

Gulf Sustain

Strategy overview
Draft: 14 May, 2024

1. Background and Vision

In 2022, the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) launched the Gulf Sustain initiative with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to work towards a green transition framework that considers the intersection of economic diversification, worker welfare and sustainable development in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations.¹ [Gulf Sustain](#) aims to develop knowledge, drive dialogue, and promote stronger policies, accountability, and collaboration on an integrated approach to achieving net-zero commitments while advancing the welfare of all workers in GCC countries' economic diversification plans. Gulf Sustain's aspiration and approach are to deliver impact by building leverage through collective action.

The programme was born as a result of a feasibility assessment that sought to identify opportunities for collaboration across the GCC on the topics of sustainability and inclusion. As GCC governments shift their focus towards economic diversification and future-proofing workforces in the face of the climate emergency, there is a unique opportunity to advance responsible business practices. The increased focus on sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, technology, and finance will require an increased amount of transparency, corporate responsibility and ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) compliance, of which workers' rights are an increasing part. The new drivers of the economy will also require better-educated and higher-skilled workforces.

By convening the private sector, governments, financial actors, and local, regional, and international organizations across the fields of climate action, renewable energy, economic diversification, and worker welfare, Gulf Sustain seeks to contribute to the development of a green transition framework that will drive social change in the GCC and beyond. The initiative aims to contribute to GCC countries becoming strong drivers in transitions towards environmentally sustainable and equitable economies with the rights of workers and vulnerable groups at the centre.

To this end, Gulf Sustain's approach will focus on the following objectives:

- **Drive Engagement:** We bring together key stakeholders to ensure a multi-level approach and include diverse voices in green transition & economic diversification processes.
- **Produce Knowledge:** We develop research & create evidence to support the inclusion of all workers in transition processes and build the business case for why private sector companies should prioritise an inclusive green transition.
- **Collaborate & Co-create:** We partner with local and regional stakeholders to develop actionable solutions and expand networks working in the fields of green transitions,

¹ Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

sustainable development and worker welfare. Part of this effort will center around the provision of capacity building and training activities as they relate to worker welfare.

In order to achieve these strategic objectives, two core workstreams will be pursued between 2023-2027:

- i. Responsible Recruitment in the green transition
- ii. Climate Change and Worker Welfare.

The workstreams will build on expertise and existing tools on responsible recruitment, migration with dignity and responsible business practices (namely the Dhakka Principles, with special attention paid to the Employer Pays Principle), but will also look to generate new knowledge and resources, particularly regarding the impact of climate change on workers (using concrete examples including air quality and heat stress). Cross-cutting thematic lenses include gender, youth and sustainable development. To this end, a central component of the Gulf Sustain approach will be partnering with local stakeholders and experts to ensure that the outcomes of Gulf Sustain's work are locally owned and tailored to the national and regional contexts.

2. Country-level activities

As of May 2024, Gulf Sustain has presence in the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, where it is engaging with diverse stakeholder groups to further its mission. Expansion into Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman is expected throughout 2024 and 2025.

Throughout the remainder of 2024, Gulf Sustain will focus on:

- **Strategic Dialogues:** Hosting, co-hosting or participating in events that seek to raise awareness and promote knowledge exchange around responsible business practices in the Gulf region; target audiences include private sector companies, government representatives and agencies, academic institutions and wider civil society
- **Research:** Outputs that focus on the topics of economic diversification, worker welfare and the green transition specific to country level or regionally applicable focus areas.
- **Youth engagement:** having strategic dialogues, research and a training module delivered specifically to the leaders of tomorrow in collaboration with youth-focused initiatives and academic institutions based in the region.
- **Convening:** Bringing together diverse stakeholder groups from across the GCC to build capacity and provide an opportunity to learn about responsible business practices in their national and regional contexts; This will include expert speakers and the hosting of

interactive sessions aimed at building roadmaps for how to action responsible business in the context of the green transition

- **Co-creation:** Working closely with cross-sector private sector companies across the GCC region to jointly produce a regionally applicable framework for responsible business practices in the context of global just transition conversations that is informed by real-world challenges and opportunities faced by companies in the region.