



Gulf Sustain
Responsible business for people and planet

UNDERSTANDING GCC LAWS:

Heat stress, recruitment fees,
and migration agreements

PART 1: HEAT STRESS

Background on Heat Stress

When a person performs hard physical work, the body produces high amounts of heat. To maintain a stable body temperature, this excess heat must be released to the environment. The body primarily achieves this by producing sweat and by directing more blood to cooler areas. Heat stress occurs when the body generates more heat than it can release. If the body cannot rid itself of this excess heat, the core temperature rises and the heart rate increases.¹ As heat continues to build up, the person may begin to lose concentration, have difficulty focusing on tasks, become irritable or feel sick, and often lose the desire to drink water. The next stage is most often fainting and even death if the person is not rapidly cooled down. It becomes dangerous in high-temperature environments, particularly for outdoor and manual labourers.²

Measuring occupational heat stress

The Wet-Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) index is widely used internationally to measure occupational heat stress, as it accounts for temperature, humidity, wind speed, and solar radiation. In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), most countries mitigate heat stress through midday work bans during the summer months. These are defined by fixed hours and vary slightly by country. However, Qatar is currently the only GCC country that has formally mandated the use of WBGT measurements in national legislation³ to assess heat risk and adjust working conditions accordingly.⁴ The regulation requires WBGT instruments to be placed close to the workers without interfering with their tasks, ensuring accurate readings of heat exposure.⁵

The challenge of workplace heat exposure is not limited to ambient temperature; it also includes access to water, rest, and shade, particularly in sectors like construction and agriculture, where workers often face intense workloads and limited control over pacing.⁶ While midday bans offer some protection, only Qatar has introduced a risk-based legal framework tied to WBGT, whereas the other GCC countries continue to rely on fixed summer work-hour restrictions.

1 <https://www.mol.gov.qa/admin/LawsDocuments/2020%20Heat%20Stress%20Guidance-r15.pdf>

2 https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_711919.pdf

3 Ministerial Decision No. 17 of 2021

4 [https://www.mol.gov.qa/admin/LawsDocuments/Decision%20of%20the%20Minister%20of%20Administrative%20Development,%20Labour%20and%20Social%20Affairs%20No.20\(17\)%20of%202021%20on%20the%20Necessary%20Precautions%20to%20Protect%20Workers%20from%20Heat%20Stress.pdf](https://www.mol.gov.qa/admin/LawsDocuments/Decision%20of%20the%20Minister%20of%20Administrative%20Development,%20Labour%20and%20Social%20Affairs%20No.20(17)%20of%202021%20on%20the%20Necessary%20Precautions%20to%20Protect%20Workers%20from%20Heat%20Stress.pdf)

5 [https://www.mol.gov.qa/admin/LawsDocuments/Decision%20of%20the%20Minister%20of%20Administrative%20Development,%20Labour%20and%20Social%20Affairs%20No.20\(17\)%20of%202021%20on%20the%20Necessary%20Precautions%20to%20Protect%20Workers%20from%20Heat%20Stress.pdf](https://www.mol.gov.qa/admin/LawsDocuments/Decision%20of%20the%20Minister%20of%20Administrative%20Development,%20Labour%20and%20Social%20Affairs%20No.20(17)%20of%202021%20on%20the%20Necessary%20Precautions%20to%20Protect%20Workers%20from%20Heat%20Stress.pdf)

6 https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/LO_OSH_Heatstress-R16.pdf

Summary of legislations to protect workers from heat stress in the GCC countries

COUNTRY	LEGISLATION CODE (MINISTERIAL DECISION)	PROHIBITED WORK HOURS		THERMAL STRESS INDICATOR	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
		Period of enforcement	Hours daily		
Bahrain	No. 3 (2013)	July 1 to August 31	12:00 – 16:00	--	Work timetable must be translated and clearly visible. Workers in oil and gas industry as well as emergency maintenance are exempt.
Kuwait	No. 535 (2015)	June 1 to August 31	11:00 – 16:00	--	Workers in oil and gas industry as well as workers in closed-in vehicles/structures are exempt.
Oman	No. 286 (2008) No. 322 (2011)	June 1 to August 31	12:30 – 15:30	--	Includes provisions for cool drinking water as well as airconditioned shaded resting areas and transportation
Qatar	No. 17 (2021)	June 1 to September 15	10:00 – 15:30	WBGT	Includes requirements for risk assessment and annual health check-ups as well as provisions for training workers and OSH staff, drinking water, shaded rest areas, and personal protective equipment. Includes workers' right to remove themselves from high heat stress situations. Work stops if WBGT exceeds 32.1°C.
Saudi Arabia	No. 3337 (2014)	June 15 to September 15	12:00 – 15:00	Heat Index	A supplementary guide provided by the Ministry includes requirements for risk assessment and provisions for worker training, personal protective equipment, health checks, gradual adaptation to full-time work, as well as breaks and water based on Heat Index. Workers in closed-in vehicles/structures, shaded areas, or remote areas where no shade is available are exempt.
United Arab Emirates	No. 401 (2015)	June 15 to September 15	12:30 – 15:00	--	Includes requirement for 8-hour maximum daily work shift; additional hours will be considered overtime and include extra pay. Includes provisions for protective equipment, cold drinking water, additional salts/lemon, industrial cooling solutions, sunshade. Work timetable must be translated and clearly visible.

