



Technical Cooperation Project for the State of Qatar – Phase 2

QUICK FACTS

Countries: The State of Qatar

Evaluation date: 05 January 2024

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: Regional Office for Arab States

Technical Office: Regional Office for Arab States

Evaluation manager: Hiba Al Rifai (ROAS) and Naomi Asukai (EVAL)

Evaluation consultant(s): Patrick Breard, Nahla Hassan

DC Symbol: QAT/21/01/QAT

Donor(s) & budget: DTF/Qatar, US\$ 10,404,974.46

Key Words: International labour standards



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The first phase of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) (2018-2021) was the outcome of negotiations between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the government of the State of Qatar (SOQ) following a complaint, which was lodged in 2014 under Article 26 of the ILO Constitution. The complaint against the SOQ was lodged at the International Labour Conference for nonconformity with the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). In November 2017, the ILO Governing Body decided to close the complaint based on the SOQ's adoption of a comprehensive technical cooperation programme co-designed in agreement by the ILO. The second phase of the technical cooperation programme sought to consolidate the achievements of the first phase while adding new areas for cooperation, including active and inclusive labour market policies that contribute to a more competitive and knowledge-based economy. These objectives were aligned with those set out in Qatar's National Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy (2018-2022). The second phase of the programme focused on four key areas of action:

- 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

Present situation of the project

The budget for the second phase of the programme was US\$ 10,404,974.46 for 30 months, from 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2023.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The primary purpose of this final evaluation is to assess the project's overall achievements in comparison to its planned outcomes and outputs in addition to identifying unanticipated outcomes.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation assessed the project duration covering the period 1 July 2021- 31 October 2023. Data gathering was performed between 31 August and 6 October 2023. The geographical coverage is aligned with the scope of the project. The evaluation integrates gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, ILS and social dialogue, and Covid-19 as crosscutting concerns throughout its methodology and deliverables. The TCP logical framework and indicators were used as a basis for addressing key questions. A mixed-method approach was used to collect data to allow for triangulation and



validation of data and enhance the credibility of findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Data collection relied on desk review of secondary sources, interviews and focus groups (51 male and 36 female), and observation to gather evidence of achievements. Data analysis was qualitative and quantitative. The evaluation faced and mitigated several constraints, i.e. limited time to conduct the evaluation and consult informants, limited number and types of evaluation informants, limited availability of data.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance and strategic fit

The TCP's second phase was well suited for the context of labour migration in Qatar, aligned with the Permanent Constitution, the National Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2018-2022. However, the contextual problems and needs could have been better analysed to ensure full coherence with all national objectives and targets of the labour market and workforce and to the economic context in the country and to help increase buy-in from all stakeholders which requires demonstrating the win-win nature of the kafala reforms.

The relevance of the TCP's activities, outputs and objective have not been a result of traditional social dialogue but of a particular form of social dialogue specific to the labour management context of Qatar. The impediments to social dialogue in Qatar were considered in the design of the project with the Ministry of Labour (MOL) and attempts were made to address them through Pillar 3 which focused on Workers' voice and social dialogue, strengthening existing Joint Committees (JCs) and the establishment of new ones. The engagement was fostered with Global Union Federations (GUFs), International Organisation for Employers (IOE) and members of International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), but the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) has not been in the reforms during Phase 2, as was the case in Phase 1. Workers' unions expressed concerns about worker representation and freedom of association issues; although not part of the objectives of the project, the legal barriers related to freedom of association in Qatar continued to pose challenges for the implementation of the TCP.



Coherence and validity of design

The project strategies and structures have limited coherence and logical correlations between the objective, outcomes and outputs. The project document presented an implementation plan but lacked several core elements in the design were not adequately covered, such as a comprehensive logical framework, M&E plan, theory of change, and a risk analysis. Not identifying nor analysing risks and assumptions posed a potential gap in addressing them comprehensively. Within the first year of implementation, an Evaluability Assessment was conducted that reconstructed the theory of change, logical framework and M&E components, in which the adjusted logical framework refined the four pillars into four outcomes and 12 outputs and strengthened links between them, made changes to some outputs, activities and indicators. As such, the adjusted logical framework was introduced and started to be used quite late in the project's lifetime and the indicators had no measured baseline and are mostly not SMART.

