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Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

ILO DC/SYMBOL: RAB/20/01/CHE

Type of Evaluation: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Evaluation nature: Independent

Project countries: Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman

P&B Outcome(s): 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue, 2: International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision, 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all, and 8: Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all.

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This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BLAs	Bilateral Labour Agreements
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQM	Evaluation Question Matrix
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MAG	Migration Advisory Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOL	Ministry of Labour
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
P&B	Programme and Budget
ROAS	Regional Office for Arab States
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSA	Social Security Agreements
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

GCC COUNTRIES

Figure 1: Map of GCC countries



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Social protection in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has been historically characterized by robust social insurance schemes, yet these have largely excluded migrant workers who form a significant part of the workforce. Recognizing this gap, most GCC countries have been showing readiness to modernize their social protection systems towards the inclusion of migrant workers, supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with various partners.

The Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) of the ILO has been implementing the project 'Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC)' since 2021. An independent final evaluation was launched by ROAS that assessed the achievement of the project results against its planned outcomes and outputs and the potential impact on the targeted populations. It also identified the main good practices and lessons learned and presents practical recommendations to improve future similar projects. This Draft Evaluation Report is submitted in accordance with the Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by ROAS.

Project Description

The project was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and was implemented between January 2021 and April 2024 with a budget of USD 1,023,224, plus a contribution from ILO of USD 274,605. Comprised of three inter-related outcomes, the overall objective of the project was to increase access of migrant workers in selected GCC countries to social protection through enhanced awareness, improved design, and implementation of social protection measures in alignment with international standards.

Project Outcomes:

1. A comprehensive regional mapping of existing social protection mechanisms in GCC countries provides insights on levels of accessibility and coverage, and a country in-depth analysis of social protection needs and gaps for migrant workers is available in selected GCC countries.
2. Policy dialogue is initiated to identify social protection gaps, recommendations, opportunities for reform and potential entry points to expand coverage to migrant workers.
3. Specific reform entry points for enhancement of social protection for migrant workers are identified in selected GCC countries and progressive improvement of the policy environment, scheme design or administration is achieved to the benefit of migrant workers in selected areas.

Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

The primary purpose of this final evaluation is to assess the achievement of the results, identify difficulties, strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy and implementation, assess the potential impact of the programme for the targeted populations and formulate lessons learned and practical recommendations to improve future similar programmes. Following the OECD criteria, the evaluation examined the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact and sustainability of the

project. The primary clients of this evaluation are ILO ROAS, ILO Social Protection (SOCPRO) and MIGRANT departments, the SDC, ILO constituents in the countries of studies and the project's key stakeholders. Secondary users include other project stakeholders and units within the ILO that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation.

The evaluation assessed the project duration covering the period from January 2021 until March 2024. The geographical coverage covered the GCC member states in the State of Kuwait, Kingdom of Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, State of Qatar and Sultanate of Oman. The evaluation integrated ILO's cross-cutting issues, including norms and social dialogue, gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination concerns throughout its methodology and deliverables.

The project's 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 discussions, as well as observation to gather evidence of achievements. Data analysis was qualitative and quantitative. The evaluation faced and mitigated several constraints, mainly the effect of the holy month of Ramadan and holidays on the time to consult informants and limited reach to a wider group of migrants and migrant worker associations.

Main Findings

Relevance and Strategic Fit

The project's three outcomes had a strategic fit within the ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B) 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, bringing together two critical trends within the GCC, namely; fair labour migration and social protection for all. Some of the strategic discussions and evidence generated by the project have enriched the ILO's strategic thinking and contributed to the P&B development. The project has, consequently, contributed to the acceleration of several SDGs, including SDGs 1, 3, 5,8 and 10. Furthermore, this project came in alignment with the SDC's focus on promoting decent work for refugees and migrant workers.

Overall, the project was designed based on in-depth problem analysis of the migrant workers' situation in the GCC countries. They have limited access to social protection that is not aligned with international social security standards. They mostly have access to healthcare and employer-funded employment injury and sick leaves. Migrant workers face persistent protection challenges, coupled with limited social protection commitments and reluctance from destination countries. The project design was also informed by several discussion forums and external factors and events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Cup in Qatar and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue on the future of work. At the time of project design, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant increase in migrant worker deportations from the GCC countries, often without receiving end-of-service benefits or healthcare access, and many employers struggled to pay wages. The Project Document reflected the general challenges and needs of migrants women but did not clearly articulate how this will be addressed in the detailed description of activities at the outset. Constraints at the project's outset hindered the ability to delve deeper into the circumstances

of women migrant workers or allocate specific activities to this group. Nevertheless, the project incorporated a gender lens into its activities thereafter where possible.

The project focused on private sector workers in the formal sector in regular conditions. To achieve that, it focused on evidence generation to support policy dialogue for gradual progressive -rather than immediate- policy reform. This approach allowed to garner support and ownership from GCC governments and maintain a positive momentum for further action. At varying extents, governments were willing to explore new protection measures for migrant workers, therefore the project came as a strategic fit to their agendas offering deeper rethinking to reform. For example, Oman was interested in providing funds for the end-of service benefits and extend social protection to migrant workers. Qatari authorities were willing to drive positive change in social protection landscape to address the pressing needs of migrant workers and employers. Kuwait has been striving to adopt measures to reduce complaints and legal disputes by workers.

Coherence

The project's design placed emphasis on establishing synergies and complementarities with interventions by other actors and international organizations, however these did not come along as strong during implementation, with the exception of the synergy with the FAIRWAY programme. Both teams maintained effective coordination on activities and resource utilization at the regional and country levels. With the UN agencies, ILO collaborated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), including on data collection and the preparation of the regional mapping report 'Social Protection for Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries'.

Effectiveness

The project was comprised of three outcomes and four outputs, which were all fully- or over-achieved in terms of the knowledge products produced, engagement with stakeholders and country coverage, as well as bringing most of the GCC countries together in regional dialogue on social protection. Under Outcome 1, the project carried out two regional studies and two quantitative and qualitative surveys, exceeding what was originally planned. Under Outcome 2, two research and policy papers were produced and policy dialogue was bolstered through organizing or actively participating in high-level events and facilitating bilateral engagement between countries. Under Outcome 3, the project has over-achieved on the level of technical assistance it provided, with concrete advancements for some GCC countries.

Having effectively contributed towards the achievement of its two key milestones and over-achieving on its expected outcomes and outputs, the project contributed to policy outcomes of the ILO's P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023. It has also contributed to the ILO's strategies on gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards. The improvements promoted through the project in migrant worker protection may indirectly benefit women. However, there was limited targeting of gender-specific concerns within the project.

Social dialogue under the project appears to have been limited due to the dominance of government-led institutions in the GCC region, the weak to no existent trade unions and workers' associations, as well as the lack of freedom of association. Addressing social protection for migrant workers in GCC countries is sensitive and a nascent protection area that required years for ILO's efforts to succeed in getting some governments and employers open to and start engaging in reform dialogue with ILO and the project, others still underway. Genuine social dialogue was hence hindered by the absence of such prerequisites for dialogue at national and regional levels. Interviewees from government stakeholders also confirmed the project promoted social dialogue, despite occasional disagreements, they recognized how this helped to improve analysis and decision-making from multiple perspectives.

In the views of HQ staff during interviews, the collaboration with the project was robust with technical inputs that enriched outcomes and overall effectiveness, which was also established by the project team at ROAS during interviews. At the same time, regional autonomy in managing administrative and financial tasks ensured timely project execution, resource efficiency and hands-on regional involvement by ROAS which resulted in good project management practices and contributed to overall success. ROAS played a crucial role in supporting project activities, including facilitating stakeholder engagement in regional events, report revision, contract management and logistical arrangement, which contributed to project effectiveness.

Efficiency

The total project budget was US\$ 1,297,289 with contributions of US\$ 1,291,082 including the recent co-extension (79%) by SDC and US\$ 274,064 (21%) by ILO. This total considers the cost-extension received in March 2024, increasing the budget from an original total of US\$ 1,024,364. The highest budget portion was allocated to staffing at 44 percent, which includes specialized experts, followed by Outcome 1 at 18 percent, Outcomes 2 and 3 each at 11 percent. The project staff find that spending the project budget was efficient. Except for the cost-sharing with the FAIRWAY programme, there had been no other cost-sharing synergies observed during the evaluation. Two challenges were observed; the requirement by the SDC of a 50 percent co-funding for the next phase poses a challenge and the insufficient allocations for support staff and administration considering the wide coverage of the project across multiple countries.

The project structure consisted of national and regional technical teams, commissioned think tanks and NGOs, and the Migration Advisory Group (MAG). ILO staff at HQ and ROAS found that this decentralized structure was adequate and contributed to the project's success with sufficient in-house technical expertise. They attributed part of the project's success to the effective and transparent communication and smooth working relations between them at the different offices.

Impact Orientation

Overall, the project's achievements are likely to contribute in the longer-term to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of the GCC countries, albeit with the conditions of continued capacity strengthening, social dialogue and policy influence. At varying extents, the project engaged with countries and promoted systems reform in improving migrant workers' access to comprehensive social

protection, the most recognized were in Oman setting a precedent, largely supported by a separate track of direct collaboration between Oman and ILO, to which this project was only complementary. ILO, workers associations and government stakeholders find that the regional mapping and country assessments conducted by the project helped to identify gaps in social protection systems and devise solutions for improvement.

Policy dialogue on social protection has advanced considerably with GCC countries, grounded on the evidence generated from the research, policy briefs and surveys produced by the project. They informed advocacy efforts and presented compelling arguments to governments and constituents for reforms, although ultimate implementation is beyond ILO's control due to political and cultural complexities. Bahrain's initiative to extend provident for end-of-service benefits and pensions funds applicable to non-Bahraini workers, although not yet implemented and is not fully aligned with ILS. Progress in Kuwait and Qatar on social protection reforms was also noted, particularly in discussions on health benefits and access to public health systems.

A shift has become visible in attitudes towards social protection in GCC countries, which has notably transformed from being a taboo topic to being openly discussed in regional and bilateral events, with the project effectively accompanying this positive momentum. Despite advancement, the introduced reforms are considered only a first step towards addressing disparities between national and non-national workers, with multiple and complex challenges remaining for the GCC countries to align to the international labour standards. The interviewed government stakeholders expressed openness to exploring further innovative approaches for social protection and stressed the need for adopting legislative frameworks and measures based on discussions and recommendations by social protection experts.

The evaluation underscores the sensitivity surrounding domestic workers, which presents unique challenges in promoting universal social protection reforms in the GCC countries. The specifics of how to integrate domestic workers into social protection reforms remain unclear. Hence, the project has drawn the attention to domestic work, and there is room for promoting behavioural change around this matter in future programming.

New entry points identified through this evaluation and others have been and remain crucial. These include:

- Considerations of local realities, cultural sensitivities and national experiences emerged as crucial factors that were adopted by the project in identifying entry points for social protection reform.
- Developing robust business cases and reframing social protection as an investment in economic stability of institutions could bolster the potential reform solutions offered to the different GCC governments. The complex political landscape in some countries may hinder dialogue on social protection, slowing progress and changing priorities. However, some views from the government stakeholders see that political change may offer an entry point to provide technical support on developing new frameworks that consider social protection aspects.

- The corridor approach to social protection reform was specifically identified by ILO and migrant workers' associations as a promising entry point to ensure a shared responsibility for the transfer of benefits between origin and destination GCC countries. This approach aims to ensure that migrant workers and their families have access to social protection across borders and involves several key strategies, such as building inclusive national systems, ratifying relevant standards, social security agreements, bilateral labour agreements, addressing practical obstacles, and unilateral measures.
- Access to health care and end-of-service benefits and provident funds have been and remain crucial entry points for social protection reform by the project, varying in focus and scope from one country to the other, examining the potential governance of social insurance and social funds is further required. Additionally, addressing employment injury compensation and protection in case of injury at workplace, particularly in industries like construction, domestic work and agriculture, present another entry point for the project to devise nationally acceptable solutions for reform. In relation is also the promotion of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) concerns.
- The success of engagement with GCC countries largely centres on their willingness to align with the international labour standards for a state-led governance of social protection, versus its privatization, as exemplified by Oman's reform efforts. In Oman, working with the government, employers and labour communities on means to operationalize the policy is considered an entry point for the country, as well as mobilising migrants and information sharing about the new policies and their rights. Engagement with GCC Bureau and leveraging its convening power has proven valuable, particularly in influencing discussions on end-of-service benefits, which still represents a critical entry point to dialogue and reform solutions with GCC countries.

Sustainability

While immediate impact on migrant workers may not be realized, the project has laid a solid foundation at the mid- to long-term for their access to social protection. Despite this progress, disparities persist in social protection entitlements between nationals and migrant workers across the GCC countries and the emerging solutions that the project had facilitated face administrative and cultural challenges for their application. As such, the achieved project results are likely to be sustainable with further country-specific interventions that may differ in their approach, design and implementation modality from one country to the other. Prospects of sustainability by the project increased by the effective collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Primarily, the connection with the GCC bureau has been a pivotal avenue for comparative analysis between countries, alignment of positions and coordinating efforts across the region in social protection initiatives and influencing governments.

Social dialogue in the GCC region still lags behind, which may hinder sustainability of the efforts made by the project for inclusive social protection. Attributed to contexts within the GCC, limited focus was placed by the project on reaching out, engaging and building capacities of worker unions and associations. ILO

staff recognize this gap and believe future projects should contribute to international and national efforts that strive to invest in unions and their acceptance within the national frameworks.

Good Practices

The project presents some good practices that could be built upon in future projects, including:

- Adopting a gradual progressive approach by ILO and international partners facilitates acceptance by governments and employers for social protection reform recommendations and increases likelihoods of their successful implementation, where political will is at the core.
- Evidence-based research provides a solid foundation for high-level dialogue and promotes policy influence by ILO and international organizations. Contextualization ensures that reform solutions are well-received and can be successfully implemented, increasing probability of ownership and acceptance by governments.
- The project's ToC focusing on evidence generation, followed by dialogue and policy recommendations, as well as capitalization on international labour standards, yields concrete results in terms of government buy-in and ownership. This approach could be followed by ILO and international organizations in future projects.
- Engaging with a strategic regional partner such as the GCC bureau is instrumental in fostering regional dialogue, information sharing, identifying priorities and liaising at higher levels with key government stakeholders and influential decision-makers at the country level.
- Collaborating with sending countries is essential for comprehensive social protection for migrant workers and sharing of responsibilities with the destination countries.
- The high level technical expertise of the project's human resources ensured that it progressed in the right direction and gained the trust of government stakeholders and partners. It can be replicated by the ILO or any other international organization in future social protection projects in other GCC countries.