Source: ILO, Heat and OSH Policy Brief June 2024 https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

HEAT STRESS: REGULATIONS PER COUNTRY

Saudi Arabia

Ministerial Decree No. 3337 (14 May 2014)⁷

1. Definition of Heat Stress

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) defines heat stress as:

“A person develops a heat stress as a result of exposure to hot and humid weather, leading to the loss of many fluids from the body through profuse sweats such as occurs with Hajj and Umrah performers, as well as during running in very hot weather.”⁸

2. Working Hours Ban During Summer

To reduce worker exposure to extreme heat, MHRSD enforces Ministerial Decree No. 3337, which:

- Prohibits outdoor work from 12:00 to 15:00,
- During the period from 15 June to 15 September each year.

3. Employer Responsibilities

As part of this mandate, the Ministry issued [a procedural guide](#) outlining required and recommended measures to protect workers from heat stress.⁹ Employers must:

- Schedule rest breaks;

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

⁸ <https://www.hrsd.gov.sa/sites/default/files/2023-06/Procedural%20Guidelines%20for%20Occupational%20Safety%20and%20Health%20For%20preventing%20the%20Effects%20of%20Exposure%20to%20Direct%20Sun%20and%20Heat%20Stress%202021.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.hrsd.gov.sa/sites/default/files/2023-06/Procedural%20Guidelines%20for%20Occupational%20Safety%20and%20Health%20For%20preventing%20the%20Effects%20of%20Exposure%20to%20Direct%20Sun%20and%20Heat%20Stress%202021.pdf>

- Provide designated shaded areas;
- Ensure consistent access to hydration, with an emphasis on drinking fluids every 15 to 20 minutes;
- Encourage the use of light-coloured clothing to minimize heat absorption.

Employers are also obligated to:

- Install temperature and humidity monitoring devices;
- Adapt work schedules to reduce prolonged heat exposure;
- Provide regular health assessments to identify vulnerable workers;
- Ensure workers have access to appropriate rest zones.

4. Team-Based Safety Practices

The guidance stresses collective safety¹⁰. Workers are encouraged to:

- Operate in teams;
- Report symptoms promptly to colleagues;
- Avoid working alone in high-heat conditions.

5. Exemptions

The decision excludes certain categories of workers, including:

- Workers in oil and gas companies, due to the special nature of their work;
- Maintenance workers in emergency situations.¹¹

6. Reporting and Penalties

- Violations can be reported through the 19911 hotline or the MHRSD mobile app.
- Penalties include fines ranging from SAR 3,000 to 10,000 (USD 800–2700) and
- Possible business closures in cases of repeated violations.

Qatar

Ministerial Decision No. 17 of 2021¹²

1. Summer Working Hours Rule

As of 26 May 2021, Qatar introduced a new regulation to protect workers from heat stress.

- Outdoor work is banned from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

¹⁰ <https://www.hrsd.gov.sa/sites/default/files/2023-06/Procedural%20Guidelines%20for%20Occupational%20Safety%20and%20Health%20For%20preventing%20the%20Effects%20of%20Exposure%20to%20Direct%20Sun%20and%20Heat%20Stress%202021.pdf>
¹¹ <https://my.gov.sa/en/content/employment#section-3>

¹² https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

- This applies every year from 1 June to 15 September.
- The rule applies to all outdoor work under the sun or in open workplaces.