Overall, the project's design and implementation have been shaped by the ILO's normative values and standards, with a focus on achieving meaningful and sustainable labour reform in Qatar.

Efficiency

The TCP human and financial resources were efficiently utilized. The ILO Office in Doha carried out the implementation of the project, ROAS provided executive management and operational support, with support from HQ when needed. The project was led by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and assisted by three technical specialists, in addition to operation officer, finance, and communication as well as the interpreter, national officers and general staff. The TCP enjoyed technical backstopping from several ILO departments and branches in HQ Geneva and in ROAS. However, challenges were faced due to downsizing and to a number of external factors that added to the staff's workload, particularly in the M&E role, negatively impacting its efficiency. The TCP management was participatory and inclusive, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined.

The project's timeframe did not allow for the efficient achievement of the intended results. The scope in phase 2 continued to involve



significant labour reforms that needed to be developed and implemented in a relatively short period of time. The project attempted to achieve a lot in two years, within a challenging context surrounding the project in Qatar. There were external factors that affected the implementation, including hosting the World Cup, internal restructuring within MOL, reduced engagement by GUFs and ITUC and the “Qatar Gate” issue which slowed down engagement between the unions and the MOL and brought to a more direct involvement of the ILO HQ senior management and ACTRAV and ACTEMP in the design of phase 3. Most ILO staff who were interviewed during this evaluation talked about how the project was perhaps too ambitious at the outset compared to its duration and delays in implementation meant that not all of the intended outcomes could be reached. The delays were for multiple reasons including the restructuring and new personnel in the MOL and the World Cup.

There has been a keen interest by ROAS and HQ to provide the necessary technical backstopping to the TCP to ensure it becomes a successful model for replication in the Gulf countries. Technical backstopping involved specialists, whose level of involvement varied depending on the nature of the interventions. While some areas required in-depth support, others, like OSH, Social Dialogue and Migration had in-house expertise and although there was no dedicated gender specialist in the project, all of the colleagues apply gender-responsive approaches to their work. Involvement in the TCP Qatar by HQ varied from one unit to the other, they played an important role in providing support when needed. For example, while NORMES provided technical backstopping, the ACTRAV, ACTEMP, LABADMIN/OSH and GOVERNANCE departments had some involvement over the years.

Effectiveness

The TCP made progress on a majority of the intended project outcomes and outputs. The TCP has contributed to strengthen labour market and labour migration governance (outcome 1). The support provided to operationalising the dismantlement of the kafala system has facilitated job changes for migrant workers. Procedural changes



supported by the TCP have been adopted by the MOL. Capacities of MOL's staff and partners have been strengthened with trainings. Fair recruitment has been promoted and also supported through trainings and process improvements, but several sources of information indicate that a significant proportion of the workforce still faced the payment of recruitment fees. Guidance tools such as on due diligence have been prepared and work initiated to mainstream labour rights and fair recruitment into public procurement. However, several outputs under this outcome were not delivered. Furthermore, gaps remain in the adoption of the labour reforms, such as with unscrupulous employers still requesting No-objection Certificates (NOCs) to workers changing jobs or with many workers not being aware of labour laws despite some communication tools produced by the project.

To support the enforcement of labour laws and enhance access to justice (outcome 2), the project has contributed to developing capacities in the Labour Inspection Department's section covering OSH but had no engagement with the section covering Working Conditions, which was a shortcoming. The project has provided increased momentum and support to enhancing commitment to Occupational Safety and Health. Access to justice has been improved through a range of trainings and the development of standard operating procedures. Significant needs remain for strengthening labour inspection and for compressing the time required by labour courts (or Dispute Settlement Committees) to process the cases submitted by migrant workers.

To promote workers' voice and social dialogue (outcome 3), the project has successfully supported the growth of joint committees from 20 by the end of phase 1 to 72 in October 2023, currently covering no more than 1.5% of the workforce. Trainings were delivered to hundreds of workers. However, promotion of social dialogue has not led to installing the ILO's model of tripartite consultations at national level. Semi-annual dialogues and steering



committee meetings with IOE, ITUC and other GUFs were convened to provide strategic technical guidance to the project.