Lessons Learned

1. Effective social dialogue is challenging in the GCC region yet remains critical for inclusive social protection efforts. Genuine social dialogue was hence hindered with the absence of prerequisites for dialogue at national and regional levels. Focus on social dialogue could be strengthened by ILO teams in future projects given the current positioning of ILO as a strategic partner to governments on social protection reform, as well as by governments, workers' unions and federations, private sector/ employers.
2. Women migrant workers in GCC countries face protection challenges, including risks of abuse, adverse working conditions, lack of access to any form of social insurance schemes or labour inspection, especially domestic workers who are residing within households and their work is not recognized. Despite legal provisions, end-of-service benefits for domestic workers are often not implemented. Focus by ILO, partners and governments should place more emphasis on social protection reforms that promote rights of domestic workers in the GCC countries.
3. Collaboration and synergies with UN agencies and international organizations on social protection is limited, with the exception of a few examples that were managed, such as with the IOM, where the

project established a space of coordination, while recognizing ILO's technical leadership on the subject matter. A unified structured approach to synergies or joint programming does not currently exist, which should be considered by ILO teams, SDC and international organizations in the future to avoid lost opportunities in maximizing impact, complement experiences or efficiently utilize resources.

4. The ILO's gender equality mandate focuses on the rights and experiences of female migrant workers, particularly those engaged in domestic work. The ILO's mandate on gender equality can back efforts by ILO teams and governments to promote equal opportunities for them in the GCC region. This could be based on the knowledge and understanding gained as a result of the project's reviews of legal frameworks and research that examined the unique gender challenges faced by women in the migrant workforce and the extent of entitlements available to them.
5. Despite the identification of potential complementarities and synergies in the design phase with other projects, these are not structurally integrated in the description of activities by ILO as to how specifically they would be achieved, what would be the roles, inputs, contributions and outputs towards the common expected outcomes.

Conclusions

Relevance and Strategic Fit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project's three outcomes had a strategic fit within the ILO's P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, bringing together two critical trends to the GCC, namely; fair labour migration and social protection for all. The project was relevant to P&B Outcomes 1, 2, 7 and 8, as indicated in its design document, in addition to Outcome 6 on gender equality. The strategic discussions and evidence generated by the project have enriched the ILO's strategic thinking and were reflected in the P&B development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has, consequently, contributed to the acceleration of several SDGs, including SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the project was designed based on in-depth problem analysis of the migrant workers' situation in the GCC countries, including women. Existing gaps and the need for broader reforms contributed to the project design, as well as the persistent protection challenges they face. However, the inability to engage migrant workers during the design phase due to restrictions by governments caused their voices not to fully captured.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At varying extents, the project came as a strategic fit to the countries' agendas, they were willing to engage in reform dialogue and explore new protection measures for migrant workers. For example, Oman was interested to avail funds for the end-of service benefits and extend social protection coverage to migrant workers. In Qatar, authorities were willing to drive positive change in the social protection landscape to address pressing needs of migrant workers and employers. Kuwait had been striving to adopt measures to reduce the high number of complaints and legal disputes by workers.
Coherence

- Although the project’s design placed emphasis on establishing synergies with interventions by other actors and international organizations, there were only limited endeavours by the project in this regard, such as with IOM and with UNICEF on child benefits in Oman, TCP projects in KSA, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman and market mobility and social justice in Kuwait. With the exception of the FAIRWAY programme, such complementarities and synergies came across as ad hoc and not structured.
- The synergy between the FAIRWAY programme and this project was evident through effective coordination on activities and resource utilization at the regional and country levels. Both shared the same funding source, SDC’s support and had a common focus on migrant workers across Asia, Africa, and the Arab States. Both were addressing issues related to wage protection, end-of-service indemnity reforms and fair recruitment practices. Both projects could benefit more efficiently from inter-regional dialogue and sharing of best practices.

Effectiveness

- The project three outcomes were all fully- or over-achieved in terms of the knowledge products produced, engagement with stakeholders and country coverage, as well as bringing most of the GCC countries together in regional dialogue on social protection. As such, the project has effectively contributed towards the achievement of its two key milestones for 2022 and 2023.
- On gender equality, the project contributed to the organization’s gender equality mandate, trying to engage in dialogue on gender-related issues and -where possible- capitalizing on opportunities that may drive reforms within the limited degree of openness by constituents. However, there was limited targeting of gender-specific concerns within the project and it could have better explicitly prioritized gender-specific interventions.
- The conducted research studies and policy papers, in collaboration with reliable partners like ODI, ensured credibility of findings and recommendations among stakeholders. They, therefore, served as valuable tools on the alignment of national practices with international labour standards. Top of Form
- Addressing social protection for migrant workers in GCC countries is sensitive and a nascent protection area that required years for ILO’s efforts to succeed in getting some governments and employers open to engaging in dialogue with ILO and the project, others still underway.
- It was established by ILO HQ and ROAS staff that the collaboration with the project was robust with technical inputs that enriched outcomes and overall effectiveness. At the same time, regional autonomy in managing administrative and financial tasks ensured timely project execution. ROAS played a crucial role in supporting project activities, including to facilitate stakeholders engagement in regional events, report revision and logistical arrangement, which contributed to project effectiveness.

Efficiency

- The total project budget was US\$ 1,297,289 with contributions of US\$ 1,291,082 including the recent co-extension (79%) by SDC and US\$ 274,064 (21%) by ILO. This total considers the cost-extension received in March 2024, increasing the budget from an original total of US\$ 1,024,364, as indicated in table 4. The highest budget portion was allocated to staffing at 44 percent, followed

by Outcome 1 'Regional review and country assessments' at 18 percent, Outcome 2 'Country-based policy dialogue' at 11 percent and Outcome 3 'Country-specific support to reform' also at 11 percent.

- Two challenges were observed; the requirement by the SDC of a 50 percent co-funding for the next phase poses a challenge, particularly due to limited donor engagement in GCC labour migration, and the insufficient allocations for support staff and administration considering the wide coverage of the project across multiple countries.

Impact Orientation

- Overall, the project's achievements are likely to contribute on the longer-term to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of the GCC countries, albeit with the conditions of continued capacity strengthening, social dialogue and policy influence. At varying extents, the project engaged with countries and promoted systems reform, the most recognized were in Oman¹ setting a precedent in improving migrant workers' access to comprehensive social protection.
- Policy dialogue on social protection has advanced considerably with GCC countries, grounded on the evidence generated from the research, policy briefs and surveys produced by the project. They informed advocacy efforts and presented compelling arguments to governments and constituents for reforms, although ultimate implementation is beyond ILO's control.
- A shift has become visible in attitudes towards social protection in GCC countries. It has notably transformed from being a taboo topic to being openly discussed in regional and bilateral events, with the project effectively accompanying this positive momentum. There is a general interest and concrete forward-looking discussions and initiatives on reforms.
- Despite advancement, the introduced reforms are considered only a first step towards addressing disparities between national and non-national workers, with multiple and complex challenges remaining for the GCC countries to align to the international labour standards. Government stakeholders expressed openness to exploring further innovative approaches for social protection and stressed the need for adopting legislative frameworks and measures based on discussions and recommendations by social protection experts.
- The project's careful identification of entry points has led to increased receptivity and response towards dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders. Cultural sensitivities and national experiences emerged as crucial factors that were adopted by the project in identifying entry points for social protection reform. Having said that, government stakeholders find that there is still more potential for ILO to leverage national experiences and perspectives to identify potential solutions that consider local realities and concerns.

Sustainability

- While immediate impact on migrant workers may not be realized, the project has laid a solid foundation at the mid- to long-term for their access to social protection. Despite this progress, disparities persist in social protection entitlements between nationals and migrant workers across

¹Reform in Oman was largely supported by a separate track of direct collaboration between Oman and ILO, to which this project was only complementary.

the GCC countries and the emerging solutions that the project had facilitated face administrative and cultural challenges for their application.

- The achieved project results are likely to be sustainable with further country-specific interventions that may differ in their approach, design and implementation modality from one country to the other. Prospects of sustainability by the project increased by the effective collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Primarily, the connection with the GCC bureau.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthen and promote a genuine social dialogue in the GCC countries where possible, while engaging and strengthening migrant workers' associations, unions or federations.

Recommendation 2: Continue to promote innovative evidence-based research in workers' rights and social protection, including on business models, financial sustainability and labour market competitiveness.

Recommendation 3: Develop a clear strategy for the implementation of the corridor approach in the next phase, considering a mix of country specific as well as regional interventions

Recommendation 4: Design tailored interventions specifically targeting women domestic workers to address and ease both legal and practical challenges they face in accessing social protection that leads to their increased vulnerabilities.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen and maximize the impact of the partnership with the GCC bureau, clearly defining its role and potential contributions at the design phase. Along the same lines, identify and strengthen other emerging regional partnerships with the private sector, regional workers' associations and federations, chambers of commerce and others.

1 INTRODUCTION

1. The Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched an independent final evaluation of the project ‘Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries’ (RAB/20/01/CHE). The project was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and was implemented between January 2021 and April 2024 with a budget of USD 1,023,224, plus a contribution from ILO of USD 274,605. The evaluation assessed the achievement of the project results against its planned outcomes and outputs and the potential impact on the targeted populations. It also identified the main difficulties/ constraints and lessons learned and presents practical recommendations to improve future similar programmes.
2. This Draft Evaluation Report is submitted by the consultant in accordance with the Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by the ILO ROAS (Annex 1). It was conducted between 1 February and 30 April 2024..

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Background

3. Social security is a fundamental human right and an important element to ensure the well-being of workers, their families, and communities. Despite that, the complexity of extending social protection coverage to migrant workers is quite common globally, as well as in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries where migrant workers make up the vast proportion of the labour market.² Social protection provisions for migrant workers in the Gulf countries are characterized by important gaps, shaped by the legacy of the sponsorship system, the short-term migration paradigm, and the duality of provisions between national and migrant workers. Migrant workers tend to be principally covered through employer-liability mechanisms. Long-term benefits covering risks of old-age, disability and unemployment are almost entirely unaddressed, as well as the rights of family members. Domestic workers, migrant workers in an irregular situation and those working in the informal economy are particularly vulnerable and lack access to basic forms of social protection.³
4. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the most vulnerable groups in the GCC countries, in particular migrant workers, were at high risk and were significantly affected, mainly due to their limited access to social protection or total absence of any coverage. There has been a recognition that comprehensive social protection systems serve as social and economic stabilizers in times of economic and financial crises.

² ILO ROAS. 2020. Project Document, Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (November 2020)

³ ILO. 2024. Projects. https://www.ilo.org/beirut/projects/WCMS_884951/lang--en/index.htm

5. Within this context, the ILO has launched the project ‘Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries’, funded by the SDC. At the time of this evaluation, the ILO submitted a request for a cost-extension until November 2024 and was approved by SDC.⁴

2.2 Project Strategy and Expected Results

6. The project aimed to develop exploratory research to promote the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment between national and non-national workers, while making the necessary links with the social protection systems in their country of origin. The project aimed to place emphasis on the barriers faced by and specific solutions for migrant women assessing, the situation of migrant workers in an irregular situation and identifying progressive reform options for gradual extension of core social protection rights. The project focused on undertaking regional action-oriented research, while supporting national and bilateral policy dialogue, followed by some exploratory reform efforts in Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, as well as in Bahrain.
7. The project directly contributes to the acceleration of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. Additionally, the project contributes to the achievement of the ILO’s programme of work and results framework for 2020-21,⁵ guided by the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, particularly within the scope of Policy Outcome 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue; Policy Outcome 2: International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision; Policy Outcome 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all; and Policy Outcome 8: Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all.
8. Comprised of three inter-related outcomes, the overall objective of the project was to increase access of migrant workers in selected GCC countries to social protection through enhanced awareness, improved design, and implementation of social protection measures in alignment with international standards. The expected outcomes and outputs and their pertinent indicators are illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 1, the Theory of Change (TOC) is presented in Annex 2.

⁴ ILO. 2023. Extension Request July 2023-March 2024, Revised Proposal v.2 (May 2023)

⁵ ILO. 2019. Programme and Budget for 2020–21, Programme of Work and Results Framework
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_719163.pdf

Figure 2: Project Outcomes and Outputs

Impact: Migrant workers in selected GCC countries have increased access to social protection as a result of enhanced awareness, improved design and implementation of social protection measures in alignment with international standards.

Outcome 1: A comprehensive regional mapping of existing social protection mechanisms in the GCC countries provides insights on levels of accessibility and coverage, and a country in-depth analysis of social protection needs and gaps is available in selected GCC countries.

- Output 1.1:** A regional mapping of entitlements to social protection amongst migrant workers in the GCC countries is conducted.
- Output 1.2:** Comprehensive country-specific mapping and in-depth analysis of social protection policies, schemes, practices and coverage of migrant workers in 2 countries.

Outcome 2: Policy dialogue is initiated to identify social protection coverage gaps, opportunities and recommendations for reform and potential entry points to expand coverage to migrant workers.

- Output 2.1:** National/regional policy dialogue platform to discuss opportunities for reform and potential sustainable models to expand coverage of social protection to migrant workers in the selected (2) countries.

Outcome 3: Specific reform entry points for enhancement of social protection for migrant workers are identified in selected GCC countries and progressive improvement of policy environment is achieved to the benefit of migrant workers in selected areas as relevant.

- Output 3.1:** Feasibility assessment and technical assistance for design and implementation of the policy reforms recommended for (1) selected country.