This replaced the previous rule (Decision No. 16 of 2007), which had shorter banned hours and a smaller time window during the year.¹³

2. Scientific Approach – WBGT Threshold

In addition to the fixed working hours ban, a new system was introduced using the Wet-Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT).¹⁴

- If the WBGT exceeds 32.1°C, outdoor work must stop immediately, even if it is outside the 10:00–15:30 ban.
- WBGT measures heat stress by factoring in temperature, humidity, sun exposure, and wind speed.

*This approach is used year-round, not just during summer.

3. Employer Responsibilities

Employers must take specific steps to protect workers:

- Monitor heat levels and stop work if WBGT goes over the limit.
- Adjust work schedules to reduce exposure to high heat.
- Provide drinking water, shaded rest areas, and other protective measures.
- Conduct risk assessments with workers and make records available for inspection.
- Offer annual medical check-ups, especially for workers with health conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure.

4. Enforcement and Inspections

- The Ministry of Labour carries out inspections, especially during banned hours.
- Inspectors check both working hours and WBGT levels.
- Non-compliance can lead to worksite closures.
- Workers can report violations anonymously through a hotline or a mobile app.

5. Scientific Basis for the Law

The regulation was based on a 2019 study by FAME Lab (University of Thessaly), commissioned by ILO, MOL, and the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy.¹⁵

- The study observed 5,500 work hours in construction and agriculture.

¹³ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40arabstates/documents/genericdocument/wcms_794519.pdf

¹⁵ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40arabstates/documents/genericdocument/wcms_794519.pdf

- It found that heat stress was common even outside the old banned hours.
- The results helped shape the new policy and the WBGT threshold.

Oman

Ministerial Resolution No. 286/2008 (as amended by Resolution No. 322/2011)¹⁶

1. Midday Work Ban

Article 16/3–3 of Ministerial Resolution No. 286/2008, as amended by Ministerial Resolution No. 322/2011, establishes a midday work ban in Oman.¹⁷

- The regulation prohibits outdoor work, particularly on construction sites,
- Between 12:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.,
- From 1 June to 31 August each year.

2. Public Health Guidance and ‘Safe Summer’ Campaign

The Ministry of Health has issued guidance on preventing heatstroke, emphasizing the risks of prolonged exposure to high temperatures and direct sunlight.¹⁸

In May 2025, the Ministry launched the ‘Safe Summer’ guidelines to further protect workers from heat stress. These guidelines complement the ministerial decision with the following measures:

- Smart work scheduling: Reassigning strenuous tasks to early morning or late afternoon; maintaining the outdoor work ban during peak heat hours (12:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m. in June–August).
- Regular breaks: Mandating breaks every 45–60 minutes in shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- Hydration support: Ensuring access to water and hydration materials.
- Environment cooling: Encouraging the use of air conditioning, fans indoors, and portable fans or umbrellas outdoors.
- Heat alert systems: Monitoring daily temperature and humidity to guide operations.
- Targeted protection: Identifying high-risk workers (such as the elderly or those with chronic conditions) for prioritized intervention.
- Training and materials: Delivering heat-stress education through posters, brochures, videos, and worker training sessions.

3. Occupational Safety and Health Requirements

The Ministry of Labour requires employers to integrate occupational safety and health (OSH)

¹⁶ <https://www.omanobserver.om/article/1172349/oman/moh-issues-guidelines-to-protect-workers-from-heat-stress>

¹⁷ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.muscatdaily.com/2025/05/18/moh-launches-safe-summer-campaign-to-protect-outdoor-workers/>

measures into workplace practices. This includes training workers on the risks associated with heat exposure and the protective actions they should take.¹⁹

4. Penalties for Non-Compliance

Violations of the regulation may result in:

- Fines ranging from OMR 100 to OMR 500, (USD 260–1300) and
- Up to one month in jail.

UAE

Ministerial Decree No. 401 of 2015 (commonly referred to as the Midday Break Decree)²⁰

Midday Work Ban

Prohibits outdoor work between 12:30 and 15:00 from June 15 to September 15. Issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE), the regulation seeks to reduce workers' exposure to extreme heat and limit the incidence of heat-related illnesses.²¹

Additional Information

Complementing this legal framework, the UAE government launched the [“Safety in the Heat” program](#), implemented specifically within Abu Dhabi and supported by the Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre (ADPHC).²² It aims to educate both employers and workers on managing heat-related risks, targeting an outreach of 800,000 individuals.

