which these reforms are being carried out has changed in 2023 in various ways. For example:
 - Compared to the huge investment in infrastructure and other sectors that was seen in the years leading up to the 2022 World Cup, there have been fewer opportunities for employers and workers in 2023. While many workers have returned home at the end of their contracts, there has also been a rise in “freelance” work, where workers obtain a residency permit from an “employer”, but where there is no genuine employment relationship, leaving workers in a vulnerable situation. The Government has taken measures to prevent those concerned companies from hiring workers, and arresting some of the ostensible employers engaged in this practice.
 - MOL has undergone a restructuring – with new senior officials and new departments established to handle occupational safety and health, labour dispute resolution, and other areas. One of the most important shifts in 2023 relates to the enhancement of MOL’s e-services and investment in digital solutions. This will help to address a number of the priority issues – including around wage protection, timely dispute resolution and consistent application of the procedures on changing jobs.
 - The Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC), has been phasing out over the course of the year. The SC has been a highly active and visible institution, contributing for many years to advancing the labour agenda – nationally and internationally. The SC’s Worker Welfare Standards have been adopted by other institutions (including outside of Qatar), and it is important that the SC’s investment in auditing those standards is also replicated.
9. The data presented in this report (in relation to labour inspection, wage protection, labour disputes, and so on) shows how the Government is implementing and enforcing the laws – though this also reveals the compliance gaps that remain. Much of the progress supported by the ILO / Qatar technical cooperation programme in the past year has related to enabling effective implementation of labour reforms through enhancing procedures, systems, capacity and partnerships. These measures and activities are summarized in this report.
10. Other key developments in 2023 relate to the increased cooperation with other countries. This has resulted in the sharing of Qatar’s experience, and Qatar also drawing inspiration from others. In the region, this has been led by the GCC States themselves, and sometimes with the support of the ILO Regional Office for Arab States and the Doha Office, and other organizations. A particular highlight was the Conference on Occupational Heat Stress in Doha in May 2023.
11. At the international level, the MOL has continued to engage with international organizations, trade unions and NGOs, and has increased the number of exchanges with partner countries. In addition, it has been a busy year for Qatar within the UN system in 2023, including hosting the 5th UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) in Doha, and co-chairing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Summit in New York, and opening the UN House in Doha, where the ILO Office is now based.
12. Looking forward, discussions have been ongoing throughout the year about the future of the ILO / Qatar technical cooperation programme. Plans are under way for a new four-year programme beginning in 2024. The scope of work would include consolidating the work to date on the labour reforms, as well as expanding into new areas, including around employment policy, the labour market information system, and skills development. The work continues.

► Pillar 1: Labour market and labour migration governance

Labour mobility

13. In September 2020, legislation was adopted that reformed a central element of the kafala or sponsorship system, and enshrined in law the right of workers to change jobs without their employer's permission –following a notice period. This allows workers to find new and better opportunities commensurate with their skills. Greater labour mobility also benefits employers, as they are able to recruit workers who match their needs via the local labour market. Skills and knowledge remain in the country, accumulate, and benefit the economy. A breakdown of the number of workers who changed jobs during this period shows the following:

- Out of a total of 1,037,644 applications to change jobs received by MOL from September 2020 to October 2023, 669,198 were approved and 364,053 were rejected.² There are 12 instances in which MOL will reject employment change (EC) applications, above all when new employers are blocked from recruitment due to non-compliance with the laws on wage protection. It is also important to note that workers often re-apply for employment change after a rejection (see below for information on rejected applications).
- In 2023 (up until October), 167,048 men and 25,295 women have had their applications to change jobs approved. The proportion of women who changed jobs in this period is the same as the overall proportion of women in the workforce (15 per cent).³ As of September 2023, there were 10,827 approved applications to change jobs from domestic workers (male and female).
- The highest number of workers changing jobs are in construction – which is reflective of the overall size of the sector in the labour market. However, because a worker's actual occupation is not always accurately reflected in the administrative records, there are limitations to any conclusions that can be drawn on labour mobility across occupations and sectors. This limitation will be at least partially addressed through a standardization of occupations. MOL launched the Qatar National Occupational Classification guide in April 2023. Aligned with the International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008, the national guide classifies and aggregates over 3,000 occupations in the private sector. Adoption of a standard national occupation classification for the private sector supports standardized collection and analysis of data for statistical purposes as well as for administrative records. The programme continues to work with MOL to update this national guide to address the changing realities of the labour market in Qatar. This work on the classification of occupations will be central to the establishment of a labour market information system, which is so critical to policy formulation and monitoring. In addition, the programme is also working with MOL and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to update the list of occupations in the domestic work sector.

14. The employment change (EC) platform is now functioning far more efficiently than when the system was first introduced. The average number of days to process an EC application decreased from 22 days in August 2021 to only six days in August 2023. MOL is introducing new changes to the EC system. It will be fully automated, leaving little scope for interference. This allows a standardized review of the EC applications received, and increases overall efficiency. The new EC system will also introduce an electronic version of the employment change form (obviating scanning and uploading

² In comparison, prior to the introduction of these reforms, 8,653 workers changed employers in 2018, and 17,843 workers changed employers between September 2019 and August 2020.