Table 1: Project Logical Framework⁶

Results chain	Indicators	Baseline	Target
Impact- By the end of the project, migrant workers in selected GCC countries have increased access to social protection as a result of enhanced awareness, improved design and implementation of social protection measures in alignment with international standards.	Percentage of migrant workers legally covered by social protection systems in selected countries.	TBD	TBD (+10%)
	Percentage of covered migrant workers benefiting from short-term benefits such as unemployment, employment injury, maternity or sickness benefits.	TBD	TBD (+10%)
	Percentage of women migrant workers covered by the social protection system.	TBD	TBD (+10%)

⁶ ILO. 2023. Extension Request July 2023-March 2024, Revised Proposal v.2 (May 2023)

<p>Outcome 1- A comprehensive regional mapping of the existing social protection mechanisms in the GCC countries provides insights on levels of accessibility and coverage, and a country in-depth analysis of social protection needs and gaps for migrant workers is available in GCC countries.</p>	<p>Number of channels of dissemination and discussion of the results of regional mapping.</p>	0	4
	<p>Number of countries of origin and of destination engaged in discussions of the regional and country-specific mapping.</p>	0	5 destination countries 5 origin countries
<p>Output 1.1- A regional mapping of entitlements to social protection amongst migrant workers in the GCC countries is conducted.</p>	<p>Number of GCC countries covered by the regional mapping.</p>	0	5
<p>Output 1.2- Comprehensive country-specific mapping and in-depth analysis of social protection policies, schemes, practices and actual coverage of migrant workers in the selected (2) countries.</p>	<p>Number of country-specific mappings/ assessments finalized, containing all elements that enable assessment of actual coverage of migrant workers under national policies and legal frameworks, with gender disaggregated analysis.</p>	0	2 Gulf countries 1 origin country
	<p>Number of interviews and focus group discussions conducted with key stakeholders regarding migrant workers' needs.</p>	0	3 FGD with employers 400 respondents
<p>Outcome 2- Policy dialogue is initiated to identify the most relevant social protection coverage gaps, recommendations, opportunities for reform and potential entry points to expand coverage to migrant workers.</p>	<p>Number of global, regional and national policy initiatives and dialogues that engage different actors (Governments, cities, civil society, private sector).</p>	0	3 origin countries 6 destination countries
	<p>Number of reports produced and endorsed, with recommendations, opportunities and entry points.</p>	0	2
<p>Output 2.1- National/regional policy dialogue platform to discuss opportunities for reform and potential sustainable models to expand coverage of social protection to migrant workers in the selected (2) countries.</p>	<p>Number of workshops and/or virtual conferences and respective participants.</p>	0	4
	<p>Number of key stakeholders involved in national/regional policy dialogue initiatives and in the design of policy reforms scenarios.</p>	0	8
	<p>Number of policy reforms matrices with entry points developed, including gender specific items</p>	0	2
<p>Outcome 3- Specific reform entry points for enhancement of social protection for migrant workers are identified in selected GCC countries and progressive improvement of the social protection policy environment, scheme design or administration is</p>	<p>Number of countries for which a concrete roadmap for adaptive and phased implementation is developed (i.e. EOSI and/or healthcare)</p>	0	2
	<p>Level of endorsement of the roadmap by all relevant stakeholders. This roadmap should detail</p>	Absent	Endorsed

achieved to the benefit of migrant workers in selected areas as relevant.	timelines and concrete objectives and actions to take in the short and longer term. New transformative policy and legislative reforms in place	0	1
Output 3.1- Feasibility assessment and technical assistance for design and implementation of the policy reforms recommended for (1) selected country.	Number of migration governance frameworks, policies, models and approaches benefiting from new research findings (i.e. EOSI).	0	1
	Number of specific reform items for which technical assistance, capacity development and support to implementation is provided at the level of the policy environment, scheme design or administration	0	1

2.3 Programme Management, Financing, and Monitoring

10. The project started in January 2021, with an original end date of June 2023 that was then extended until March 2024 based on a request by ILO (Currently the project has been extended till September 2024). An inception phase of two months was dedicated for recruitment of staff, choice of implementing partners, development of a project risk matrix and mitigation measures, a communication strategy, the formal project launch, as well as exploratory engagement with national stakeholders to refine the selection of two countries for in-depth assessment and national dialogue.
11. The ILO constituted a small technical team to oversee the project, with technical backstopping provided by the Regional Specialists on Social Protection and Migration Policy. Project management support was provided by a technical officer on Social Protection and an International Junior Professional Officer (JPO). Multi-stakeholder engagement was at the heart of the policy and coordination process, bringing together a range of key stakeholders in GCC countries, and a few in countries of origin. Research activities and policy dialogue at the country level were sub-contracted to international and regional institutions and implementing partners with relevant expertise. Implementation of the different phases of the project benefited from the meetings and deliberations of the Migration Advisory Group (MAG), which provided strategic advice to the ILO Regional Office for Arab States on fair migration in the Middle East.⁷
12. As the project was below the 1 million and less than 30 months, it was only mandated for a final internal evaluation. With the cost extension, the budget increased to beyond the 1 million threshold and hence it was too late to consider a mid-term evaluation (internal or self) and an independent final evaluation was planned, aligned with ILO policy. SDC approved this deviation,

⁷ ILO ROAS. 2020. Project Document, Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (November 2020)

with the final evaluation rescheduled due to budget and timeline considerations, coinciding with a project extension until March 2024.⁸

13. According to the project's progress report dated June 2023, to offset project delays, slow GCC state actor communication hindered approval for field data collection due to bureaucracy and topic sensitivity. The ILO adjusted Output 1.1 sequencing, easing overall timeline. Challenges in Output 1.2 prompted measures like interviews with returning workers and surveys with employers. Ongoing regional transitions and stakeholder resistance necessitate continued engagement for effective social protection enhancement.⁹

3 EVALUATION PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Evaluation Objectives

14. As the project is coming to an end and in line with the evaluation policy,¹⁰ this final independent evaluation is launched by ILO ROAS with the aim to assess the achievement of the results, identify difficulties, strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy and implementation, assess the potential impact of the programme for the targeted populations and formulate lessons learned and practical recommendations to improve future similar programmes.
15. Specifically, the evaluation examined the following aspects:
- **Relevance:** Changes in context and review of assumptions to assess if the project's design was adequate to address the problems at hand? Were the project objective and design relevant given the political, economic and financial context?
 - **Coherence:** Is the project compatible with other interventions in the region on migration?
 - **Effectiveness:** How has the activities contributed towards project's goals? What are the results in terms of outcomes and outputs achieved? To what extent did it contribute to the ILO's Programme & Budget, Country Programme Outcomes and more largely SDGs? How was gender integrated in the work and approach of the project?
 - **Efficiency:** How was the use of resources in achievement of projected performance? How have the resources been used to fulfil the project performance in an efficient manner with respect to cost, time, and management staff?
 - **Impact Orientation:** To what extent is the project likely to contribute to long-term intended impact including in relation to gender equality and empowerment of women?
 - **Sustainability:** Will the project's effects continue over time?

⁸ ILO ROAS. 2023. Progress Report, Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (June 2023)

⁹ ILO ROAS. 2023. Progress Report, Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (June 2023)

¹⁰ ILO. 2020. ILO policy guidelines for evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations, 4th edition. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_571339.pdf

3.2 Evaluation Scope

16. **Thematic scope:** The evaluation assessed the project’s overall performance in line with its planned outcomes and outputs, highlighting the main challenges and good practices. The evaluation integrated ILO’s cross-cutting issues, including norms and social dialogue, gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination concerns throughout its methodology and all deliverables.
17. **Geographic scope:** The evaluation covered the GCC member states, which currently comprise the State of Kuwait (Kuwait), Kingdom of Bahrain (Bahrain), United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA),¹¹ State of Qatar (Qatar) and, Sultanate of Oman (Oman).
18. **Temporal scope:** The evaluation covered the project duration from January 2021 until March 2024, while the project ends in November 2024 after having received a cost extension from April 2024.

3.3 Evaluation Clients

19. The primary clients of this evaluation are ILO ROAS, ILO Social Protection (SOCPRO) and MIGRANT departments, the SDC, ILO constituents in the countries of studies and the project’s key stakeholders. Secondary users include other project stakeholders and units within the ILO that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation.

3.4 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

20. In line with the ToRs, the independent evaluation systematically used the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria¹² of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact orientation and sustainability. It considered whether aspects of human rights, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) and disability inclusion are integrated. It adhered to the ILO evaluation policies and framework¹³ and to the United Nations Evaluation Guidelines and Evaluation Norms and Standards.¹⁴
21. Following a review of the evaluation ToR and the initial review of the documents shared by ILO ROAS, the consultant proposed some modifications to the original Evaluation Questions (EQs), which were approved by the ILO during the inception phase. The final EQs used in this evaluation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Evaluation Questions

EQs as modified by the consultant in the inception report and approved by ILO

¹¹ The project’s interaction with KSA stakeholders was limited to the regional engagement via the GCC Bureau, it was not allowed to conduct a mapping in the KSA.

¹² OECD.2021. *Evaluation Criteria*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

¹³ ILO. 2024. *Evaluation Policies*. <https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationpolicy/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20ILO%20applies%20the%20OECD,%2C%20efficiency%2C%20impact%20and%20sustainability.>

¹⁴ UNFPA. *UNEG/UNFPA review norms and standards* <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/guidance-documents>

Relevance and strategic fit	
1	How did the project contribute to the ILO's Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, Country Programme Outcomes, and United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2020-2024 and the SDGs?
2	How well was the project designed to address relevant priorities and needs of constituents and migrant workers and whether goals have been clearly specified?
3	How relevant was the project to the needs of female migrant workers or other most vulnerable groups?
Coherence	
4	To what extent is the project coherent with other interventions of the ILO and the UN in the region? To what extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of the countries under study including work on gender?
Effectiveness	
5	To what extent did the project achieve the overall objective, outcomes and outputs?
6	How did the project's outputs and outcomes contribute to ILO's Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 and the organization's mainstreamed strategies, including gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards?
7	To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic or other external factors affect the implementation of the project? Did these hinder or reverse the progresses that had been made? In what way? What were the mitigation steps taken by the project?
8	How effective was communication among the project teams, the regional office and the responsible technical department at ILO headquarters? Has the project received adequate technical and administrative support/response from ILO backstopping units?
Efficiency	
9	To what extent were the project activities cost-efficient? Were the resources allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent can the project results justify the time, financial and HR invested in the project?
10	To what extent has the project been able to create synergies in cost sharing with other ILO or non-ILO initiatives either nationally or regionally?
11	How did the project's governance structure and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems facilitate good results and efficient delivery? And if not, why not?
Impact Orientation	
12	How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment between national and non-national workers?
13	What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers and other identified most vulnerable groups?
14	Did the project identify and use specific reform entry point for the extension of coverage? What other entry points could be used and in which GCC countries?
Sustainability	

15	Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?
16	What good practices can be found for future projects to build upon from this current project to ensure sustainability and extending social protection to migrant workers?

3.5 Evaluation Approaches and Data Collection Methods

22. The consultant followed participatory and mixed-method approaches in this independent final evaluation. All efforts were exerted by the consultant to speak to a wide range of stakeholders/constituents and a list of stakeholders consulted/interviewed is provided in **Annex 5** of this report. On data collection, emphasis was on qualitative data, including through document review, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Additionally, the qualitative data was complemented with quantitative data from secondary resources. Additionally, gender equality was mainstreamed into all stages of the evaluation, adhering to ILO Guidance Note on Integrating Gender Equality in M&E . Addressing Social Dialogue and International Labour Standards was assessed in terms of effectiveness and sustainability.

- Desk Review of documents was an on-going process throughout the different phases of the final evaluation. Documents reviewed included the project documents, progress reports, workshop proceedings, minutes of meetings, as well as the research published by the project, surveys and ILO strategic documents.
- KIIs and FGDs were carried out with participants identified in consultation with ILO ROAS in the TOR and kick-off meetings using the semi-structured guides outlined in **Annex 4**. Interviews were conducted with selected ILO staff, constituents, partners and stakeholders. Balancing the number of men and women interviewed was not totally possible due to the majority of constituents being men.
- Data analysis was qualitative in nature, with some quantitative secondary data (2 surveys one with n=1000), organized around the project's three expected outcomes. The Evaluation Question Matrix (EQM) presented in **Annex 3** was the center piece of the final independent evaluation and played a crucial role before, during and after data collection. Cross-checking and integration of different information sources was carried out through a variety of information sources to increase the validity and reliability of the evaluation findings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

23. Familiar with the unique aspects of the ILO and its evaluation policies, the consultant adhered to the highest level of technical and ethical standards in all stages of the evaluation and fulfilled the criteria of professionalism, impartiality and credibility. The consultant abided by the ILO's Code of Conduct for Evaluators and the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System (UNEG 2020).

The consultant does not have any links to project management or any other conflict of interest to interfere with the independence of the evaluation.

3.7 Sampling approach

24. The evaluation adopted a purposeful sampling approach. A list of possible stakeholders was developed by the evaluation and the project team. The key considerations for the sampling was knowledge and engagement with the project. Hence, the list of stakeholders interviewed included almost all the relevant stakeholders at national, regional and HQ level who have engaged with the project during design and implementation. All efforts were exerted to ensure that the purposeful sampling covered all types of stakeholders.

3.8 Evaluation Limitations

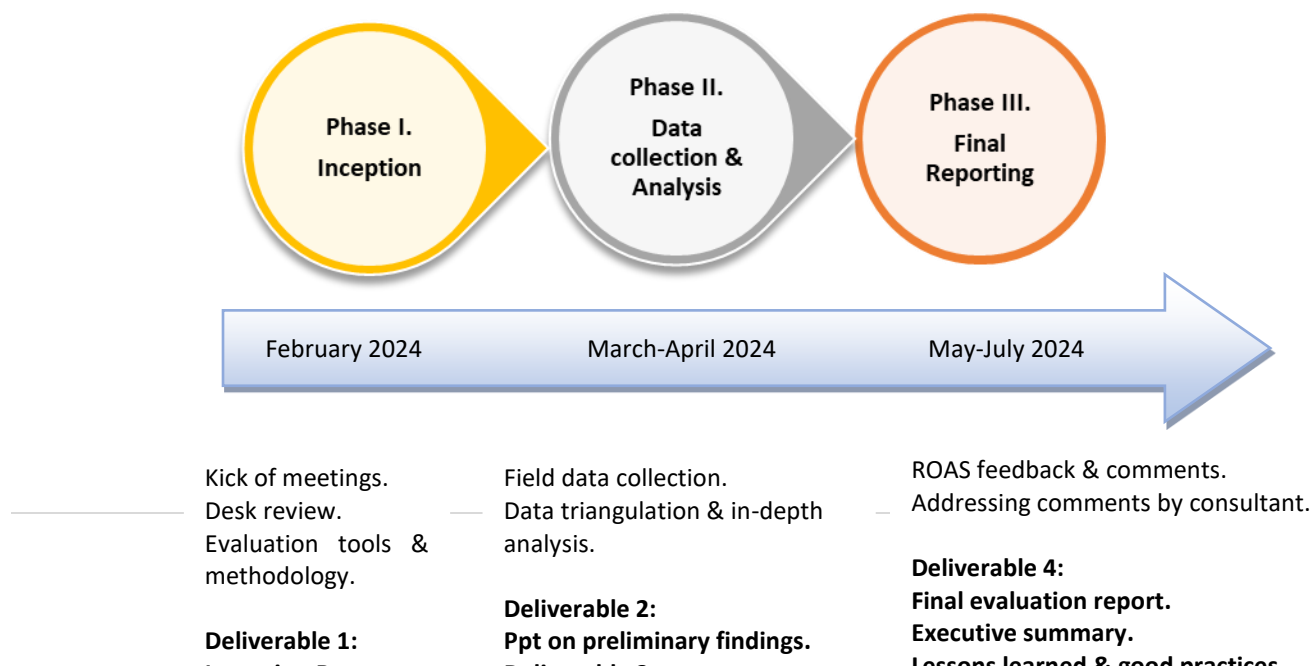
25. As with any evaluation or field work, certain limitations were faced, including:

- The duration of the evaluation fell within the holy month of Ramadan and feast vacations, which slowed the process of scheduling interviews due to shortened working hours and common leaves.
- Limited access to some respondents for the KIIs or limited availability of high-level respondents for interviews.
- The project’s interaction with KSA stakeholders was limited to the regional engagement via the GCC Bureau.
- Stakeholders may not be able to recall information and hence there will be recall bias

3.9 Evaluation Timeline and Deliverables

26. The independent final project evaluation was conducted between February and April 2024 through three phases; inception, data collection, and analysis and final reporting, as illustrated in Figure 4. The detailed timeline of the evaluation activities is presented in **Annex 6**.