For workers, the program emphasizes hydration, salt intake, rest breaks, and timely symptom reporting.²³ For employers, it mandates shift scheduling, acclimatization support, workload reduction, and provision of shaded rest areas and water. It includes training on managing heat-related illnesses.²⁴

Under the Abu Dhabi OSH Framework (ADOSH-SF) Code of Practice 11.0, employers must conduct heat stress risk assessments, use WBGT or TWL indices, and provide medical services and first aid for heat-related conditions.²⁵

Exemptions

According to the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, exemptions apply in the following cases:

- Laying asphalt or pouring concrete when technically unfeasible to postpone.
- Emergency repairs to water, electricity, sewage, or other critical infrastructure.
- Work that, if interrupted, would cause disruption to traffic or services and for which a permit has been issued by the competent authority.

¹⁹ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.mohre.gov.ae/en/media-center/awareness-and-guidance/midday-break.aspx>

²¹ <https://www.mohre.gov.ae/en/media-center/awareness-and-guidance/midday-break.aspx>

²² <https://www.adphc.gov.ae/en/Public-Health-Programs/Injury-Prevention/Safety-in-Heat>

²³ <https://www.adphc.gov.ae/-/media/Project/ADPHC/ADPHC/Safety-in-Heat/Training-Manual-AE.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.adphc.gov.ae/-/media/Project/ADPHC/ADPHC/Safety-in-Heat/Man-E.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.adphc.gov.ae/-/media/Project/ADPHC/ADPHC/PDF/OSHAD-SF/Codes-of-Practise/It--Safety-in-the-Heat-v3I-English.pdf>

Even when exempted, employers must provide shaded rest areas, cooling systems, adequate drinking water and rehydration materials, and first aid on site.²⁶

Penalties

Non-compliance may result in AED 5,000 fines per worker (up to AED 50,000 in total) (USD 1361 USD and up to USD 13,600 in total), as well as suspension of work permits.²⁷

Bahrain

Order No. 3 of 2013 regulating working hours outdoors.²⁸

Midday Work Ban

Prohibits outdoor work between 12:00 and 16:00 from July 1 to August 31 annually. Employers must develop work schedules in compliance and display them visibly for workers and inspectors.²⁹

Exemptions

- Workers in oil and gas installations
- Workers performing emergency maintenance

These exemptions require employers to implement additional protective measures against heat exposure.³⁰

Employer Obligations

- Display compliant work schedules in visible locations
- Provide appropriate safety equipment
- Ensure safe handling and storage of materials
- Educate workers on risks of working in high-heat conditions.³¹

Penalties

- Violators face up to 3 months' imprisonment, a fine of BHD 500–1,000 (USD 1326–2653) per offense, or both.³²

26 <https://www.mohre.gov.ae/en/media-center/awareness-and-guidance/midday-break.aspx>

27 <https://www.mohre.gov.ae/en/media-centre/news/3/6/2025/mohre-to-implement-midday-break-for-the-21st-consecutive-year-from-15-june-to-15-september-2025.aspx>

28 https://natlexilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=95101&

29 https://natlexilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=95101&

30 https://natlexilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=95101&

31 https://www.wilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

32 <https://www.newsofbahrain.com/bahrain/113897.html>

Kuwait

Kuwait is known for ranking among the hottest countries globally during summer, frequently reaching above 50 °C.³³

Ministerial Decision No. 535/2015 ('Noon Work Ban') issued by the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM).³⁴

Midday Work Ban

- Prohibits outdoor work from 11:00 to 16:00, annually, from June 1 to August 31
- Applies when ambient temperatures exceed 48.89 °C.³⁵

Exemptions

- Workers in the oil and gas sectors are exempt from this ban.

Enforcement

- The PAM conducts unannounced inspections at outdoor work sites.³⁶

Penalties

- Employers face fines of KWD 100–200 (USD 327–654) per worker for violations

In severe or repeated cases, operations may be suspended³⁷

³³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S001671852400160X>

³⁴ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

³⁵ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Heat%20and%20OSH%20Policy%20Brief%202024_1.pdf

³⁶ <https://kuwaittimes.com/kuwaits-outdoor-labor-ban-730-violations-in-june>

³⁷ <https://kuwaittimes.com/pam-launches-sudden-inspection-campaign/>

Part B: PROHIBITION OF RECRUITMENT FEES

This explainer provides a legal and regulatory snapshot of how Gulf countries address recruitment fees. For a deeper exploration of responsible recruitment risks, business responsibilities, and reform strategies, see our companion briefing: “Responsible Recruitment? Understanding the GCC Context.”