³ Based on data from the Labour Force Survey 2023, Authority on Planning and Statistics.

a paper version). This essentially precludes the omissions or technical problems that used to beset the completion or submission of the old-style form, often resulting in rejection of an application. The new system also automatically prevents workers from submitting an EC application when the new employer is blocked for non-compliance with the law (a common, and important, reason for rejection). To ensure consistency, the Ministry is adopting new internal standard operating procedures for staff of the Labour Relations Department to reflect the latest changes to the system.

15. However, during this reporting period, there have still been cases of retaliation by unscrupulous employers against workers who submitted a request to change jobs. This has taken the form of cancelling their residency permits (QIDs) or filing false absconding charges against them. To tackle this, the electronic systems of MOL and MOI had been linked to prevent employers from taking such action after a worker had submitted their application through MOL's electronic system. A similar electronic linkage in principle ensures that employers cannot cancel a QID or file an absconding case if a worker has an ongoing labour complaint with MOL.
16. To address misuse of the absconding report system as a retaliatory action, MOI had introduced procedural changes based on the discussions with MOL in 2022. An employer reporting an absconding case must provide additional data, such as information on the monthly salary of the worker, whether or not the employer owes any financial dues to the worker, whether or not there is a labour complaint, the worker's accommodation address, and information on any witness(es) who can testify. A penalty has also been introduced, to be imposed in the event that inaccurate information is provided.
17. The process for a worker to have their QID reactivated is being revised to make it more accessible and efficient for workers. Under the new process, once a QID has been reactivated it cannot be cancelled again for the next six months.
18. Many workers and employers still refer to the need for a No-Objection Certificate (NOC). Even though this is not required by law or by the EC system, an NOC is still required for many job applications. Communication materials on the labour mobility legislation ([Q&A for employers](#), [Q&A for workers](#), [flowchart for workers](#)) were produced in 12 languages, and disseminated through various channels. While the dissemination of these useful materials continues, it is essential that their content be frequently reviewed and updated in line with any changes to the EC system, and that they be more widely disseminated among workers and employers alike.
19. As a part of the technical cooperation programme, MOL and ILO have initiated a study to assess the impact of the *kafala* reforms. Three years since the legislative changes, the study will examine the impact on the labour market, on male and female workers, and employers of different sizes in different sectors. This MOL-ILO study will also look into how labour mobility reforms have impacted enterprises and workers in relation to recruitment costs, skills and labour productivity, wages and many other perspectives. The study is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.
20. Since the adoption of Law No. 13 of 2018 and Ministerial Decision No. 95 of 2019, migrant workers have had the right to leave the country either temporarily or permanently without prior approval from their employers. An exception was created for five per cent of a company's workforce, restricted to certain senior positions and for which approval would need to be granted. Between 1 January and 31 October 2023, there were 13,282 requests for exit permits. In comparison, in mid-October 2022, there were 45,690 requests for exit permits.

Fair recruitment

21. In 2023, the MOL has revoked the licenses of four recruitment agencies, and these have been named in the local media. In July, MOL and ILO completed an assessment of the system for licensing and monitoring private recruitment agencies. The assessment examined relevant policies as well as operating procedures and mechanisms used by MOL to license and monitor recruitment agencies, and enforce compliance. Recommendations of the assessment included, among other issues, expanding on the current procedures to develop licensing standards and a set of auditable requirements that can be used to issue a new license and renew a license of a private recruitment agency. The technical cooperation programme will support MOL to develop these standards in line with the national legislation. An exchange with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) in the United Kingdom has been organized to understand how licensing standards can be developed and applied to ensure compliance of agencies. In addition, the assessment also evaluated MOL's process of inspecting private recruitment agencies and the penalty scheme used if non-compliance is detected. Through the proposed third phase of the technical cooperation programme, MOL and ILO will continue to work on developing a comprehensive inspection framework with standardized tools and guidelines as well as build the capacity of the inspectors.
22. MOL continued to participate at the global level in the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative Advisory Committee,⁴ which was established to review progress made and provide advice on priorities and areas of action to the ILO's strategy on fair recruitment.

Domestic workers

23. The number of domestic workers in Qatar in August 2023 was 304,784. This represents a significant proportion of the overall population and workforce, across a variety of occupations.
24. The Qatar Visa Centers (QVCs) in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka are now processing applications from domestic migrant workers coming to Qatar using the revised [standard employment contract](#) adopted by MOL in 2021. MOL has introduced an [electronic service to attest employment contracts](#) to allow the electronic authentication of the revised standard employment contract of domestic workers. Under the new system, the employment contract to be signed is uploaded into the electronic system along with the contact information of the domestic worker. A notification is sent to the domestic worker who logs into the system to access the employment contract prior to approving or rejecting it. In addition, the platform also enables domestic workers to print a copy of their employment contract. This electronic service is also available for workers in the private sector.
25. MOL and ILO continued to collaborate with the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) to raise awareness among domestic workers in Qatar. In 2023, the IDWF organized more than 20 information sessions and workshops with domestic workers focusing on Law No. 15 of 2017 on domestic workers, the standard employment contract, complaint mechanisms, changing of jobs and occupational safety and health. Domestic workers from Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, the Philippines, Uganda and elsewhere participated in these activities. There are positive signs that these informal networks of domestic workers are expanding in size, and indeed across more nationalities. They are important in raising awareness and forming a support group.