Figure 3: Evaluation Timeline and Phases



4 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 Relevance and Strategic Fit

EQ 1: How did the project contribute to the ILO's Programme and Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, Country Programme Outcomes, and United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2020-2024 and the SDGs?

27. **The project's three outcomes had a strategic fit within the ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B) 2020-2021¹⁵ and 2022-2023,¹⁶ bringing together two critical trends within the GCC, namely; fair labour migration and social protection for all.** The project, by mapping existing social protection mechanisms and analysing gaps (Outcome 1), facilitating national and bilateral policy dialogue (Outcome 2) and identifying policy reform entry points (Outcome 3), contributed to several policy outcomes of the P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023. Particularly, according to its design, the project was relevant to P&B Outcome 1: 'Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue', P&B Outcome 2: 'International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision', P&B Outcome 7: 'Adequate and effective protection at work for all', and P&B Outcome 8: 'Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all'.
28. **In addition to the above, the evaluation underscores the project's contribution to the P&B Outcome 6: 'Gender equality and equal opportunities and treatment for all in the world of work',** which was clear through the project's focus on the integration of gender considerations into its research work and policy dialogue.
29. Therefore, the project was relevant and likely contributed to the following ILO P&B Outputs.
- Output 1.4: Strengthened social dialogue and labour relations laws, processes and institutions.
 - Output 2.2: Increased capacity of the member States to apply international labour standards.
 - Output 6.2. Increased capacity of Member States to strengthen policies and strategies to promote and ensure equal opportunities, participation and treatment between women and men.
 - Output 7.5: Increased capacity of constituents to develop fair and effective labour migration frameworks, institutions and services to protect migrant workers.
 - Output 8.1: Increased capacity of member States to develop reformed sustainable national social protection policies or legal frameworks to extend coverage and enhance benefit adequacy.

¹⁵ ILO. 2019. Programme and Budget for 2020–21, Programme of Work and Results Framework https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_719163.pdf

¹⁶ ILO. 2021. Programme and Budget for 2022-23, Programme of Work and Results framework. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---program/documents/genericdocument/wcms_831036.pdf

- Output 8.3: Increased capacity of member States to integrate social protection in policy responses to support and protect workers and employers during their life and work transitions.
30. **During KIIs with ILO staff, they mentioned how some of the strategic discussions and evidence generated by the project have enriched the ILO’s strategic thinking** and were reflected as important elements for ILO in the P&B development with regards to the extension of social protection to migrant workers.
31. **The project has, consequently, contributed to the acceleration of several SDGs**, including SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. Specifically, relevant to the following targets.
- Target 1.3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
 - Target 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.
 - Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
 - Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
 - Target 10.4: Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.
 - Target 10.7: facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

Table 3: Indicative contribution by project outcomes to the SDGs and ILO B&P¹⁷

SDGs	SDG Targets	ILO B&P Policy Outcomes & Outputs	Project Outcomes
SDG 1	Target 1.3	Outcome 8 / Output 8.1 and 8.3	Outcome 3
SDG 3	Target 3.8	Outcome 8 / Output 8.1 and 8.3	Outcome 3
SDG 5	Target 5.4	Outcome 6/ Output 6.2	All outcomes
		Outcome 8/ Output 8.1 and 8.3	Outcome 3
SDG 8	Target 8.8	Outcome 1/ Output 1.4	Outcomes 1 and 2
		Outcome 2/ Output 2.2	Outcomes 1 and 2
		Outcome 7/ Output 7.5	All outcomes
SDG 10	Target 10.4	Outcome 1/ Output 1.4	Outcomes 1 and 2

¹⁷ Compiled by the consultant based on review and analysis of documents (Table I.2 and II.1 of the ILO B&P 2022-2023, the project document and logical framework).

	Outcome 2/ Output 2.2	Outcomes 1 and 2
	Outcome 6/ Output 6.2	All outcomes
	Outcome 7/ Output 7.5	All outcomes
	Outcome 8/ Output 8.1 and 8.3	Outcome 3
Target 10.7	Outcome 7/ Output 7.5	All outcomes

32. From their side, the SDC emphasized that this project came in alignment with the agency’s focus on promoting decent work for refugees and migrant workers, especially aggravated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

33. Examining the relevance of the project to countries’ UNSDCF, it was found to be closely relevant to country frameworks where they are developed, for example, the project directly contributes to KSA UNSDCF¹⁸ Outcome 7 ‘Upholding migrant and domestic workers’ rights and resilience’ of Pillar 4 ‘Foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies and mobilize the means required for implementation’. The contributes to the Bahrain UNSDCF¹⁹ Outcome 2 ‘Strengthened social sector policies and systems improve the delivery of quality inclusive services for Bahraini citizens and residents’ as it aims to ensure that social protection systems and mechanisms address exclusion, enhance targeting and effective delivery, especially for expatriate workers.

EQ 2: How well was the project designed to address relevant priorities and needs of constituents and migrant workers and whether goals have been clearly specified?

34. Overall, the project was designed based on in-depth problem analysis of the migrant workers’ situation in the GCC countries where they are fundamental to the labour markets, including women, yet have limited access to social protection. Social protection for migrant workers in GCC is mostly employer-dependent, with labour laws mandating limited benefits such as coverage for medical care, paid sick leave and end-of-service benefits, falling short of ILO standards. Further, weak labour law enforcement and the absence of effective labour dispute resolution mechanisms for migrant workers leaves migrant workers exposed to the risk of employer non-compliance, inability or unwillingness to cover due benefits. Feedback from ILO and SDC on the design of the project showed that it was built on the realization of the existing gaps in social protection systems and the need for broader reforms. Social protection was seen as a strategic entry point for dialogue, fostering regional cooperation and addressing the *Kafala* system power imbalance between workers and employers. The *Kafala* (Sponsorship) System emerged in the 1950’s and is a routine practice in the GCC countries where a migrant worker’s immigration status is legally bound to an individual employer or sponsor (*kafeel*) for their contract period. The migrant worker cannot enter the country, transfer employment nor leave the country without first obtaining explicit written permission from the *kafeel*. The project design was centred around triggering

¹⁸ KSA UNSDCF 2022-2026 https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Kingdom%20of%20Saudi%20Arabia_Cooperation_Framework_2022%20to%202026.pdf

¹⁹ Bahrain UNSDCF 2021-2022 <https://bahrain.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Signed%20SCF.pdf>

stakeholders' interest and paving the way for responses and reform initiatives that has the potential to leverage social protection for migrants and strengthen their financial resilience.

35. **There is an urgent need to enhance protection measures for workers both in the GCC countries and upon return, especially in light of the growing number of migrants heading to the GCC and the absence of bilateral cooperation.** However, the limited social protection commitments made in bilateral agreements and reluctance from destination countries had been hindering discussions. In the survey conducted by the project on 'Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries',²⁰ it was clear that de facto levels of social protection coverage are often lower than the actual provisions established in national legislation across the GCC, although there are variations depending on the specific contingency, and the worker's gender and income level. The highest was access to health services, where 74 percent of the returned workers in the ILO survey reported having had some kind of health coverage in the GCC, being still far from universal.
36. **During KIIs with ILO staff, they mentioned that the project design was informed by several discussion forums and external factors and events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Cup in Qatar and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue on the future of work.** They underscored that at the time of project design, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had drawn attention to the criticalness of migrant workers' access to basic health and social assistance services. There was a significant increase in migrant worker deportations from the GCC countries, often without receiving end-of-service benefits or healthcare access. Many employers struggled to pay wages, leaving migrants with nothing upon deportation. Another factor that influenced the project design as noted by the ILO staff was the World Cup in Qatar, which helped to raise attention on social protection and migrant workers' protection in the region and build momentum for further support by ILO for policy reform. Also, of note was the discussions at the high-level symposium on the Future of Work in the Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian Labour-Sending and Receiving Countries in April 2019.
37. **At varying extents from one country to the other, the GCC governments were willing to engage in reform dialogue and explore new protection measures for migrant workers, as reflected in KIIs with national stakeholders. As such, the project came as a strategic fit to the countries' agendas.** For example, it was observed that Oman was interested to avail funds for the end-of service benefits and extend social protection coverage to migrant workers for wider benefits beyond that. In Qatar, previous work by ILO on this portfolio has demonstrated the ability to address pressing needs of migrant workers and employers and the authorities are therefore willing to do more to drive positive change in Qatar's social protection landscape. Kuwait had been striving to adopt measures that may reduce the high number of complaints by workers and consequent legal disputes. Interviewed stakeholders from Oman mentioned that the provision of end-of-service benefits for migrant workers is included in the national agenda and was the focus

²⁰ ILO. 2023. [Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries.](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903674.pdf)
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903674.pdf

of different projects and funds. In the national social protection strategy, Oman aimed to extend coverage to migrant workers including various benefits, not only the end-of-service one, which was an important advancement in policy reform and national ownership. In Qatar, the government was keen to build on the enhancements achieved on migrant workers' protection with the support by ILO. Interviewed stakeholders talked about how these achievements have garnered regional attention and prompted proactive engagement from Qatari authorities who want to move forward on expanding benefits to migrant workers in health insurance, unemployment insurance and injuries compensation.

38. In Kuwait, the project was relevant and the government interest stemmed from prevalence of labour complaints by workers and the lack of financial resources among employers to pay end-of-service benefits to workers, that frequently results in legal disputes. During initial discussions, initiatives in neighbouring countries were shared by ILO to foster a more conducive working environment for migrant workers across the GCC region, which were seen relevant by the interviewed Kuwaiti stakeholders. For instance, to establish a fund designated for end-of-service benefits whereby employers make monthly contributions to ensure the availability of resources upon the completion of a worker's tenure. This approach was implemented in the Oman and Bahrain and has proven effective by guaranteeing timely access to their entitled benefits. They believe it also has the potential to alleviate the financial burden off employers, particularly small businesses with limited liquidity, thereby reducing the occurrence of labour disputes and easing the workload of labour authorities and courts in Kuwait.
39. **A deeper rethinking for the reform of social protection regimes for migrant workers in the GCC countries was therefore underscored, upon which the project design was anchored. The project attempted to gradually promote equitable treatment and inclusive social protection extended to migrant workers.** The overarching strategy of the project, as defined in the TOC, was to promote the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment between national and non-national workers, making the necessary links with the systems in their countries of origin. The project worked on evidence generation and capacity strengthening towards the gradual reform of social protection systems in countries of destination, bilateral or multilateral social security agreements, as well as through the adoption of social protection measures for migrant workers.
40. **The project focused on diagnosis, analysis and evidence generation to support policy dialogue rather than aiming for immediate policy reform. In views of ILO, this approach allowed to garner support and ownership by some GCC and maintain a positive momentum for further action. The project design emerged from recognizing the challenges migrant workers face in accessing social protection in their destination and home countries.** On the other hand, the design responded to the clear need by employers who face liquidity problems and suffer repercussions of the global economic shocks. With such pressure on governments, there was a potential opportunity for the project to promote best practices from the global level and introduce evidence for their possible adoption at GCC countries. With the understanding of the sensitivity in the GCC countries for policy

reform, the project aimed for a set of outcomes carefully designed with focus on diagnosis, analysis and evidence generation to support policy dialogue that may on the longer term influence reform of labour frameworks and laws. Guided by ILO standards, the project sought adoption of international norms, while taking into consideration the cultural complexities in the target countries. To do so, the intended outcomes were aligned with the GCC countries' interests in attracting skilled workers amid *Kafala* reform and addressing burdens on dispute resolution systems faced by the Ministry of Labour. One of the challenges shared by the ILO staff during this evaluation was the inability to engage migrant workers during the design phase due to restrictions by the GCC governments, hence their voices were not fully captured.

EQ 3: How relevant was the project to the needs of female migrant workers or other most vulnerable groups?

41. **According to interviewed ILO staff, the project focused on private sector workers in the formal sector in regular conditions and strived to devise protection solutions that can assist migrant workers, especially those in irregular situations, who are mostly women working in the domestic sector. To achieve that, the project's scope followed a comprehensive approach to understand the social protection landscapes in the GCC counties (under outcome 1) as an initial step to facilitate advocacy.** Women domestic workers in the GCC region face challenges, including risks of abuse, adverse working conditions, lack of access to any form of social insurance schemes or labour inspection, as they are residing within households and their work is not recognized. Generally, migrants in irregular status lack access to consistent level of protection, including any contributory schemes, placing them in a situation of vulnerability. Despite legal provisions, end-of-service benefits for domestic workers are often not implemented, except in Bahrain, where legal provisions exist but are not enforced. Addressing the specific challenges faced by women migrant workers within the project was therefore an important element in the project design with focus on intervention models to domestic workers, addressing both legal and practical obstacles. However, during implementation, addressing and supporting their specific concerns in reform efforts was not evident. In some countries, domestic work is not officially recognized as employment, resulting in exclusion from social insurance schemes—a critical issue that ILO continues to investigate.

42. This finding was cross-checked with the results of the survey conducted by the project on 'Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries',²¹ which found that women experienced lower levels of social protection coverage than men. In part, this reflects the widely documented gaps in social protection entitlements for domestic workers and the fact that the vast majority of female participants were employed in domestic work. However, even where domestic workers are covered for example for health insurance, women were still less likely than men to receive a benefit. They also exhibited lower levels of awareness of their rights than men.

²¹ ILO. 2023. [Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903674.pdf).
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903674.pdf

43. **This was also confirmed by national stakeholders in GCC who were interviewed during the evaluation. They reflected a clear recognition of the disparities that still exist in social protection coverage and social security benefits for migrant workers, especially domestic workers, who are mostly women.** In Oman, maternity benefits through the national system have been extended to cover both Omani and non-Omani migrant workers, addressing a previous disparity and potential discrimination against hiring women due to associated costs. Yet, issues persist regarding coverage for elderly, unemployment and death-related benefits, which are not included. For Kuwait, the social protection fund encompasses all migrant workers, including those in the private sector, however, domestic workers are excluded due to their irregular status. Gender-specific challenges, particularly affecting female domestic workers, have been identified.
44. **ILO is positioned as a strategic partner to the GCC countries on women’s employment and participation in labour market, which rendered the project relevant to work on reform efforts in relation to protection of women domestic workers.** A few advancements were made, for example, the reforms underway in Oman, based on interest by authorities, are geared towards establishing a social insurance system alongside initiatives aimed at empowering women that would be advantageous for migrant workers.
45. **This was also reflected in the Project Document where focus on women migrant workers was emphasized and efforts were made to integrate this focus into the design framework. However, constraints at the project's outset hindered the ability to delve deeper into the circumstances of women migrant workers or allocate specific activities to this group, such as limited time, absence of social protection information in the GCC countries and the poor access to workers themselves.** ILO recognized women as one of the most vulnerable groups among migrants in GCC countries and the need for protection for migrant workers regardless of gender. The project aimed to lay the groundwork for future implementation and improvement of migrant worker protection systems. Specific attention is given to domestic workers, recognizing their significance in the Gulf region, where they constitute a substantial portion of the migrant workforce.
46. **Although not clearly articulated in the detailed description of activities at the outset, the project incorporated a gender perspective into its activities thereafter.** For example, under Outcome 1, a systematic examination of gender-specific constraints and barriers was studied, revealing significant gaps in social protection among women, especially in sectors such as domestic work. This was confirmed by the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) FGDs during this evaluation who mentioned that they participated in dialogue and research by ILO looking at the ongoing challenges of women and their access to social protection.