Background on Recruitment Fees

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO):

“Recruitment fees or related costs refer to any fees or costs incurred in the recruitment process in order for workers to secure employment or placement, regardless of the manner, timing or location of their imposition or collection.”³⁸

This encompasses any charge, monetary or in-kind, direct or indirect imposed on workers during hiring. These may take the form of money, property, wage deductions, kickbacks, or bribes, and can be collected by any party, whether an employer, labour recruiter, agent, or other intermediary.³⁹

The ILO definition also includes both visible and hidden charges—including illicit or informal fees, such as bribes or extortionate payments—as part of prohibited recruitment fees.⁴⁰

In addition to general recruitment fees, the ILO outlines a detailed list of related costs that should not be borne by workers. These costs are often imposed during the recruitment process to access employment or placement and may be initiated by an employer, labour recruiter, or an agent acting on their behalf. These include:

1. Medical costs: Payments for medical examinations, tests, or vaccinations
2. Insurance costs: Charges to insure the lives, health, and safety of workers, including enrolment in migrant welfare funds
3. Skills and qualification tests: Costs to verify workers’ language proficiency and level of skills or qualifications, as well as for location-specific credentialing, certification, or licensing
4. Training and orientation: Expenses for required training, including on-site job orientation and pre-departure or post-arrival orientation of newly recruited workers
5. Equipment costs: Payments for tools, uniforms, safety gear, and other equipment needed to perform assigned work safely and effectively
6. Travel and lodging costs: Expenses incurred for travel, lodging, and subsistence within or across national borders during the recruitment process—including for training, interviews, consular appointments, relocation, and return or repatriation

38 https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@migrant/documents/publication/wcms_536755.pdf

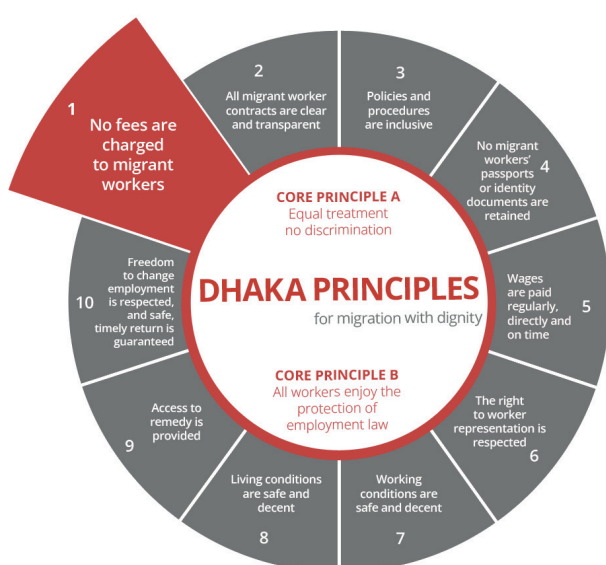
39 file:///Users/macpro/Downloads/wcms_647387.pdf

40 https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@migrant/documents/publication/wcms_536755.pdf

7. Administrative costs: Application and service fees required solely to complete the recruitment process. These may include fees for representation and services aimed at preparing, obtaining, or legalizing workers' employment contracts, identity documents, passports, visas, background checks, security and exit clearances, banking services, and work or residence permits.⁴¹

[The Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity](#), developed by the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), provide a human rights-based framework to protect migrant workers throughout the entire labour migration cycle—from recruitment, to employment abroad, to safe return home. They emphasize that the root of many abuses begins at the point of recruitment, particularly when workers are forced to pay fees to secure jobs.

Within this framework, Principle 1, [the Employer Pays Principle](#), was originally coined by the [IHRB Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment](#) to describe a model in which workers do not pay any fees, costs, or charges for recruitment. It clearly states that no worker should pay for a job; the full cost of recruitment must be borne by the employer. This voluntary principle has been widely adopted by companies, governments, and international organizations across sectors.



