

# Improving Labour Migration Governance and Combating Human Trafficking in the Middle East



## AT A GLANCE

- **Partners**  
Ministries of Labour, Interior and Justice, workers' representatives, civil society organizations, non-governmental organisations, labour attachés and welfare officers of countries of origin, law enforcement officials, media professionals, and academics.
- **Donor**  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- **Duration**  
1 December 2012 - 30 November 2014
- **Target beneficiaries**  
Government, workers and employers, and migrant workers
- **Geographical focus**  
Bahrain, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and Yemen



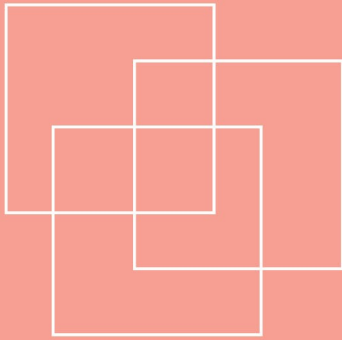
## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Labour migration has increased exponentially in the Middle East since the onset of the 1970s oil boom. Initially, migrants came to work on large infrastructure projects but demand for workers soon diversified into manufacturing and other occupational sectors (such as retail, hospitality health, tourism and domestic help), presenting new opportunities for migrant women.

Today, the Arab world is a hub of attraction for international migrants globally. The institution governing labour migration in the Middle East is the *kafala*, an employer-driven sponsorship system regulating the relationship that employers (*known as sponsors or kafeels*) have with migrant workers. Terms and conditions of residence and work are typically determined by the *kafeels*.

The inequalities resulting from employer-driven migration governance systems often result in migrant workers suffering from underpayment, non-payment and delays in payment of wages and unwarranted additional costs. Low-skilled workers are frequently made to work in arduous conditions for longer hours than envisaged by the law, without overtime payments. They may be deprived of weekly rest, annual or home leave or subjected to physical and sexual abuse. In the Middle East, there are some 600,000 forced labour victims and 3.4 in every 1,000 of the region's inhabitants are compelled to work against their free choice.





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## OBJECTIVES

Arab Governments have signalled their interest in reforming the *kafala* system that ties migrant workers to their employers, and they have taken steps to improve the working and living conditions of national and foreign workers. This project supports efforts to integrate migration governance into strategies for the nationalisation of the labour force and broader socio-economic policies. Its main objectives are to:

- » Enhance means available to formulate labour migration policies and reform *Kafala* system in target countries.
- » Build the capacity of civil society stakeholders to better protect migrant workers and advocate for their rights
- » Improve recruitment process and employment policy in target countries
- » Support governments and key stakeholders to develop mechanisms to respond to cases of forced labour and trafficking.

The project will improve the protection afforded to migrant workers in different sectors through activities focused on: regional data management, research and policy reform, service delivery to migrant workers as well as capacity training programmes.

## OUTCOMES

### Enhanced resources for the formulation of labour migration policy by target countries:

- Advisory services contribute to influencing migration policy and recruitment practises
- Government officials in target countries are able to translate labour migration studies into policy reforms
- Decision makers employ the database provided on the MENA MAGNET Research Portal to review policies and open an independent policy dialogue between origin and destination countries
- Official statistics are improved through better sample design in national household surveys

### Better protection and services are extended to migrant workers:

- An action plan for inter-regional cooperation is signed and implemented between trade unions in countries of origin and destination
- The capacity of trade unions to assist migrant workers in at least one country is increased
- Increased capacity of civil society organizations to provide better services to women migrant workers in at least two countries
- Coverage of labour migration and human trafficking in the Arab media is expanded and improved.

### Governments develop mechanisms to respond to cases of forced labour and trafficking:

- Policy coherence is achieved through effective mechanisms to implement national laws and regulations put in place by national institutions.

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