4.2 Coherence

EQ 4: To what extent is the project coherent with other interventions of the ILO and the UN in the region? To what extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of the countries under study including work on gender?

47. **The project’s design placed emphasis on establishing synergies and ensuring engagement with interventions by other actors and international organizations mentioned in the Project Document, which was also underscored by ILO staff during interviews who noted specific complementarities with FAIRWAY programme by ILO and SDC, the Africa Labour Migration Conference, and social protection initiatives in GCC countries.** During the design phase, the project had set out to engage governments in GCC countries and countries of origin, UN and development partners, as well as trade unions and employers, indicating entry points for complementarities such as the SDC partnership with UNCDF focused on countries of origin, the regional consultative processes on migration, such as the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, the ILO FAIRWAY programme and the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) for Africa. During interviews, ILO staff talked about synergies with the FAIRWAY programme funded by the SDC on labour migration. During the COVID-19 pandemic, repurposed funding from other programmes was allocated to support returning migrants in Ethiopia with reintegration efforts. The inaugural Africa Labor Migration conference included a session on social protection, serving as a preparatory meeting for the Doha dialogue between African and Arab states and aimed to familiarize African countries with the situation in the GCC and highlight positive developments. Discussions with countries like Egypt and Morocco, which send workers to the GCC, facilitated planning for further dialogue on potential reforms and bilateral cooperation, with the goal of identifying champions in the GCC for bilateral social protection agreements.
- **Specifically, the synergy between the FAIRWAY programme and this project was evident, as underscored by ILO staff, both teams maintained effective coordination on activities and resource utilization at the regional and country levels.** While it may seem that synergistic collaboration was not fully planned due to separate project scopes and objectives, yet both shared the same funding source, SDC’s support and had a common focus on migrant workers across Asia, Africa, and the Arab States. Both were addressing issues related to wage protection, end-of-service indemnity reforms and fair recruitment practices. As a result, this approach ensured that efforts complemented each other, ILO staff indicated effective coordination on activities and resource utilization at the regional and country levels, which was also validated in interviews with FAIRWAY team. Examples of effective collaboration were highlighted by both teams, for instance, lessons from FAIRWAY’s early phases in Oman informed social protection policy dialogue and the project alignment with national plans. The Migration Reference Group utilized by FAIRWAY facilitated knowledge exchange and collaboration and regulatory frameworks. In Kuwait, joint research initiatives involving employers demonstrated synergies between FAIRWAY and the project which helped in understanding migrant workers’ issues and identify common goals and engage in joint activities. Nevertheless, both ILO and FAIRWAY teams have identified potential synergies that were not tapped-on, particularly in corridor approaches between South Asia and the GCC. Both projects could benefit more efficiently from inter-regional dialogue and sharing of best practices. This approach aims to ensure that migrant workers and their families have access to social protection across borders and involves several key strategies, such as building inclusive national systems,

ratifying relevant standards, social security agreements, bilateral labour agreements, addressing practical obstacles, and unilateral measures.

48. **Government stakeholders in Kuwait and Oman who were interviewed also substantiated the effective complementarity between the project and the FAIRWAY programme in their countries. Synergies between the two projects is demonstrated in several activities shared by the stakeholders during the evaluation.** In Kuwait, coordination between FAIRWAY and the project took place for the just transition workshop, the complementarity was clear where the project worked in-depth on comprehensive analysis and identifying gaps, while FAIRWAY emphasis was on consultation and workshops. There is a recognition among stakeholders that advocating for a shift towards addressing labour workers' issues requires substantive improvement in labour protection laws rather than solely capacity building.
49. **In discussions with government stakeholders from GCC countries, they indicated some other synergies with interventions that they are engaged in on the protection of migrant workers, offering complementarity to the project with no redundancy.** The ILO engages in Technical Cooperation (TCP) Projects with individual GCC countries such as KSA, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, addressing national issues. Collaboration focuses on commonalities like social protection, fostering synergies and cross-references. In Kuwait, collaboration with ILO encompassed various projects, besides FAIRWAY, they mentioned market mobility and justice transition. With the Trade Union Federation (KUTF), collaboration has been pivotal in addressing migrant worker issues. During COVID-19, joint efforts provided legal and psychological support, ensuring comprehensive assistance, also noted was collaborative initiatives on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and the research on workplace harassment. In Qatar, the TCP was in place prior to this project on migrant workers under evaluation. Both projects remained consistent in approach without mixed messages and alignment, particularly regarding end-of-service reform, as well as regional mapping and stakeholder engagement, existed to some extent. In Oman, collaboration between ILO and UNICEF aligned with their respective mandates, focusing on national pensions and social protection reforms. The project on provident fund aimed to extend social protection through bilateral agreements with sending countries, transitioning from end-of-service benefits to pensions.
50. **With the exception of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), collaboration with UN agencies, was limited.** Despite facing challenges in aligning technical mandates and navigating the complex political context, ILO and IOM established a common space for coordination on one component of the project. They worked on drafting and validating the report 'Social Protection for Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries' IOM supported some data collection in the GCC countries and participated in regular calls with ILO and ODI throughout the course of the data collection providing insights on challenges and opportunities related to the Gulf countries.

4.3 Effectiveness

EQ 5: To what extent did the project achieve the overall objective, outcomes and outputs?

51. **The project was comprised of three outcomes and four outputs, which were all fully- or over-achieved in terms of the knowledge products produced, engagement with stakeholders and country coverage, as well as bringing most of the GCC countries together in regional dialogue on social protection.** The project conducted and published a number of research reports, surveys and policy papers beyond what was originally modestly planned. This was possible because the project team demonstrated flexibility in responding to demands and priorities of constituents. Building on the emerging evidence, it embarked on high-level policy dialogue and engagement with various stakeholders, including workers, employers and government actors to present findings and discuss potential reforms constituents at national and regional level. The project provided technical assistance and successfully started to influence reform in a number of countries. It was initially planned to work in only two countries, yet the project expanded to establish a regional platform and support more countries. As such, the project has effectively contributed towards the achievement of its two key milestones; ‘By 2022, a comprehensive mapping and analysis of the existing social protection mechanisms in the GCC countries, levels of coverage and accessibility, is developed’ and ‘By 2023, a set of inclusive and rights-based policy reforms to extend social protection coverage to migrant workers in selected GCC countries is identified’.

1. **Under Outcome 1 ‘A comprehensive regional mapping of the existing social protection mechanisms in the GCC countries provides insights on levels of accessibility and coverage, and a country in-depth analysis of social protection needs and gaps for migrant workers is available in selected GCC countries’, the project carried-out two regional studies and two quantitative and qualitative surveys, exceeding what was originally planned.** The project completed the review of ‘National Social Protection Legislation and Legal Frameworks for Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries’,²² commissioned to Clyde & Co and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). It covered all GCC countries and was published and launched through a regional webinar. In addition, a regional mapping on entitlements to social protection amongst migrant workers titled ‘Social Protection for Migrant Workers in GCC countries’,²³ commissioned to ODI, was conducted and published, it covered all countries except KSA. The project rolled-out two surveys; one with employers in Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and industry (KCCI) on ‘Perspectives of a sample of employers on the social protection of migrant workers in Kuwait’. The second was a survey on ‘Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries’,²⁴ commissioned to ODI and the Nepal Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER). It was the first of its kind quantitative and qualitative survey to analyse data collected from migrant workers in the Gulf region. Lots of efforts were exerted for the dissemination of

²² ILO. 2023. National Social Protection Legislation and Legal Frameworks for Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries. June 2023. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_886063.pdf

²³ ILO. 2023. Social protection for migrant workers in countries of the GCC : A regional mapping of provisions on paper and in practice. November 2023. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903672.pdf

²⁴ ILO. 2023. Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903674.pdf

findings, including by production of infographics, articles, interviews and events, and also findings were presented to the MAG and the GCC Bureau and a regional workshop was held to discuss findings.

2. **Under Outcome 2 ‘Policy dialogue is initiated to identify the most relevant social protection coverage gaps, recommendations, opportunities for reform and potential entry points to expand coverage to migrant workers’, the project produced two research and policy papers. It bolstered policy dialogue through organizing or actively participating in high-level events and facilitating bilateral engagement between countries.** The research and policy papers produced, some building on mapping and surveys under Outcome 1, are on ‘Reforming End-of-Service Indemnity (EOSI) for Migrant Workers in Member States of the GCC’,²⁵ ‘Extending social protection to migrant workers in the Arab region’,²⁶ ‘Review of National Social Protection Legislation and Legal Frameworks for Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries’,²⁷ ‘Social Protection for Migrant Workers in GCC countries’,²⁸ ‘Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries’,²⁹ and ‘Employers’ Perspectives on Social Protection for Migrant Workers in Kuwait’. Dialogue events through which ILO worked to promote knowledge on social protection issues for migrant workers and policy reform options were many. For example, the regional workshop by the GCC Executive Bureau in Dubai and Doha (2023), the Arab Labour Conference (2023), the Migration Development Forum in Asia, facilitated with government representatives, connecting regional efforts to global migration dialogue and enabling scalability. In addition to bilateral engagement was conducted in Oman and Kuwait and Qatar. Stakeholders engagement in multiplicity has also been one of the main strengths of the project.
3. **Under Outcome 3 ‘Specific reform entry points for enhancement of social protection for migrant workers are identified in selected GCC countries and progressive improvement of the social protection policy environment, scheme design or administration is achieved to the benefit of migrant workers in selected areas as relevant’, the project has over-achieved on the level of technical assistance it provided, with concrete advancements for some GCC countries.** Particularly in Oman, the project advanced in the level of support provided to constituents on the reform of the entire social security and social protection system, including from the perspective of inclusion of non-national workers and their families. Further, support was provided to the Public

²⁵ ILO. 2023. ‘Reforming end-of-service indemnity for migrant workers in Member States of the GCC.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_886159.pdf

²⁶ ILO. 2023. Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers in the Arab Region https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_886164.pdf

²⁷ ILO. 2023. National Social Protection Legislation and Legal Frameworks for Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries. June 2023. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_886063.pdf

²⁸ ILO. 2023. Social protection for migrant workers in countries of the GCC : A regional mapping of provisions on paper and in practice. November 2023. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903672.pdf

²⁹ ILO. 2023. Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in GCC countries.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_903674.pdf

Authority of Manpower (PAM) in Kuwait on the end-of-service indemnity system. Likewise, the project has started working with the MOL in Qatar.

EQ 6: How did the project's outputs and outcomes contribute to ILO's Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 and the organization's mainstreamed strategies, including gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards?

4. **Having effectively contributed towards the achievement of its two key milestones and over-achieving on its expected outcomes and outputs, the project contributed to policy outcomes of the ILO's P&B 2020-2021³⁰ and 2022-2023.³¹ It has also contributed to the ILO's strategies on gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards**
5. **Gender equality:** The project contributed to some extent to the organization's gender equality mandate, stipulated in a number of strategies, constitutions and workplans, focusing on the rights and experiences of female migrant workers, particularly those engaged in domestic work. The ILO's mandate on gender equality is to promote equal opportunities for all women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.³² Through reviews of legal frameworks and research, the project examined the unique gender challenges faced by women in the migrant workforce and the extent of entitlements available to them. A balance was ensured throughout the project between women and men -both are vulnerable- who engaged in KIIs and surveys, gathering data on their experiences and shedding light on their unique challenges. Although impact on gender was not clear, the project demonstrated agility by trying to engage in dialogue on gender-related issues and -where possible- capitalizing on opportunities that may drive reforms within the limited degree of openness by constituents, trying to trigger some interest from stakeholders who were previously reluctant to engage.
6. **The improvements promoted through the project in migrant worker protection may indirectly benefit women, however, there was limited targeting of gender-specific concerns within the project.** Some ILO staff find that the project's approach could have better explicitly prioritized gender-specific interventions. Reform discussions around gender and maternity leave were not prominent, despite the significant challenges faced by migrant female domestic workers, such as restrictions on marriage, family reunification and maternity leave. In general migration paradigms is such that migrant women do not have right to stay during maternity in the GCC, which makes extending protection complex, for reasons beyond the nature of SP systems. Oman is the exception, where reforms to the maternity insurance schemes included the inclusion of migrant women retaining their labour rights during maternity leave, not including migrant domestic workers..

³⁰ ILO. 2019. Programme and Budget for 2020–21, Programme of Work and Results Framework

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_719163.pdf

³¹ ILO. 2021. Programme and Budget for 2022-23, Programme of Work and Results framework.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---program/documents/genericdocument/wcms_831036.pdf

³² ILO. 2022. ILO Action Plan on Gender Equality. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_856240.pdf

7. **Social Dialogue:** Social dialogue under the project appears to have been limited due to the dominance of government-led institutions in the GCC region, the weak to no existent trade unions and workers' associations, as well as the lack of freedom of association. Genuine social dialogue was hence hindered with the absence of such prerequisites and regional levels. The project strived to work with partners to facilitate social dialogue and engaged with all chambers of commerce and trade unions, where they exist. To a limited extent, it engaged in workshops with workers and employers and reached out to migrant workers when possible. Social dialogue is defined by the ILO as a tripartite process of negotiation, consultation or exchange of information between representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest.³³ The ILO staff shared during KIIs that social dialogue may not be focusing on social protection for migrant workers in some GCC countries as the relevance of this topic to both employers and workers remains sensitive. Dialogue limitations existed, particularly in countries like Qatar and the UAE where union representation is absent and pertinent forums are primarily led by government entities. However, in Oman, where trade unions are present and there is a level of endorsement of social protection, there were opportunities for engagement in meaningful social security reform discussions alongside chambers of commerce.
8. Interviewees from government stakeholders also confirmed the efforts exerted by the project to promote social dialogue, despite occasional disagreements, they recognized the potential of the social dialogue to improve analysis and decision-making from multiple perspectives. During interviews, they mentioned that the project, from its start, prioritized consultations to ensure active involvement of possible parties and build ownership. It facilitated discussions about needs and strategies, promoted the exchange of ideas through meetings, workshops, international forums, FGDs and research preparation. The project facilitated engagement with government and employers, leading to understanding and acceptance of the social dialogue to some extent, benefiting from increased political support and newly appointed officials.
9. **Labour Standards:** The conducted research studies and policy papers, in collaboration with reliable partners like ODI, ensured credibility of findings and recommendations among stakeholders. They, therefore, served as valuable tools on the alignment of national practices with international labour standards, allowing countries to endorse and implement specific provisions based on their priorities. The research findings also provided insights to the development of a regional strategy on ILO's labour migration 2024-2027. The many international labour standards and fundamental rights conventions are important for safeguarding the dignity and rights of migrant workers. All international labour standards, unless otherwise stated, are applicable to migrant workers. Lack of labour protection for migrant workers undermines protection generally for all workers.³⁴ ILO staff in HQ and ROAS have

³³ ILO. 2024. Governance, Social Dialogue. Web page. <https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/areas-of-work/social-dialogue/lang--en/index.htm>#:~:text=What%20is%20Social%20Dialogue,to%20economic%20and%20social%20policy.