⁴ More information on the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative can be found here: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/fair-recruitment/fri/lang--en/index.htm>

26. The programme designed and delivered a two-day training programme on decent work for domestic workers for licensed private recruitment agencies in Qatar. Recognizing the vital role that recruitment agencies play in the employment relationship between domestic workers and their employers, the training increased their awareness of the relevant legal framework, and provided the agencies with practical guidance on fair recruitment and managing possible disputes. To date, training sessions were rolled out by MOL in July and September 2022, and in May and September 2023, in coordination with the Philippines Overseas Labor Office in Qatar, IDWF, and the ILO for 98 representatives of 60 private recruitment agencies.

► **Table 1: Complaints by or involving domestic workers**

Period	2021	2022	Up to 31 October 2023
Number of complaints	622	1,530	514
Proportion of complaints settled before reaching Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs)	83%	89%	82.4%
Proportion of complaints sent to DSCs	16%	9%	6.8%
Proportion of complaints under review	1%	1%	10.7%

27. The programme continued to disseminate the [Know Your Rights](#) booklet for domestic workers in Qatar in 12 languages,⁵ and the [Guide to Employing Migrant Domestic Workers in Qatar](#) booklet for employers in two languages, developed in partnership with the non-governmental organization Migrant Rights. A booklet for private recruitment agencies is currently being developed by MOL and ILO. The booklet aims to raise awareness about the relevant legislation on domestic work and to equip private recruitment agencies with concrete steps they can take to facilitate an employment relationship that is mutually beneficial for domestic workers and their employers.
28. As a part of the technical cooperation programme, the ILO is collaborating with MOL and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to conduct research on the perspectives and practices of employers of domestic workers. The study will focus on understanding motivations and attitudes of employers around the recruitment process; the employment relationship; and the legal framework regulating domestic work in Qatar. The study will include both Qatari and non-Qatari employers of domestic workers. The findings of the research will further inform policy recommendations and awareness raising strategies. The research is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

5 Arabic, Bahasa, Bengali, English, Hindi, Malayalam, Nepali, Sinhala, Swahili, Tagalog, Telegu, and Urdu.

Equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace

29. In March 2023, on the occasion of International Women's Day (IWD), the ILO published an [Op-Ed](#) on the importance of enabling dialogue on decent work for women in Qatar. The piece presented how the MOL and the ILO have facilitated discussions around a mix of active labour market and gender equality policies to increase female labour participation in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. The Government adopted policies in 2023 that sought to enhance women's employment opportunities (including legislation that came into effect on part-time work in the public sector), and the MOL and ILO also supported a number of companies and institutions to develop or strengthen their corporate policies on gender equality and non-discrimination.
30. An important starting point for policy consultations is to enhance women's equal participation and voice in social dialogue at the enterprise, sectoral, and national levels. These consultations must be inclusive of all women, regardless of nationality, profession, and skills level. The programme supported the establishment of standing committees and networks of women to bring their views and experiences into national policy discussions on women's equality. For example, an elected committee of women employees from Qatar Foundation's supplier companies has been formed to discuss the experience of women in the facilities management, private security, and catering sectors.
31. The ILO and MOL facilitated consultations with the Women's Subcommittee of Qatar Foundation's Central Labour-Management Consultation Committee with the objective of developing a grievance escalation procedure that women suppliers can use when confronted with discrimination, violence or harassment by other suppliers, visitors, students, staff or faculty on campus.
32. The ILO and MOL organized a three-day [workshop](#) on diversity, equality, and inclusion policies with students, faculty and staff representatives from Qatar University and Hamad bin Khalifa University in February 2023. During this workshop, participants reflected on the scope and remediation measures of their diversity, equality and inclusion policies, using ILO Conventions No. 111 and No. 190 as benchmarks.
33. The ILO and MOL provided targeted coaching sessions to individual joint committees in the manufacturing and retail sectors which led to the development of new diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies or to the expansion of existing DEI policies to include transportation, work events, and accommodation. Some companies have implemented changes to their company premises and to their operations to eliminate some of the risks that were identified in the risk assessments that were undertaken by the joint committees.
34. In keeping with this year's International Women's Day theme of "DigitALL: Innovation & Technology for Gender Equality", in March 2023, the ILO and MOL organized a seminar for 200 female students from Qatar University's College of Business and Economics (CBE) on the topic of Digital Labour Platforms, Decent Work and Sustainable Development. The seminar aimed to promote awareness of labour rights considerations as applicable to digital labour platforms.
35. Discussions with Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) and MOL are under way to organize a series of discussions on DEI with QFC members, many of them women-led start-ups and SMEs.

The ILO programme participated in a consultative meeting to discuss the report "Country Profile: Employment Policies for Persons with Disabilities in the State of Qatar" on 8 October 2023. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

Statistics

36. The programme has been enabling an ongoing engagement between Qatar's Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA) and the ILO Statistics Department regarding the global statistics database, the Labour Force Survey and reporting against the SDG indicators for which the ILO is the custodian. These conversations continued in October 2023 on the sidelines of the Planning and Statistics Authority's Doha Data Forum – which saw participation from ILO-Qatar and ILO Headquarters.
37. The MOL has established a Labour Market Information and Research Department, responsible for updating and analyzing statistical data for the labour market. There is ongoing collaboration with UNESCWA and other institutions to build up the labour market information system and a data analytics platform, on which to inform and monitor policies. The MOL continues to publish a monthly bulletin online and through social media channels that includes figures on labour inspection, complaints, work permits, etc.