⁴¹ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/Global_report_master_combined_web.pdf

Summary of Prohibition of Recruitment Fees in the GCC

COUNTRY	LEGAL BASIS (LAW / DECREE / MINISTERIAL DECISION)	PROHIBITION OF RECRUITMENT FEES	WORKER CATEGORY COVERED	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Saudia Arabia	Article 40(1) of Saudi Arabia's Labour Law (Royal Decree M/51 of 23/8/1426H – Sept. 27, 2005, as amended)	The employer shall bear the recruitment fees and the residence permit and work permit fees of the worker.	Private sector workers (other than domestic workers).	The Labour Law as approved by Royal Decree M/51 of 1426 (2005) (hereafter the "Labour Law"), article 40. If the employer charges the worker with any of the costs/fees that are set by law on the employer, the employer is fined 10,000 Saudi riyals (US\$2,660) (as provided by Ministerial Decision No. 178743/1440 (2019), clause 18).
Qatar	Labour Law No. 14 of 2004, and Entry, Exit and Residence Law No. 21 of 2015.	It is clearly prohibited by the Labour Law to charge workers recruitment fees or expenses or any other costs.	Private sector workers (other than domestic workers)	No
Oman	Ministerial Decision No. 1 of 2011 on Issuing the Regulations for Recruiting Non-Omani Workforce.	Recruitment agencies are prohibited from charging fees to workers.	Private sector workers (other than domestic workers).	According to the Labour Law, it is "prohibited to advertise and promote labor and classify it on the basis of creed, color or cost, and advertise it in a way that demeans human dignity" (article 32).
UAE	Article 6(1) of the United Arab Emirates Federal Decree-Law	An employer cannot charge the worker or collect from him/her recruitment and employment costs, either directly or indirectly.	Private sector workers (other than domestic workers)	If the worker changes to a new employer during the probation period, the employer may be able to claim (part of) the recruitment costs from the new employer.
Bahrain		Charging recruitment fees to workers is not explicitly prohibited by law.		
Kuwait		Charging recruitment fees to workers is not explicitly prohibited by law.		<u>In 2024, Kuwait set fee limits for hiring domestic workers: The new fee structure caps the cost of hiring domestic workers from Asian countries at KD750 (about Dh9,000), African countries at KD575, and KD350 for individuals with a special passport provided by the sponsor.</u>

PART C: BILATERAL LABOUR MIGRATION AGREEMENTS (BLMA's)

Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs) are cooperation arrangements signed between migrant-sending and host countries. They detail the specific responsibilities of each party and the actions required to achieve shared goals in managing labour migration, ensuring regulation according to agreed principles and procedures. [These agreements include legally binding bilateral labour agreements \(BLAs\), Memoranda of Understanding \(MoUs\), and technical cooperation agreements](#) between government ministries or agencies that address various aspects of labour migration.

According to research by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), bilateral labour agreements “can provide concrete means to improve the governance of labour migration and strengthen the protection of migrant workers based on shared responsibility when they are solidly underpinned by international human rights and labour standards and effectively implemented.”⁴²

BLMAs are flexible tools that take various forms, with differing objectives, scopes, and legal implications. They serve to address a broad range of recruitment needs and labour shortages across diverse socioeconomic contexts and labour market conditions.

Summary of BLMA's between the GCC & migrant-sending countries

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION							Additional notes
	SAUDI ARABIA	QATAR		OMAN	UAE	BAHRAIN	KUWAIT	
KENYA	BLA in effect	BLA in effect		In development	BLA in effect	In development	In development	
TANZANIA	BLA in effect	BLA in effect		No	BLA in effect	No	No	
ETHIOPIA	BLA in effect	BLA in effect		No	No	BLA in effect	No	
UGANDA	BLA in effect	BLA in effect		Draft agreement under review	BLA in effect	No	Draft agreement under review	
INDIA	MoU (DSW)	BLA in effect		MoU	MoU	MoU	MoU	India Ministry of External Affairs: MOUs
NEPAL	Draft BLA exchanged	BLA in effect		Draft BLA exchanged	MoU	BLA in effect	No	The Plight of Nepali Migrant Workers in the GCC
BANGLADESH	MoU (domestic workers)	BLA in effect		MoU	BLA in effect	No (Under discussion)	Yes (technical Cooperation Agreement)	Malaysia MOU
SRI LANKA	MoU (DSW)	BLA in effect		MoU	MoU	MoU	MoU	Bilateral Labour Agreements Between Sri Lanka and Other Jurisdictions
PAKISTAN	MoU	MoU (Expired now, to be renewed)		No	MoU	MoU	MoU	From Pakistan to the Gulf Region
PHILIPPINES	BLA in effect	BLA in effect		No	MoU	MoA	MoA	

42 International Labour Organization (ILO) & International Organization for Migration (IOM), “Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements in African Union Member States: Taking Stock and the Way Forward,” p. 1.



CITE AS: Sarah Mostafa-Kamel, Gulf Sustain, Programme Manager.
Gulf Sustain is a regional initiative of the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB).

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