³⁴ ILO. 2024. International Labour standards on Labour Migration. Web page <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/standards/lang--en/index.htm>

confirmed that respective units related to labour migration have been supporting the design and implementation of the project, including ACTRAV and ACTEMP. The project's focus on social protection had shed light on its significance in the region, prompting plans for larger-scale programmes to address labour standards issues, despite the lack of ratification of conventions such as C102 within the GCC countries. The research reports developed, by examining the broader spectrum of standards, provide information on minimum requirements and highlight areas for improvement on social protection reform.

- 10. Governments in GCC countries believe the project had indeed contributed to align national priorities and laws more closely to the international labour standards.** Government stakeholders from Kuwait mentioned during interviews how the project worked with them on the end-of-service benefits discussing contributions from employers for this service, and the responsibility of the Kuwaiti government, particularly if employers preferred investing funds rather than allocating them for worker protection. The ILO proposed provident fund solutions, but concerns persisted about fund management, especially given the significant migrant population. Stakeholders from Oman said that the partnership with the project proved valuable, offering insights into international labour standards and best practices in social protection, aligning with the Oman 2040 vision. In Qatar, the project discussed challenges in accessing benefits and compensation for migrant workers and the existing disparities in healthcare access, especially for low-paid workers.

EQ 7: To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic or other external factors affect the implementation of the project? Did these hinder or reverse the progresses that had been made? In what way? What were the mitigation steps taken by the project?

- 11. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the GCC's protection measures for migrant workers and weakness in current *kafala* model.³⁵ According to ILO staff, it acted as a catalyst for discussions by the project on better protection systems within the GCC. Having an altered view, the interviewed government stakeholders find that the pandemic brought significant challenges for employers, as much as it did for workers, disrupting previously stable conditions.** Instances about workers being unpaid or denied end-of-service benefits during the pandemic prompted rapid recognition of the need and urgency for reform within the GCC countries, as explained by ILO staff. They emphasized that the pandemic did not hinder project progress; on the contrary, it presented a wake-up call for action aligned with ongoing reforms in the GCC. It encouraged preliminary collaboration with sending countries, which was crucial for advocacy. Government stakeholders, from their side, pinpointed to the resulting losses at the employers side, employers experiencing financial constraints during the pandemic struggled to fulfil end-of-service obligations. They however still recognize that the legal provisions favouring workers' rights show fairness and support for workers. Additionally, comparisons with practices in other countries, like the UAE's tax policies, highlighted

³⁵ The Kafala (Sponsorship) System emerged in the 1950's and is a routine practice in the GCC countries where a migrant worker's immigration status is legally bound to an individual employer or sponsor (*kafeel*) for their contract period. The migrant worker cannot enter the country, transfer employment nor leave the country without first obtaining explicit written permission from the *kafeel*.

disparities in treatment and raised questions about equity in the face of economic hardship. Given these conditions, within a short span, the project yielded important outcomes, including the innovative regional research on migration and social protection, activating social dialogue on reform of social protection benefits and identifying entry points for reform on social protection in some countries.

12. **The positive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly exemplified in the case of Oman.** Government stakeholders highlighted the financial strain surrounding the sustainability of Oman's 11 pension funds and disparities in social protection coverage between Omani and non-Omani workers. As part of the Oman 2040 vision for universal social protection, there was recognition it was imperative to extend coverage to migrant workers. Policymakers in Oman aimed to broaden benefits to encompass aspects outlined in Convention 102, including maternity and sick leave, alongside provisions specifically tailored for migrant workers. However, challenges arose, particularly concerning unemployment benefits for migrants, as they were not permitted to remain in the country post-contract expiration.
13. **Addressing social protection for migrant workers in GCC countries is sensitive and a nascent protection area that required years for ILO's capacity development efforts to succeed in getting some governments and employers open to and start engaging in reforms dialogue with ILO and the project, others are still underway.** GCC employers and governments find this is not an easy topic, it requires time and resources and strong entry points. The ILO efforts have made difference in advancing migrant workers' rights higher on national agendas and building ownership and capacity strengthening within stakeholders. With this understanding, the project design ensured realistic outputs and outcome, that were overachieved. This project ensured giving in-depth focus on evidence generation to support policy dialogue and put forward enough time, expertise and resources to promote understanding of social protection to migrant workers and build ownership. According to the ILO staff interviewed in this evaluation, the GCC bureau opened doors with ministries of labour and built a regional vision, bolstered by the regional workshops and bilateral discussions by ILO with some governments, social security institutions and workers and employers representatives. Oman agreed first and then Kuwait, Qatar and then Bahrain and finally UAE. The project built partnership with the GCC executive bureau and took in account their needs in demand driven conversation.
14. **Specifically in Qatar, the spotlight of the country hosting of the World Cup in 2022 brought labour rights issues to the forefront, particularly social protection concerns.** Accidents and employment injuries without proper compensation highlighted the deficiencies in existing systems to respond to shocks. This shaped the environment in which this project operated for the protection of workers before, during and after the tournament.

EQ 8: How effective was communication among the project teams, the regional office and the responsible technical department at ILO headquarters? Has the project received adequate technical and administrative support/response from ILO backstopping units?

15. **In views of HQ staff during interviews, the collaboration with the project was robust with technical inputs that enriched outcomes and overall effectiveness, which was also established by the project**

team at ROAS during interviews. They coordinated on ensuring alignment with ILO standards and working together on strategic dissemination strategies, participation in global forums and conferences, raising awareness and engagement to promote social dialogue. From their side, the project team at ROAS found that communication with HQ ensured smooth coordination and timely execution of activities, especially social protection specialists who provided valuable insights and feedback, enriching project design and implementation.

16. **At the same time, regional autonomy in managing administrative and financial tasks ensured timely project execution, resource efficiency and hands-on regional involvement by ROAS resulted in good project management practices and contributed to overall success.** The project team at ROAS adopted a proactive approach in fostering strategic partnerships with the ILO different departments and with stakeholders, including SDC and GCC. The close partnership with the GCC bureau played a pivotal role as a key stakeholder, driving engagement and collaboration in the Gulf region and facilitated stakeholder involvement from different countries. Interviewed staff in some countries confirmed that the project team at ROAS provided consistent support, ensuring quality outputs and adherence to project objectives. They find that the high standards set by the project coordinator and team contributed significantly to project effectiveness.
17. **ROAS played a crucial role in supporting project activities, including facilitating stakeholders engagement in regional events, report revision, contract management and logistical arrangement, which contributed to project effectiveness.** Regarding the ROAS FAIRWAY programme, the level of engagement in project activities was noted through logistical support and resource sharing. Although specific details were lacking, collaboration between offices, particularly in Kuwait, demonstrated synergies that optimized resource allocation and enhanced project efficiency.

4.4 Efficiency

EQ 9: To what extent were the project activities cost-efficient? Were the resources allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent can the project results justify the time, financial and HR invested in the project?

18. **The total project budget was US\$ 1,297,289 with contributions of US\$ 1,291,082 including the recent co-extension (79%) by SDC and US\$ 274,064 (21%) by ILO.** This total considers the cost-extension received in March 2024, increasing the budget from an original total of US\$ 1,024,364, as indicated in table 4. The highest budget portion was allocated to staffing at 44 percent, which includes specialized experts, followed by Outcome 1 'Regional review and country assessments' at 18 percent, Outcome 2 'Country-based policy dialogue' at 11 percent and Outcome 3 'Country-specific support to reform' also at 11 percent.
19. **The spending of the project budget was efficient,** the funding was appropriately directed to the designed activities for research and technical assistance. For example, the team had cut down

frequency of travel as much as possible to reduce costs and carbon footprint, as shared by the interviewed staff .

20. **The allocations for support staff and administration seems to have been insufficient considering the wide coverage of the project across multiple countries.** Feedback from interviewed staff shows that they juggled multiple projects as a result of overcommitment and underscored the strain on available resources.

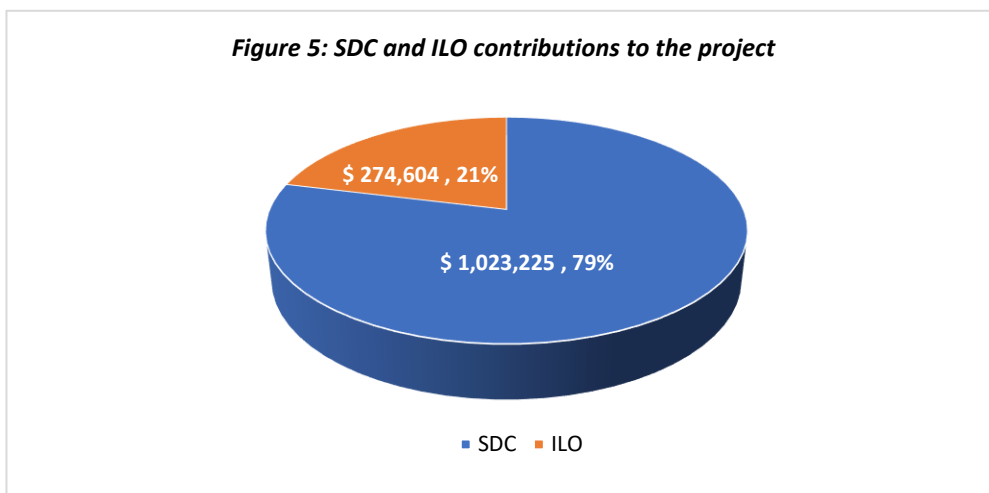
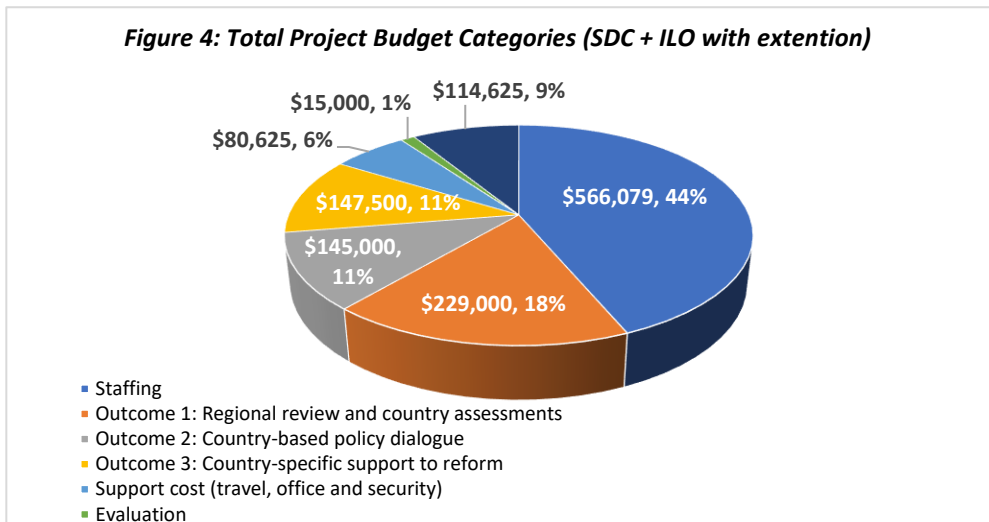


Table 4: Budget categories by SDC and ILO based on original budget and with extension

Budget Category	SDC contribution	ILO contribution	Total with Extension
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	Original	Extension	Original	Extension	SDC + ILO
Staffing	303,475	106,000	137,962	18,642	409,475
Outcome 1	185,000	6,000	38,000		191,000
Outcome 2	85,000	15,000	30,000	15,000	100,000
Outcome 3	75,000	37,500	15,000	20,000	112,500
Support cost	47,500	33,125			80,625
Evaluation	15,000				15,000
Provision for cost increase	92,427	22,198			114,625
Total	803,402	219,823	220,962	53,642	
Grand Total	1,023,225		274,064		1,297,289

21. The project had received two no-cost extensions until 30 September 2024, which in view of the evaluation were necessary to finalize the commitments under the project’s objectives, suggesting that the initial project’s timeframe was tight. The extension is laying the groundwork for a seamless transition to the upcoming phase currently in its design phase and expected to start by Q4 2024. The extension was thus crucial to maintain continuity, avoid engagement gaps and ensure sustained progress, in consideration of the recognized complex challenges associated with expanding social protection to migrant workers in the GCC requiring steady technical assistance and research. The ILO team also took the opportunity of the extension to strengthen regional engagements and complete the rollout of employers’ surveys across the region, which was long.

EQ 10: To what extent has the project been able to create synergies in cost sharing with other ILO or non-ILO initiatives either nationally or regionally?

22. **Except for the cost-sharing with the FAIRWAY programme, there had been no other cost-sharing synergies observed during the evaluation.** Cost sharing has been an aspect of collaboration between the ILO project and FAIRWAY. During MAG meetings, both entities contributed to the costs incurred and also costs associated with surveys. In interventions implemented in Oman and Qatar, cost sharing occurred between both, particularly on healthcare and end-of-work indemnity. The ILO contributed 20 percent, adhering to the requirements of the SDC with the aim to ensure financial efficiency and foster partnerships.

EQ 11: How did the project’s governance structure and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems facilitate good results and efficient delivery? And if not, why not?

23. **The project structure, as per the Project Document, consisted of national and regional technical teams, commissioned think tanks and NGOs, and the MAG. The evaluation finds that the decentralized structure with the project’s small size streamlined processes, increased efficiency of implementation and facilitated communications between the regional technical team, regional experts and country partners and research institutions. ILO staff at HQ and ROAS find that this decentralized structure was adequate and contributed to the project’s success with sufficient in-**

house technical expertise. Regional experts and a small technical team facilitated and oversaw the project led by the technical specialist. Experts in social protection coordinated the research and policy dialogue, while regional experts offered technical assistance and backstopping, both Arabs and non-Arabs. Country-specific research and assessments were commissioned to research institutions, consultancy companies or independent consultants. Further, the MAG provided strategic advice to the project.