Artificial intelligence

38. In September 2023, the Project Office organized a series of discussions, including a roundtable at Qatar Foundation, on the potential impact of generative AI on jobs. This was based on a recently published ILO global report. There is a high degree of interest in following up with more national-level research and analysis, and also examining how AI can be used to enhance labour market governance.

► Pillar 2. Enforcement of labour law and access to justice

Wages and wage protection

39. The survey findings commissioned by the technical cooperation programme in 2022 (see [last year's annual progress report](#)) were presented to the Minimum Wage Committee (MWC) in February 2023 by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI). However, in September 2023, changes were made to the leadership and membership of the MWC.
40. The Wage Protection System (WPS) allows the Government to monitor salaries and allowances paid to workers, and to detect violations. The system can reduce wage disputes and alleviate some of the workload of the Labour Dispute Settlement Committees. There were 69,806 companies registered in the WPS in August 2023.
41. A block is automatically imposed on the relevant company when the system detects that a worker has not been paid or has been paid less than the minimum wage (the system cannot yet detect whether the wage paid according to the salary information file is less than specified by the employment contract). Sometimes these events are administrative reporting errors on the part of the company. In such instances, MOL will communicate with the company to obtain additional information. If the violation is confirmed and not immediately rectified, a violation notice is issued. There was a demonstrable increase in violation notices issued in 2022. A legislative amendment is being considered to automatically issue fines in case of non-payment of wages.

► Table 2: WPS blocks and violation notices

Year	Number of companies blocked by WPS	Number of violation notices issued
2019	48,328	2,318
2020	25,200	3,360
2021	27,441	3,102
2022	28,266	7,769
2023 (up to August)	29,053	2,927

42. The technical cooperation programme is contributing to a GCC-wide study on WPS led by the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States in cooperation with the GCC Executive Bureau, that began in September 2023. The study will explore the design and operations, coverage, compliance and penalties, and put forward practical recommendations.

Access to justice

43. During the reporting period, certain sectors of Qatar's economy, notably the construction sector, have seen a reduced demand. Consequently, numerous workers were affected. Many of these workers have ongoing claims for due wages and end-of-service benefits. These continue to be the primary cause for complaints lodged at MOL. Some workers manage to change employment, and therefore have an income while they are waiting for their cases to be resolved. Others may not find work, and therefore struggle, or in some cases leave Qatar without their due wages and benefits.
44. The number of complaints received in 2022 and 2023 – primarily through the online complaints platform – can be found in Table 3 below. Between January and October 2023, the online platform received 1,123 anonymous complaints through the whistleblower channel. The proportion of complaints referred to the dispute settlement committees has increased, though this is not the case for domestic workers (see Table 1 above).

► Table 3. Complaints outcomes

Year	2022	Up to 31 October 2023
Number of complaints	31,549	24,862
Proportion of complaints settled before reaching DSCs	80%	60.2%
Proportion of complaints sent to DSCs	19.5%	22.8%
Proportion of complaints under review	0.5%	16.9%

45. The number of Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs) increased from three to five in October 2022.
46. The ILO Doha Office and the Community Liaison Officers of the ITUC and GUFs have continued to receive queries from workers, and these are then referred to MOL for action. This provides insight into the challenges faced by migrant workers, and where implementation challenges remain. Through 2023, most of the queries received by the ILO involved unpaid wages and end-of-service benefits, as well as challenges in the process of changing employer. Although employer retaliation remains an issue, the number of such cases received by the ILO has declined substantially compared to previous years.
47. The ILO has worked closely with MOL in identifying challenges that migrant workers face in getting access to justice. Some recommendations are relatively easy to implement, while others require extensive capacity building or a legislative amendment.
48. A comprehensive training course was organized from February to September 2023 by the ILO Doha Office, the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin and the MOL Labour Disputes Department, targeting officers in charge of conciliation of labour disputes - conciliation being the mandatory step that must precede forwarding of any labour dispute to the DSCs. The course included four modules (one basic training module in Doha, two more specialized modules in Turin, and finally a technical workshop in Doha). The initial sessions in Doha served to familiarize all officers

with modern techniques and good practices in dispute resolution. The second and third modules targeted a selected group of mostly senior officers who were additionally trained in the creation and management of a dispute resolution system, the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs), and performance monitoring and training of trainers. During the final module, new SOPs were drafted for the MOL's conciliation system.