The TCP has also supported international cooperation and exchange of experiences (outcome 4). Qatar's labour reforms have been presented in 15 international events. The heat stress legislation and implementation, which were promoted through a regional conference on occupational heat stress organized in May 2023, informed other countries. Conversely, cooperation activities organized with Sweden, France, the Netherlands, UK, and Singapore also influenced Qatar's labour reform agenda.

Impact orientation

The TCP has supported a range of institutional improvements during the second phase, such as upscaling the former OSH unit into a full-fledged OSH Department in MOL; installing a standalone Labour Disputes Department in MOL; or establishing a dedicated section/team in MOL to promote enterprise-level social dialogue. The GOQ has also created two new Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs), adding to the three DSCs established during the previous phase of the TCP. Digitisation of processes have brought significant improvements together with procedural changes. To protect workers, measures were also enacted to enhance the efficiency of the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund which was established in 2019. In 2022, the MOL received 31,549 complaints from migrant workers including 1,530 complaints from domestic workers. Complaints were primarily addressed through the online complaints' platform. The vast majority relate to unpaid wages and benefits, vacation allowance, travel tickets, and end-of-service benefits.

Data collection efforts on occupational injuries are being strengthened after the publication in November 2021 of a landmark baseline study compiling and presenting available data on occupational injuries in Qatar. Since then, work is underway around harmonizing and consolidating data on occupational injuries with the



prospective launch of a consolidated electronic platform end of 2023. However, some steps have been taken towards measuring the reforms undertaken during the course of the project, but impact monitoring has not been systematized and there are gaps in data collection and dissemination.

Joint committees have been effective in enabling dialogue, prevention, and resolution of conflict in the workplace, and members expressed strong interest for additional capacity development, scaling, and networking. This does not equate to national level trade union representation and tripartite national dialogue modalities as set forth in international labour standards but can be considered as a successful proof of concept and first step towards workers' representation.

The TCP has contributed to strengthening international cooperation and to developing the capacities of some but not all national partners. The TCP sought to develop a range of tools for enterprises, including in collaboration with the QCCI, eventually addressing themes such as entrepreneurship, gender equality and non-discrimination, conflict resolution, skills training programmes. However, the evaluation recorded few achievements. In addition, the TCP did not intend and did not make much contribution to engaging the private sector in international cooperation activities.

Evidence was conveyed through the evaluation's interviews and secondary resources that the project has contributed to improving the lives of workers in Qatar, although with variations in terms of scale and scope. According to a study commissioned by the project to the University of Qatar in 2022, 86% of the low-wage migrant workers in the survey indicated that the labour reforms have had a positive impact on their lives. From September 2020 to October 2023, a total of 669,198 applications to change jobs were approved by MOL and 364,053 rejected, compared to 348,455 applications approved for the period spanning from November 2020 to August 2022. The minimum wage law, which came into force in March 2021,



has benefited more than 280,000 workers. Furthermore, after the Ministerial Decision to set working hours and other measures to protect workers from heat stress, the number of people who visited the four Qatar Red Crescent Clinics with heat-related disorders went from 1,320 in 2019, and 1,520 in 2020, to 620 in 2021 (in other words, after the legislation had been introduced), and 351 from June to September 2022.

Enforcement of legislative changes as well as implementation of procedural improvements still remain a work in progress. The project contributed to promoting opportunities for women in the workplace but gender equality was not among the project's main priorities and effects are unclear. Furthermore, the contribution of the TCP to improving the lives domestic workers was limited as well as the attention provided by the project to gender equality. In addition, joint committees currently reach about 30,000 workers compared to more than 2 million migrant workers in the country. Improving the lives of migrant workers is a systemic agenda. The TCP has primarily concentrated its support on the MOL but other administration institutions are also engaged in implementing labour reforms. By design, the TCP has provided some but limited support to these ministries, with room for stronger engagement. Similarly, collaboration with the private sector and the QCCI appeared another under-used avenue to scale and accelerate impact.

Sustainability

Project interventions suggest sustainable outcomes with room for consolidation. The World Cup was referred by project partners as a strong incentive for change due to the global attention that it brought to the labour sector. The event having passed, the ability for national institutions to maintain the same level of commitment was questioned. The need to scale reforms was also highlighted, i.e. to move from a pool of innovative or progressive companies to much broader adoption across the private sector. The project achieved high ownership in the MOL but more variable levels of appropriation in

other institutions. The project had limited contribution to QCCI's institutional capacity development and to enhanced awareness of the private sector on labour law reforms. The evaluation also noted the absence of new ratifications of the ILO conventions since the start of the TCP, although this would guarantee the institutionalisation and sustainability of project outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1: The TCP should continue improving the capacities of the MOL in developing and enforcing labour legislation.