24. **Staff at HQ, ROAS and countries attributed part of the project's success to the effective and transparent communication and smooth working relations between them at the different offices.** This enabled the multiple teams to tap on arising opportunities for synergies and programme improvements.
25. The project's outcome and output level indicators are all quantitative in nature, which limits their ability to effectively measure the progress of qualitative nature characterizing this project. As the project was below the 1 million and less than 30 months, it was only mandated for a final internal evaluation. With the cost extension, the budget increased to beyond the 1 million threshold and hence it was too late to consider a mid-term evaluation (internal or self). Hence this final evaluation was commissioned.³⁶

4.5 Impact Orientation

EQ 12: How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment between national and non-national workers?

26. **Overall, the project's achievements are likely to contribute on the longer-term to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of the GCC countries, albeit with the conditions of continued capacity strengthening, social dialogue and policy influence. At varying extents, the project engaged with countries and promoted systems reform** in improving migrant workers' access to comprehensive social protection, **the most recognized were in Oman setting a precedent**, largely supported by a separate track of direct collaboration between Oman and ILO, to which this project was complementary. The project also worked with employers to explore reforms that aim to increase integration of migrants into social insurance and reform the *kafala* system.
27. **Regional mapping, country assessments and investment cases conducted by the project helped to identify gaps in social protection systems and devise solutions for improvement that present business cases for social protection; countries can extend coverage that is financially viable with good results for both workers and employers.** From their side, workers' associations revealed that the research conducted by the project has successfully identified existing gaps and provided recommendations for policy improvement. It presents an initial step towards a broader agenda of advancing social protection

³⁶ ILO ROAS. 2023. Progress Report, Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (June 2023)

in the Gulf region. Likewise, government stakeholders emphasized the importance of understanding the scope and nature of challenges faced by workers and their complaints, which are mostly social protection-related, such as end-of-service benefits. They find it important also to have explored the management of migrant workers' pensions and the role of their home countries in pension administration.

28. **Policy dialogue on social protection has advanced considerably with GCC countries, grounded on the evidence generated from the research, policy briefs and surveys produced by the project. They informed advocacy efforts and presented compelling arguments to governments and constituents for reforms, although ultimate implementation is beyond ILO's control.** The ILO's approach was focused on collaborating with regional networks like the MFA and the ODI to conduct research and identify gaps in social protection, which helped target advocacy efforts and enhance capacity strengthening activities. ILO also involves local stakeholders, employers, NGOs and advocacy groups to convince parliament on reforms and the dissemination of research findings through policy briefs, regional conferences, regional dialogue and events have been useful. Nevertheless, complex political economy contexts are hindering or slowing reforms at different degrees in the GCC countries, despite recognition of the importance to include migrant workers in their social protection schemes.
29. **Reforms in Oman have been signified with legal reforms to social protection framework addressing health coverage with some improvements in benefits for sickness, maternal and work injury and the establishment of boards endorsing social protection reforms. Bahrain's initiative to extend provident for end-of-service benefits and pensions funds applicable to both Bahraini and non-Bahraini workers, although not yet implemented and not fully aligned with ILS. Progress in Kuwait and Qatar on social protection reforms was also noted, particularly in discussions on health benefits and access to public health systems.** ILO staff mentioned that the project's contribution hinged on political decisions and needs within each country. For example, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments recognized the vulnerability of millions of unprotected migrant workers, prompting a need for solutions. The project focused on improving the end-of-service indemnities, a crucial element of protection for Gulf workers. Progress was achieved in Bahrain, UAE and Oman for the benefit to be administered by the government rather than solely relying on employers. This shift ensures timely payment to workers upon contract completion, enhancing social protection and reducing reliance on lengthy legal processes for benefit retrieval. Interest on such reform was raised to the project by KSA and Qatar.
30. **Both ILO and government stakeholders shared during the evaluation that a shift has become visible in attitudes towards social protection in GCC countries. It has notably transformed from being a taboo topic to being openly discussed in regional and bilateral events, with the project effectively accompanying this positive momentum.** Government stakeholders mention that this transformation is aimed at a universal coverage for all sectors and categories of individuals leaving no one behind in an inclusive approach. Coverage should include various demographics; children, PwDs, widows and the elderly, regardless of their employment status or type of work. There is a general interest and concrete forward-looking discussions and initiatives on reforms. Government stakeholders signified the

effectiveness of the social protection reforms and further work underway. For example, in Kuwait, the government started end-of-service benefits, health coverage, maternity benefits, sick leave and work injuries. In Oman, stakeholders are working for a forthcoming expansion of social protection to cover all individuals, including migrants, as well as those in trade, public life and domestic labour. Oman also highlighted the work on fund management efficiency, moving beyond the previous focus solely on early retirement benefits to provide a broader range of benefits to a wider demographic.

31. **Despite advancement, the introduced reforms are considered only a first step towards addressing disparities between national and non-national workers, with multiple and complex challenges remaining for the GCC countries to align to the international labour standards.** Government stakeholders acknowledged during interviews that more efforts are required to ensure comprehensive and equitable social protection for migrant workers. According to interviewed ILO staff and review of the legal mapping conducted through the project, gaps are still revealed in several social protection benefits for migrants and the private sector's approach to social security. Examples include the non-emergency care, old age, disability and survivor benefits, none of these benefits are currently offered to non-nationals, indicating a gap in coverage. Further, the study on end-of-service demonstrates the importance of aligning reforms with international labour standards, influencing perceptions and prompting improvements in provident funds for non-nationals.
32. **The interviewed government stakeholders expressed openness to exploring further innovative approaches for social protection and stressed the need for adopting legislative frameworks and measures based on discussions and recommendations by social protection experts.** They note disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to work dynamics and emphasize the need to address challenges faced by both employers and workers. Ideas raised include collaborating with banks to manage pension funds, conducting a detailed assessments of segments within the workforce facing difficulties with end-of-service payments. Needed focus on legal safeguards in Kuwait was mentioned. Government stakeholders also stressed the importance of considering factors such as company size and financial capabilities when addressing these challenges. Moreover, collaboration with international partners like the ILO is necessary to effectively address cross-border issues.

EQ 13: What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers and other identified most vulnerable groups?

33. **The ILO staff underscored the sensitivity surrounding domestic workers in the GCC countries, which presents unique challenges in promoting universal social protection reforms. The specifics of how to integrate domestic workers into social protection reforms remain unclear.** Unlike other working sectors, domestic workers lack centralized associations or organizations, making it more difficult to address the fragmented structures and engage with relevant stakeholders. Sectors primarily occupied by women, including domestic work, often lack adequate benefits for migrant workers, such as maternity benefits, leading to vulnerabilities and potential return to their home countries for childbirth due to limited safe options. Practical limitations, such as the absence of rest days and restricted mobility for domestic workers, hinder their access to social protection and awareness of their rights.

34. **In a first for the GCC region, Oman has set a new regional benchmark in the area of maternity and paternity leaves on the pathway to expand gender transformative labour protection and care policies.** Oman expanded maternity benefits for migrant alongside national mothers employed in full-time jobs, equal to 14 weeks in line with the requirements of ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). It also includes the option of unpaid, job-protected leave for up to 98 additional days, which can be shared between father and mother. In order to avoid negatively impacting women's future pension entitlements, the Social Protection Fund will cover the cost of pension contributions during maternity leave. Oman also introduced seven days of paid paternity leave for all employed Omani and non-Omani fathers at full salary. This can be extended to up to 98 additional days of unpaid, job-protected leave.
35. **The project has drawn the attention to domestic work and the need for reforming social security systems to acknowledge it as a legitimate employment in the GCC countries by including discussions within research and policy dialogue on domestic workers.** The project had shed light on the reality and challenges faced by vulnerable groups, particularly women migrant workers. ILO staff explained that bringing the complexities women face into discussions was central to advocate for enhanced maternity coverage as a vital support to women and their families, contributing to their overall well-being. The project also focussed on gaps between the legal provisions in place in a country and practical implementation, revealing specific needs of women migrant workers. Based on that, advocating for improved maternity coverage for women migrant workers through the project might have helped to reduce stigma in destination countries. Some government stakeholders mentioned that they aim to extend end-of-service reforms and health insurance to include women migrant workers. This can be complex for the domestic sector, however less so for sectors like cleaning and hospitality.
36. **Despite recognition by ILO staff of the necessity for addressing the perception of domestic workers in destination countries, there has been limited focus on promoting behavioural change.** It was only the initiative by the FAIRWAY programme and media in this regard that was shared by ILO staff as a positive example challenging societal norms and advocating for the rights of migrant workers.

EQ 14: Did the project identify and use specific reform entry point for the extension of coverage? What other entry points could be used and in which GCC countries?

37. **During interviews with government stakeholders, considerations of local realities, cultural sensitivities and national experiences emerged as crucial factors that were adopted by the project in identifying entry points for social protection reform.** Continuous engagement with key officials and gatekeepers who hold decision-making authority was based on a mutual understanding of cultural sensitivities and regional dynamics. The project's careful identification of entry points has led to increased receptivity and response towards dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders. Having said that, there is still more potential for ILO to leverage national experiences and perspectives to identify potential solutions that consider local realities and concerns. There is also need for continued acknowledgement of the sense of sovereignty, and regional influence may cause resistance to external

pressure or top-down approaches, especially from international organizations. Unemployment insurance (in the context of kafala reforms) and employment injury/death compensation systems are also new areas for the project to focus on.

38. **Developing robust business cases and reframing social protection as an investment in economic stability of institutions could bolster the potential reform solutions offered to the different GCC governments.** To capitalize on emerging opportunities for reform, presenting different insights on costs, financial sustainability and business models that reframe social protection as an investment rather than a cost could open doors for dialogue. This could include addressing the cost disparity between hiring nationals and migrants in the private sector for better inclusion of nationals and migrants alike and mitigating high unemployment rates in countries like Oman, Bahrain and KSA. Another insight that could be presented is on attracting and retaining skilled migrant workers by offering appropriate social protection benefits, mainly access to healthcare and end-of-benefit services. Also, reflecting on labour market competitiveness as a result of higher motivation, reduced turnover and increased productivity in a more conducive work environment.
39. **The corridor approach to social protection reform was specifically identified by ILO and migrant workers' associations as a promising entry point to ensure a shared responsibility for the transfer of benefits between origin and destination GCC countries.** Efforts to link entitlements between nations may face bureaucratic obstacles and cultural disparities, it therefore necessitates careful planning and coordination to leverage their expertise and resources and identify potential areas of focus. Central to this approach is the involvement of the private sector, which presents both opportunities and complexities. Discussions by the project were initiated with the South Asia ILO teams to align objectives and strategize the roadmap for the implementation of the corridor approach.
40. **The complex political landscape in some countries may hinder dialogue on social protection, slowing progress and changing priorities. However, some views from the government stakeholders see that political change may offer an entry point to provide technical support on developing new frameworks that consider social protection aspects.** For instance, the Kuwaiti political environment had been marked by frequent government changes and volatility; ten government reshuffles in one year, which has impacted the progress of cooperation frameworks with the UN. Despite challenges inherent in Kuwait's political landscape, the project's strategic approach and ongoing dialogue with policymakers have propelled progress within a relatively short timeframe, underscoring the potential for significant advancements in social protection reform in the near future. Recent developments, such as the emergence of a new draft framework and impending parliamentary elections, offer potential entry points for advancing social protection reform initiatives.
41. **Access to health care and end-of-service benefits and provident funds have been and remain crucial entry points for social protection reform by the project, varying in focus and scope from one country to the other, examining the potential governance of social insurance and social funds is further required.** The project had identified specific challenges already under consideration by the government, which enhanced receptiveness to collaboration with ILO. Through initiatives like mapping

and assessment of legal systems and dispute resolution, the project engaged in discussions on issues such as the mobility of highly skilled labour and workers complaints on end-of-service benefits. Future projects could further examine the role of social insurance in providing comprehensive social protection, as well as the effective management and governance of social funds, whether through collective contributions or private sector involvement. Ensuring that social protection schemes benefit all stakeholders, including workers, unions and employers, rather than solely serving private insurance companies, is a fundamental consideration for effective social protection reform. Furthermore, ongoing collaboration between GCC bureau and the ILO on health insurance for migrants, with plans to explore opportunities for collaboration leveraging existing structures within the GCC, including ministries of health and health offices to advance the promotion of health insurance among migrant populations.

42. **The success of engagement with GCC countries largely centres on their willingness to align with the international labour standards for a state-led governance of social protection, versus its privatization, as exemplified by Oman's reform efforts.** A phased approach to adhering to the standards is a favourable entry point. However, challenges arise when countries direct their reform away from the standards, for example like in UAE that adopts private sector approaches to social protection with higher risks to resilience and sustainability of systems. Collaborative efforts with governments undergoing reforms aligned with ILO standards, such as Oman, offer important entry points for advancing social protection for migrant workers, particularly in areas like end-of-service benefits. ILO has kept active engagement and dialogue also with countries whose reform plans do not initially align with standards, taking a pragmatic approach to progressive realization. See press releases for UAE and Bahrain.
43. **Sharing Oman's experiences presents valuable lessons for other GCC countries who grapple with similar challenges, potentially prompting them to prioritize reform in the same direction.** Participation in events like the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), where Oman's commitment to expanding social protection was evident, provides additional avenues for engagement and advocacy.
44. **Engagement with GCC Bureau and leveraging its convening power has proven valuable, particularly in influencing discussions on end-of-service benefits, which still represents a critical entry point to dialogue and reform solutions with GCC countries.** Advocacy in inter-regional dialogues, such as the Abu-Dhabi dialogue, provide additional platforms for advancing the social protection agenda and enables ongoing updates and discussions. Likewise, integrating social protection discussions into broader dialogues with international organizations like the SDC and the EU presents avenues for amplifying advocacy efforts. Leveraging these platforms, particularly those focused on human rights, trade and investment can bolster support for social solidarity approaches within the GCC context. Furthermore, there is potential for greater engagement with the private sector to advance the social protection agenda. Some progress has been made, yet, there remains room for further collaboration to drive forward this agenda and ensure its continued advancement.

45. **Addressing employment injury compensation and protection in case of injury at workplace, particularly in industries like construction, domestic work and agriculture, present another entry point for the project to devise nationally acceptable solutions for reform. In relation is also the promotion of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) concerns.** Issues such as heat stress, working hours, leave time and weekends can be leveraged to improve working conditions and ensure worker safety, thereby contributing to social protection efforts
46. **In Oman, significant progress was achieved with the new policy on social protection, working with the government, employers and labour communities on how to operationalize the policy is considered an entry point for the country, as well as mobilising migrants and information sharing about the new policies and their rights.** With the increased commitment by the Omani government, which invested resources for the reform efforts through ILO. Thus, the entry point for Oman would be to operationalize the policy and disseminate the gains and for the migrant workers and their families, as well as to employers and the labour markets. This requires more collaboration between ILO, the Omani government and other stakeholders, including with migrant workers to see how the access to social protection would practically happen in Oman with the new policy changes. The hope is that this could also be reached in other countries, including UAE, Kuwait and KSA.