49. A study visit to the Netherlands for MOL officials will take place in February 2024, to build the capacity of officials from two departments: (1) labour relations (joint committees/social dialogue) and (2) dispute resolution (individual and collective disputes). The focus will be on social dialogue, and in particular on collective conciliation, with a view to developing SOPs from MOL on the conciliation of collective disputes emerging from joint committees and other channels, and the platform for the online submission of complaints.
50. This study tour will follow on from a training and consultation that the ILO organized for the labour inspection and labour relations department in 2022 and in the context of which several gaps in the management of collective disputes were highlighted. These were seen to require additional training and knowledge sharing for the purpose of developing SOPs on collective dispute resolution.
51. A number of other measures have also been introduced to enhance the dispute resolution process, especially to make it quicker. This includes amending the online complaints platform to allow for the submission of collective disputes; adopting legislation to remove the requirement for a preamble on the court documentation – thereby reducing the burden; enabling workers to log on and track the status of their case; and enacting the rules on making the conciliator's decision binding.
52. The Workers' Support and Insurance Fund (WSIF) is continuing to disburse large amounts to cover workers' wages. The WSIF disbursed QAR 14 million to 5,500 workers in 2020, and by September 2022 the fund had disbursed QAR 1.16 billion. As of August 2023, the amount has increased substantially to approximately QAR 2.3 billion. Around half of this amount has been disbursed from the Fund to more than 70,000 workers. The other half was transmitted through the Fund from entities and companies to pay salaries and wages. The vast majority of payments coming from or through the Fund go to companies that have limited liquidity, the aim being to support the completion of the relevant projects or operations.
53. The [electronic platform](#) announced in a Decision by the Board of Directors in 2022 was launched in 2023 with some limitations in its operation. It does not yet include the ability for the workers to apply for coverage or follow up their cases online. The electronic platform provides ample information on the processes followed and the activities of the Fund, as well as some statistical data on the operations.
54. A technical exchange with relevant institutions in Singapore was organized in August 2023, with the participation of the management of the Fund and the ILO. The delegation had the opportunity to explore the Singaporean model of wage protection and exchange experience and lessons learned. The WSIF and the ILO are currently discussing a proposal to hold an international conference on wage protection in Doha in 2024.
55. Migrant Forum Asia (MFA), a coalition of NGOs in Asia, organized training in March and October 2023 with MOL for migrant community leaders, including visits to the dispute settlement committees and shelters, and discussions on dispute resolution. These activities fall under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by MOL and MFA in October 2022.

Heat stress

56. This was the third summer during which the 2021 [Ministerial Decision](#) to further protect workers from heat stress was applied. As with previous summers, to support the application of the heat stress legislation, MOL and the ILO conducted a campaign to disseminate updated communication materials including posters, flyers and video animations for [employers](#) and for [workers](#) in multiple languages,⁶ as well as guidance for employers. MOL disseminated these through social media and through visits to employers in Qatar.
57. In the summer of 2023, labour inspectors carried out a targeted inspection campaign, focusing on construction worksites, the agricultural sector, delivery companies and the industrial sector. This led to 504 worksites (almost all in construction) being shut down for non-compliance with the legislation (up on the figure of 463 for summer 2022).
58. The ILO also joined the Qatar's National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) in a series of events as part of a campaign aimed at raising awareness among workers on the risks of heat stress. Similarly, the ILO presented Qatar's heat stress legislation to the members of the Qatar branch of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH).
59. In May 2023, the Government of Qatar and the ILO held an international conference on occupational heat stress in Doha. The conference brought together government, workers' and employers' representatives from the GCC, Jordan and Iraq, as well as leading researchers in the field of heat stress from around the world. Participants also shared international experiences on related research, featuring presentations on experiences from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. These presentations and a set of conclusions are available on the ILO website. A number of initiatives that stem from the Office's work on heat stress and the international conference is under way. Consultations with MOL to expand the agenda of relevant work include:
 - Strengthening the implementation of current legislation, with expansion of medical checkups, identification of relevant medical conditions, stricter monitoring of temperatures throughout the year, and exploration of additional protective measures.
 - New research on the effects of heat on the health of workers, with a focus on the most vulnerable categories of workers.
60. Qatar's legislation, research, and campaigns on heat stress have also been shared by MOL and the ILO in several international meetings, including at the World Government Summit in Dubai in February 2023; at an online meeting on "Heat at Work" held by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in September 2023; at a regional meeting organized by IOM in Kuwait about the impact of climate change on migration and migrant workers in the region, in September 2023; the MENA Climate Change Week in Riyadh in October 2023; and will be shared at the COP28 in Dubai in December 2023.

Occupational safety and health

61. The MOU signed in November 2021 between MOL and the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), with the objective to improve the collection and exchange of data and statistics, and create a national registry for occupational accidents, is still in effect. During 2023, an IT company was hired by the State of Qatar to create a unified database for occupational injuries in Qatar. The ILO has been a part of the process, through technical meetings and participation in the final drafting workshop. The product was a Minimum Data Set (MDS), namely a set of data collection forms, one for every major data entry point for occupational accidents in Qatar (the hospitals network, MOL, employers and insurance companies).

6 The heat stress video animation for workers received over a million views across various social media platforms.

- 62. The technical cooperation programme has continued to support the training programme with MOL's Labour Inspection Department. Following the training in 2022, a second group of 20 senior labour inspectors (19 men and 1 woman) were trained in OSH subjects and Risk Management by the UK-based National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) in August 2023. They will receive internationally recognized certification on OSH, after passing the post-training exams. The training was organized by the ILO and the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST).
- 63. The MOL and ILO are cooperating with the Embassy of the UK and UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to develop a training module for joint committees on occupational safety and health. The course will focus on risk management at enterprise level, with the aim to strengthen the effective participation of workers on safety and health in the workplace. HSE will also pilot the training among joint committee representatives. Senior OSH Inspectors from MOL will join the training in a capacity of prospective trainers in the future.
- 64. MOL and ILO continued to carry out campaigns throughout 2023 to raise awareness among workers and employers on the prevention of the most common occupational injuries. A video animation on road safety was produced in multiple languages, and will be distributed widely on social media pages. The OSH inspectors also continued their awareness raising efforts in the thematic areas of falls from heights and on the legal requirement for employers to notify the MOL of accidents.