Recommendation 2: The TCP should provide further support to the MOL in promoting existing labour laws and in facilitating their uptake by the private sector.

Recommendation 3: The TCP should develop a private sector engagement strategy to strengthen the engagement of employers in accepting and promoting labour reforms.

Recommendation 4: The TCP should continue supporting the engagement of the ITUC and GUFs in the project while promoting the ILO's model and fundamental principles including on social dialogue.

Recommendation 5: The ILO should advocate for joint committees to become mandatory within companies of certain sizes and be expanded to smaller size companies. The ILO should also promote their networking and advocate for sectoral and inter-sectoral committees.

Recommendation 6: The ILO Project Office in Doha should more systematically leverage the ILO's global technical expertise in the design and implementation of the project including on the development of solid M&E systems.

Recommendation 7: The TCP should continue supporting the MOL and national institutions in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on the labour market and impact of the reforms.

Recommendation 8: The TCP should continue supporting Qatar in sharing successful experiences and lessons learned across the region and globally.

Recommendation 9: The ILO should continue promoting the ILO Conventions and International Labour Standards.

	<p>Recommendation 10: The ILO and partners should consider installing a national project governance structure to monitor and guide the operational management of the TCP and strengthen shared ownership. The ILO's role in Qatar should also be promoted to improve understanding of its mandate and create opportunities for meaningful partnerships with other ministries and entities.</p>
<p>Main lessons learned and good practices</p>	<p>Lesson Learned 1: The amplitude of the reforms initiated prior and during the first phase of the TCP implied a scope of change that was perceived as “societal” and cannot be implemented overnight.</p> <p>Lesson Learned 2: The new structuring of the Ministry of Labour (MOL) departments require additional support related to communication and dissemination of information which would help MOL propagate information about labour mobility, fair recruitment, and other reforms.</p> <p>Lesson Learned 3: The reach and impact of communication materials remain unclear. This is partially because of limited coordination with the Government about their communication objectives. Additionally, enhanced technical cooperation with ILO offices in sending countries could have amplified the impact of communication products, particularly during pre-departure briefings that migrant workers receive.</p> <p>Lesson Learned 4: Emphasis on perspectives of employers’ organizations is imperative to ensure the adoption and implementation of the legislation reform measures and plans, and special attention should be given to the implications on the business community and wider economic context within the country. In doing so, the technical support and involvement of the ACTEMP is essential to encourage the engagement of QCCI.</p> <p>Lesson Learned 5: The TCP did not open a dedicated window to promoting and achieving gender equality. Increased attention to the gender dimension of the labour reforms and the extent to which they reach women requires dedicated analysis.</p> <p>Lesson Learned 6: The ability to follow-up on access to justice cases within the ILO office is limited due to downsizing as well as to the volume of the cases, making it challenging to ensure adequate management of cases.</p> <p>Lesson Learned 7: Joint Committees within the employer enterprises play a role in addressing challenges faced by workers and improving their well-being, serving as a platform where both sides can discuss</p>



issues and propose solutions. Nevertheless, they remain company specific with limited sectoral and inter-sectoral engagements.

Lesson Learned 8: The normative role and tripartite nature of the ILO should be promoted beyond the work of the TCP.

Lesson Learned 9: The hosting of the World Cup had several effects on the project, sometimes pulling effects in different directions. On the one side it raised expectations for accelerated reforms and project outcomes, increasing the visibility on the labour sector and gaps in Qatar. On the other side it created competing priorities and additional work challenging the absorption capacity of the project team and national partners.

Lesson Learned 10: In complex and challenging environments, a well-designed project must have a clear Theory of Change, logical framework, M&E plan and risk analysis.

Good Practice 1: The project was able to build on the relationships and connections from Phase 1 which helped promote the role of the ILO and awareness about the TCP.

Good Practice 2: Increased engagement with ITUC and the GUFs and CLOs helped provide support to CLOs and enabled the project to be well informed of issues affecting workers and thus enabling the project to engage in advocacy and consultation with MOL to find solutions.