Labour inspection

- 65. Up until September 2023, the MOL's Labour Inspection Department inspected 22,770 companies, 2,493 accommodation sites and 14,795 worksites.
- 66. As part of the MOU between the French and Qatari governments to share technical experience and expertise, the ILO office in Qatar and Expertise France organized a study visit to Paris for senior officials of MOL's OSH Department. The study visit included meetings with representatives of the main French institutions in charge of planning and administering labour inspection, training of inspectors, and research in support of policy and decision making. The main themes covered were the use of technology in the strategic planning and operations of the labour inspection; data collection, analysis and application; training strategies and good practices; as well as the structure and operations of an OSH Institute that will be established in Qatar, with a focus on training and research.
- 67. In the framework of the programme on a gender-responsive labour inspection that was developed in cooperation with the Swedish Work Environment Authority (SWEA), a delegation from Sweden visited Doha to participate in the international Heat Stress Conference in May 2023. A technical exchange visit to Sweden was organized in October 2023 around the following thematic areas: (1) Operational planning and implementation of inspection auditing; (2) Data collection and the use of technology in the work of the labour inspectorate; (3) Training systems for labour inspectors; and (4) Set-up and operationalization of a possible OSH Institute in Qatar.

Social protection

68. The programme provided input into [regional mapping on social protection for migrant workers](#), which was published in June 2023. Under the technical cooperation programme, MOL and ILO have engaged in discussions around potential reforms in general, and end-of-service indemnity (EOSI) in particular. MOL participated in a regional discussion in March 2023 on reforming EOSI for migrant workers held by the GCC Executive Bureau, at which ILO social protection specialists presented on core principles enshrined in international social security standards. This was followed in May 2023 by a regional meeting on the same topic hosted by MOL Qatar and GCC Executive Bureau in Doha. ILO specialists facilitated the discussion on limitations of current EOSI schemes, and the importance of social dialogue in the identification of appropriate policy options for national and regional reforms.
69. Under the technical cooperation programme, the regional discussion led to a consultation with MOL and the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund around EOSI reform policy options for Qatar. The discussion focused on the outline of the EOSI reform proposal being discussed by the State of Qatar led by the Ministry of Finance, which includes the establishment of a scheme to cover migrant workers in the public sector followed by a potential progressive roll-out to migrant workers in the private sector. The technical discussion also highlighted the ongoing efforts at reforming EOSI across the other GCC countries and the design/development of possible strategies that adequately address the perceptions of employers and workers in the upcoming EOSI reforms in Qatar. Technical discussions are also being held with the Ministry of Finance to inform the policy reform discussions.

► Pillar 3. Workers' voice and social dialogue

Social dialogue

70. The programme continues to support social dialogue at the enterprise, public client (Qatar Foundation) and sectoral (hospitality) levels. To date, there are 72 joint committees at the enterprise level, with 578 elected worker representatives for more than 29,000 employees. The elections that take place at the enterprise level will form the basis for representative workers' voice at the sectoral level, and, in due course, at the inter-sectoral and national level. See Box I below for some examples of issues raised by joint committees' representatives, and their resolution.
71. Discussions are well advanced on the proposal to make joint committees mandatory for all companies in the private sector that employ more than 100 workers, and a final decision is expected by the end of 2023. This is a major development and an important milestone. The proposed Phase 3 of the technical cooperation programme would see the MOL and ILO collaborate with different institutions to scale up the elections and the training programme for joint committees, as well as the structures at the sectoral, inter-sectoral and national level that allow for dialogue with elected worker representatives.

Ten examples of issues raised by workers' representatives during joint committee meetings and their resolution

Clarifications to company policies and procedures

- At the request of workers' representatives, management representatives discussed their human resource strategy with staff in a series of townhall meetings, to allay fears of termination and consult on the reallocation of staff to other outlets.
- Worker representatives have helped management to communicate to workers that management was open to renegotiating contractual terms or discussing alternative career paths in the company. Many have since approached management and withdrawn their resignation letters.
- Workers' and management representatives in the retail sector expanded the scope of the policies on discrimination, violence and bullying to also apply to suppliers, transportation, work trips, events and so forth.

Improvements to the organization of work

- Workers' representatives successfully negotiated a Friday (weekend holiday) rotational leave arrangement for project site employees with family responsibilities.
- Management approved worker representatives' request to install workstations on project sites. Workers can now fill out work-related or personal forms (such as leave requests) on site, obviating protracted and tiring trips to and from the head office.
- Workers' representatives have raised the issue of curfews on female staff, and after discussions with management were able to change the procedures to remove the curfew.
- Workers' representatives submitted a complaint put forward by night shift workers in receipt of the legally mandated QAR 300 food allowance in lieu of catering (available only to day shift colleagues). For lack of meal preparation time, late shift workers were buying ready-made food that cost them more than the allowance. The company increased the food allowance from QAR 300 to QAR 450 per worker for 1,200 workers.
- Management put in place 24/7 shuttle services between the parking area and workers' accommodation, thereby giving the workers more rest time before their shift started and after their shift ended.

Health and safety improvements

- Health and safety suggestions put forward by joint committee representatives in group-wide joint committees have generated improvements that are scalable to the entirety of the group's businesses. The worker representative for one of the sites recommended the installation of chairs for cashiers (previously expected to remain on their feet for several hours). As a result, management installed chairs for cashiers in the group's 80 sites.

Improving the effectiveness and transparency of training strategies and recognizing skills

- Prior to the joint committee, information about trainings was selectively relayed by supervisors to workers depending on supervisors' assessment of training needs. Workers' representatives have expressed various concerns about the company's training strategy. Following discussions, management made the training strategy and calendar available to all workers by posting it on the bulletin board in the accommodation and at the worksite. All barriers to access, including language and cut-off grades, were removed for the basic courses. Workers' representatives insisted on the importance of certification, including retroactive certification. The company has since issued certificates to employees for all previously taken courses.

72. Joint committee representatives continue to receive support through a multi-module training programme. A new training approach was piloted for Modules 4 and 5 addressing violence and harassment (C190) and equality and non-discrimination (C111). The MOL and ILO delivered training to companies' joint committees and provided in-depth support towards conducting risk assessments and identifying risk areas necessitating changes in companies' policies and procedures. In some instances, the Community Liaison Officers of the ITUC and GUFs were involved in observing the elections and providing training (see below).
73. The ILO has continued to work with Qatar Foundation to set up new joint committees and support existing joint committees through capacity-building. In 2023, the ILO supported the establishment of two project-level joint committees of Qatar Foundation suppliers.
74. The ILO and MOL have continued to support the Secretariat of the Qatar Foundation's central labour-management consultation committee, including elections to the Women's Subcommittee in February 2023. The ILO has provided training to the Women's Subcommittee on roles and responsibilities as well as discrimination, violence and harassment.
75. The ILO and MOL have hosted sector-level information sessions about joint committees. Information sessions were delivered in March 2023 to companies from the facilities management sector and in October 2023 to companies from the cleaning sector. In June 2023, the MOL and ILO provided an information session about joint committees, and led a workshop on diversity and inclusion in the retail sector (on the basis of C.111 and C.190) to a group of HR directors of nine retail companies in Qatar.
76. To institutionalize the joint committee training programme, a draft guidance tool for joint committee elections, and training manuals on module one (roles and responsibilities of joint committee members) and module two (employee participation rights) have been finalized and discussions are under way with training institutions to deliver it at a wider scale.
77. The MOL, ILO, ITUC and the global union federations (BWI, IDWF, ITF and UNI Global) held a meeting in Doha in September 2023 to discuss the status of the labour reforms and plans for Phase 3 of the technical cooperation programme, and for the unions to highlight their priorities, to discuss how cooperation among the parties should be enhanced. A Cooperation Framework is under development.

Engagement with the private sector

78. In September 2023, the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities had constructive meetings with the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) on how to strengthen cooperation with the ILO more broadly, and with the technical cooperation programme in particular. The QCCI and ILO will hold a conference in early 2024 that will set out some of the new areas of cooperation.
79. The Project Office has continued to be approached by companies wanting to discuss the status of the reforms, the risks related to their operations, and the measures that can be taken to mitigate those risks. Some of these companies have also sought to connect with the ILO in other countries in the region and around the world.
80. The programme has met with foreign business councils of several countries to discuss areas of collaboration and to promote workplace cooperation in enterprises. In September 2023, a roundtable was organized with the international business community, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability professionals from the private sector, and local consulting firms specializing in sustainability reporting, to discuss human rights due diligence in the context of ESG reporting. The roundtable also included contributions from the NYU Stern's Center for Business and Human Rights, and the Gulf Sustain Initiative at IHRB.
81. As part of the programme's sustainability strategy, the MOL and ILO are collaborating with Qatar University's Center for Entrepreneurship and Organizational Excellence at the College of Business and Economics to write a casebook on business and human rights. The casebook includes context-specific case studies on business and human rights interventions in the private sector and among public clients in Qatar, documenting the challenges and opportunities for responsible business conduct. The casebook will be used as a teaching tool for business students in Qatar University, and will also be disseminated across the region in English and Arabic.
82. In September 2023, contributors to the casebook (the MOL, the ILO, and academics from the Center) convened for a [peer review roundtable](#) to present drafts of their case studies and exchange feedback. The roundtable was facilitated by business and human rights practitioners including partners from NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights (CBHR), and the Gulf Sustain Initiative at IHRB, and the Global Business School Network (GBSN). Globally, the ILO is closely engaged with the GBSN via a [2022 MOU](#) to develop open-source teaching resources that bring labour rights into business education worldwide. On the margins of the peer review roundtable of September 2023, the CBHR had a meeting with Qatar University about becoming a member of the GBSN.
83. In September, the ILO, French Chamber of Commerce and the MOL organized a workshop for the members of the French Chamber on human rights due diligence. The workshop emphasized the importance of consultations with internal stakeholders (employees and suppliers) in the due diligence process. The French multinational Nexans shared its experience with joint committee consultations.
84. In April 2023, the ILO and QFC organized a roundtable with QFC management and companies to discuss decent work and due diligence in the procurement process, particularly when contracting cleaning, maintenance and security services. This echoed the roundtable organized with the diplomatic community in Doha in 2022. The ILO shared a labour rights checklist to support them in carrying out their due diligence.

► Pillar 4. International cooperation and exchange of experience

Bilateral exchanges with other States

- 85. The technical cooperation programme has facilitated cooperation with labour ministries and other counterparts in several countries, on a range of topics.
- 86. In the reporting period, a number of exchanges have taken place under the auspices of the Declaration of Intent (DoI) between the Government of France, the Government of Qatar and the ILO. Two online meetings were held on labour inspection in March 2023, as well as a study visit to Paris to meet with these institutions in May 2023. Another study visit with a focus on social dialogue took place in July 2023. An event was organized with the MOL, French Business Council and French Embassy to promote worker-management dialogue amongst French businesses in Qatar in September 2023.
- 87. Collaboration with the Embassy of the Netherlands continues in the area of social dialogue. The joint committee training module on employee participation rights is being revised based on the several rounds of training delivered (see section above on Pillar 3). In addition, a study visit to the Netherlands is planned in the coming months with a focus on collective dispute resolution, involving the labour and social affairs ministries, as well as the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO).
- 88. Activities were carried out under the scope of the MOU with Sweden, in the area of labour inspection (see Pillar 2, above).
- 89. An MOU will shortly be finalized between the MOL, ILO and the UK to exchange experiences and explore the possibility of further cooperation with a number of institutions, including the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).
- 90. A technical exchange with Singapore was organized for the management of the workers' support fund (see Pillar 2 above).
- 91. In addition to frequent engagement with the diplomatic community in Doha, the ILO has also provided briefings to senior officials and parliamentarians from several countries.

Sharing experiences through international forums

- 92. The MOL and ILO have participated in a number of regional and international exchanges to share experience related to the labour reforms in Qatar. One theme of global interest has been occupational heat stress, and the MOL and ILO co-hosted an important meeting on this subject in Doha in May 2023, and joined a number of discussions in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE and in Europe (see Pillar 2, above). In addition, the programme has contributed and benefited from closer cooperation between the ILO Regional Office and the GCC Executive Bureau on social protection, wage protection, absconding and other areas. The programme shared Qatar's experiences of adoption and implementation of labour mobility reforms during the 16th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour and the national tripartite preparatory meeting in Malaysia.
- 93. The MOL and the African Union are planning to organize an inter-regional meeting in Doha in 2024 on the governance of labour migration between Africa and the Arab States, reflecting the growth of this migration corridor.

UN cooperation

- 94. In June 2023, the ILO Project Office moved to the newly established United Nations House, provided by the Government of Qatar to the UN agencies resident in the country. The UN House will undoubtedly enable enhanced coordination and collaboration among the UN family. Such a collaborative environment is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of UN programs and initiatives: promoting sustainable development, decent work, education, health, gender equality and other critical areas of focus. This is clearly of importance not only for the ILO's work in Qatar, but also for cooperation between Qatar and the UN in promoting the SDGs around the world.
- 95. The ILO Doha Project Office has coordinated an effort among the UN agencies and Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to raise awareness within Qatar on the SDGs, building on the prominent role that Qatar played in the SDG Summit in September 2023. The campaign will include a series of Op-Eds and roundtables with partners and key stakeholders in the country.
- 96. The Office has also supported engagement between the ILO and different Qatari development partners, including the Qatar Fund for Development and the Education Above All Foundation. The Doha Office has also supported coordination between Silatech and the ILO Offices in the Arab States Region, in New York and in Geneva. This included the participation of the ILO Director-General in an event at the SDG Pavilion during the FIFA World Cup in December 2022; an event on "Decent jobs for forcibly displaced youth in LDCs" during the Fifth Conference on Least Development Countries (LDC5) held in Doha in March 2023; and ILO participation in a Silatech Panel Discussion on "Unlocking Potential: The Power of Remote Work in Economically Empowering Vulnerable Youth" in September 2023 during the SDG Weekend.
- 97. The programme participated in a workshop organized by UNDP and the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA) on integrating the SDGs into Qatar's National Development Strategy.

Programme management

- 98. The independent evaluation of the second phase of the technical cooperation programme started in August 2023 and will be finalized in December 2023, following a number of interviews, consultations, a desk review, and analysis of data and information. The findings of the final evaluation will be used to assess the achievement of results, the impact of the programme, and the sustainability of interventions; identify the main difficulties or constraints; and formulate lessons learned and practical recommendations to inform possible future ILO technical cooperation projects, including the proposed Phase 3.
- 99. A series of meetings have taken place over the course of 2023 to shape the design of Phase 3 of the technical cooperation programme. The programme is anticipated to run from 2024 to 2027. More details of Phase 3 will be shared once the details are finalized.
- 100. The Project Office in Doha continues to work closely with ILO Headquarters and the Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS), including receiving technical backstopping support from a number of the specialists. In addition, there are regular exchanges to build links between Qatar and regional and global programmes and priorities.

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