4.6 Sustainability

EQ 15: Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?

47. **While immediate impact on migrant workers may not be realized, the project has laid a solid foundation at the mid- to long-term for their access to social protection. Despite this progress, disparities persist in social protection entitlements between nationals and migrant workers across the GCC countries and the emerging solutions that the project had facilitated face administrative and cultural challenges for their application.** Interviews with ILO, migrant workers and government stakeholders show that the project has laid a strong foundation through evidence generation and policy dialogue. Early signs of national ownership could be seen in some instances, such as the resources provided by the Omani government to ILO for technical assistance on the reform agenda, the Kuwait has taken a decision to engage in the establishment of a provident fund. The Qatar decision to include the SP in the 3rd phase shows ownership and hopefully the KSA would follow-up. Even when not fully involved, countries like KSA participated in related initiatives, emphasizing their acknowledgement of the importance of this area. Oman will chair the next cycle of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. That is why the recent extension of the project until September 2024 was essential to allow for the realization of additional outputs, enhancing the potential for future positive reforms and effective social protection for migrants.
48. **As such, the achieved project results are likely to be sustainable with further country-specific interventions that may differ in their approach, design and implementation modality from one country to the other.** The outputs of the concluded phase of this project, including research outputs

and policy dialogue, provide concrete policy recommendations in terms of possible reforms around social protection at the regional and country levels. For example, the legislative landscape in Kuwait presents notable challenges to the swift enactment of reforms, primarily due to recurrent changes and its decentralized decision-making process. Unlike countries with centralized governance structures, Kuwait's legislative decisions requires extensive broad engagement across various stakeholders and policymakers.

49. **Social dialogue in the GCC region still lags behind, which may hinder sustainability of the efforts made by the project for inclusive social protection.** Attributed to contexts within the GCC, limited focus was placed by the project on reaching out, engaging and building capacities of worker unions and associations. ILO staff recognize this gap and believe future projects should strive to invest in unions and their acceptance within the national frameworks moving forward. Capacitating CSOs through training and resource sharing enhances their ability to advocate for social protection policies and disseminate information to migrant communities, thereby fostering greater engagement and empowerment.
50. **Prospects of sustainability by the project increased by the effective collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Primarily, the connection with the GCC bureau, that has been a pivotal avenue for comparative analysis between countries, alignment of positions and coordinating efforts across the region in social protection initiatives and influencing governments.** It was clear during interviews that there is a notable commitment within the bureau to maintain momentum and accountability regarding the project outcomes, particularly for countries that are still at an earlier stage of reform. The establishment of a decree for a regular team comprising ministries of labour and social funds across the GCC countries will be useful for identifying potential entry points, collaboration areas and assessment of feasibility and implementation strategies, thus contributing to sustainability.

EQ 16: What good practices can be found for future projects to build upon from this current project to ensure sustainability and extending social protection to migrant workers?

51. **Adopting a gradual progressive approach facilitates acceptance by governments and employers for social protection reform recommendations and increases likelihoods of their successful implementation, where political will is at the core.** For example, moving from traditional end-of-service benefits lying in the hands of employers to a providence fund as an intermediary step that can be more readily adopted by countries instead of a universal social protection system led by the government. This approach requires flexibility from the project's side and attention to political dynamics and changing political economy of GCC countries.
52. **Evidence-based research provides a solid foundation for high-level dialogue and promotes policy influence. Contextualization ensures that reform solutions are well-received and can be successfully implemented, increasing probability of ownership and acceptance by governments.** Research is significant for an in-depth understanding of the legal frameworks, socio-economic and cultural context and identifying gaps in social protection coverage in the GCC countries -or other regions. Understanding

the context and nuances of each country is crucial for devising effective social protection solutions tailored to the specific challenges and ensures relevance and potential progress. This is why when conducting surveys or gathering data, it is crucial to ensure that right respondents are reached, the data collected is meaningful and directly applicable to the project's needs, enhancing its effectiveness and potential impact.

53. **The project's ToC focusing on evidence generation, followed by dialogue and policy recommendations, as well as capitalization on international labour standards, yields concrete results in terms of government buy-in and ownership.** This design ensured that the project direction aligns with local contexts and national priorities, facilitated discussions on sensitive social protection topics and opened avenues for reform. Rather than being solely donor-driven, understanding synergy with SDC's global migration programme is important for a continued positive outlook.
54. **Engaging with a strategic regional partner such as the GCC bureau is instrumental in fostering regional dialogue, information sharing, identifying priorities and liaising at higher levels with key government stakeholders and influential decision-makers at the country level.** It provided opportunities for closed-door discussions at regional levels and tactical directions for policy recommendations and reform entry points. In general, widening the array of partnerships with diverse regional players is important, including the private sector, regional workers' associations and federations, chambers of commerce and others.
55. **Collaborating with sending countries is essential for comprehensive social protection for migrant workers and sharing of responsibilities with the destination countries.** Working with ILO in Asia broadened momentum for collaboration on research and paved the way to start working on a corridors approach with the GCC countries.
56. **The high level technical expertise of the project's human resources ensured that it progressed in the right direction and gained the trust of government stakeholders and partners.** The technically competent project teams had the capacity to provide the necessary technical support and policy recommendations to guide reform efforts. Allocating specialized human resources in critical fields, including social protection and migration, ensures effective implementation of outcomes and coherence with international standards. It helps for a better understanding of contexts in the GCC and formulating tailored solutions to fit the specific needs of each country. Similarly, effective project management, connecting research findings with policy conversations, being aware of political sensitivities and effective coordination are key aspects of the successful achievement of the project results. Having said that, it is also important to continuously invest in staff soft skills where needed with regards to effective communication, negotiation and persuasion, that are crucial in navigating resistance from stakeholders.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were developed based on triangulation of the available data collected through desk review of available project documentation and interviews conducted during the online field phase. Statements were triangulated from different sources to ensure reliability of evidence presented. Based on the triangulation and analysis the following conclusions were developed and reflect the views of the evaluation.

Relevance and Strategic Fit

- The project's three outcomes had a strategic fit within the ILO's P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, bringing together two critical trends to the GCC, namely; fair labour migration and social protection for all. The project was relevant to P&B Outcomes 1, 2, 7 and 8, as indicated in its design document, in addition to Outcome 6 on gender equality. The strategic discussions and evidence generated by the project have enriched the ILO's strategic thinking and were reflected in the P&B development.
- The project has, consequently, contributed to the acceleration of several SDGs, including SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities.
- Overall, the project was designed based on in-depth problem analysis of the migrant workers' situation in the GCC countries, including women. Existing gaps and the need for broader reforms contributed to the project design, as well as the persistent protection challenges they face. However, the inability to engage migrant workers during the design phase due to restrictions by governments caused their voices not to fully captured.
- The project design was informed by several discussion forums and external factors and events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Cup in Qatar and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue on the future of work. At the time of project design, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had drawn attention to the poor access of migrant workers' to healthcare, coupled with the inability of employers to pay their benefits due to economic downturn.
- At varying extents, the project came as a strategic fit to the countries' agendas, they were willing to engage in reform dialogue and explore new protection measures for migrant workers. For example, Oman was interested to avail funds for the end-of service benefits and extend social protection coverage to migrant workers. In Qatar, authorities were willing to drive positive change in the social protection landscape to address pressing needs of migrant workers and employers. Kuwait had been striving to adopt measures to reduce the high number of complaints and legal disputes by workers.
- The project design was anchored around the gradual progressive reform to extend social protection for migrant workers in GCC countries, based on research and analysis to support evidence-based policy dialogue and reform recommendations. The design did not aim for immediate policy reform, which garnered trust and buy-in from some GCC governments for further action.
- In its design, the project strived to devise protection solutions that can assist migrant workers, especially those in on private sector workers in the formal sector in regular conditions, who are mostly women working in the domestic sector. To achieve that, the project's scope followed a

comprehensive approach to understand the social protection landscapes in the GCC counties as an initial step to facilitate advocacy. However, limited time and absence of social protection information in the GCC countries hindered the ability to deeply articulate gender considerations in the description of activities at the outset.

Coherence

- Although the project's design placed emphasis on establishing synergies with interventions by other actors and international organizations, there were only limited endeavours by the project in this regard, such as with IOM and with UNICEF on child benefits in Oman, TCP projects in KSA, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman and market mobility and social justice in Kuwait. With the exception of the FAIRWAY programme, such complementarities and synergies came across as ad hoc and not structured.
- The synergy between the FAIRWAY programme and this project was evident through effective coordination on activities and resource utilization at the regional and country levels. Both shared the same funding source, SDC's support and had a common focus on migrant workers across Asia, Africa, and the Arab States. Both were addressing issues related to wage protection, end-of-service indemnity reforms and fair recruitment practices. Both projects could benefit more efficiently from inter-regional dialogue and sharing of best practices.

Effectiveness

- The project three outcomes were all fully- or over-achieved in terms of the knowledge products produced, engagement with stakeholders and country coverage, as well as bringing most of the GCC countries together in regional dialogue on social protection. As such, the project has effectively contributed towards the achievement of its two key milestones for 2022 and 2023.
- Under Outcome 1, the project carried-out two regional studies and two quantitative and qualitative surveys, exceeding what was originally planned. Under Outcome 2, two research and policy papers were produced and policy dialogue was bolstered through organizing or actively participating in high-level events and facilitating bilateral engagement between countries. Under Outcome 3, the project has over-achieved on the level of technical assistance it provided, with concrete advancements for some GCC countries.
- Particularly in Oman, the project provided extensive support to constituents on the reform of the entire social security and social protection system. Further, unexpected support was provided to the PAM in Kuwait on the end-of-service indemnity system. Likewise, the project has started working with the MOL in Qatar.
- On gender equality, the project contributed to the organization's gender equality mandate, trying to engage in dialogue on gender-related issues and -where possible- capitalizing on opportunities that may drive reforms within the limited degree of openness by constituents. However, there was limited targeting of gender-specific concerns within the project and it could have better explicitly prioritized gender-specific interventions.
- Social dialogue under the project appears to have been limited due to the dominance of government-led institutions in the GCC region, the weak to no existent trade unions and workers'

associations, as well as the lack of freedom of association. Genuine social dialogue was hence hindered with the absence of such prerequisites for dialogue at national and regional levels.

- The conducted research studies and policy papers, in collaboration with reliable partners like ODI, ensured credibility of findings and recommendations among stakeholders. They, therefore, served as valuable tools on the alignment of national practices with international labour standards. Top of Form
- The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the GCC's protection measures for migrant workers and flaws in current kafala model. According to ILO staff, it acted as a catalyst for discussions by the project on better protection systems within the GCC. Having an altered view, the interviewed government stakeholders find that the pandemic brought significant challenges for employers, as much as it did for workers, disrupting previously stable conditions.
- Addressing social protection for migrant workers in GCC countries is sensitive and a nascent protection area that required years for ILO's efforts to succeed in getting some governments and employers open to engaging in dialogue with ILO and the project, others still underway.
- It was established by ILO HQ and ROAS staff that the collaboration with the project was robust with technical inputs that enriched outcomes and overall effectiveness. At the same time, regional autonomy in managing administrative and financial tasks ensured timely project execution. ROAS played a crucial role in supporting project activities, including to facilitate stakeholders engagement in regional events, report revision and logistical arrangement, which contributed to project effectiveness.

Efficiency

- The total project budget was US\$ 1,297,289 with contributions of US\$ 1,291,082 including the recent co-extension (79%) by SDC and US\$ 274,064 (21%) by ILO. This total considers the cost-extension received in March 2024, increasing the budget from an original total of US\$ 1,024,364, as indicated in table 4. The highest budget portion was allocated to staffing at 44 percent, followed by Outcome 1 'Regional review and country assessments' at 18 percent, Outcome 2 'Country-based policy dialogue' at 11 percent and Outcome 3 'Country-specific support to reform' also at 11 percent.
- Two challenges were observed; the requirement by the SDC of a 50 percent co-funding for the next phase poses a challenge, particularly due to limited donor engagement in GCC labour migration, and the insufficient allocations for support staff and administration considering the wide coverage of the project across multiple countries.
- The project structure, as per the Project Document, consisted of national and regional technical teams, commissioned think tanks and NGOs, and the MAG. ILO staff at HQ and ROAS find that this decentralized structure was adequate and contributed to the project's success with sufficient in-house technical expertise.

Impact Orientation

- Overall, the project's achievements are likely to contribute on the longer-term to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of the GCC countries, albeit with the conditions of continued capacity strengthening, social dialogue and policy influence. At varying extents, the

project engaged with countries and promoted systems reform, the most recognized were in Oman³⁷ setting a precedent in improving migrant workers' access to comprehensive social protection.

- Policy dialogue on social protection has advanced considerably with GCC countries, grounded on the evidence generated from the research, policy briefs and surveys produced by the project. They informed advocacy efforts and presented compelling arguments to governments and constituents for reforms, although ultimate implementation is beyond ILO's control.
- Bahrain's initiative to extend provident for end-of-service benefits and pensions funds applicable to both Bahraini and non-Bahraini workers, although not yet implemented and not fully aligned with ILS. Progress in Kuwait and Qatar on social protection reforms was also noted, particularly in discussions on health benefits and access to public health systems.
- A shift has become visible in attitudes towards social protection in GCC countries. It has notably transformed from being a taboo topic to being openly discussed in regional and bilateral events, with the project effectively accompanying this positive momentum. There is a general interest and concrete forward-looking discussions and initiatives on reforms.
- The project has been opportunistic and flexible in seeking opportunities for entry points and engagement over and above what was originally envisaged in the design and logframe. The project was able to adapt to different country contexts, seizing space for more active engagement when there was appetite, but also ensuring more “low intensity” engagement in cases of lower buy in for ILO advice (e.g. UAE).
- Despite advancement, the introduced reforms are considered only a first step towards addressing disparities between national and non-national workers, with multiple and complex challenges remaining for the GCC countries to align to the international labour standards. Government stakeholders expressed openness to exploring further innovative approaches for social protection and stressed the need for adopting legislative frameworks and measures based on discussions and recommendations by social protection experts.
- The project has drawn the attention to domestic work and the need for reforming social security systems to acknowledge it as a legitimate employment in the GCC countries by including discussions within research and policy dialogue on domestic workers. Nevertheless, the sensitivity surrounding domestic workers still persists, representing unique challenges in promoting universal social protection reforms in the GCC countries.
- The project's careful identification of entry points has led to increased receptivity and response towards dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders. Cultural sensitivities and national experiences emerged as crucial factors that were adopted by the project in identifying entry points for social protection reform. Having said that, government stakeholders find that there is still more potential for ILO to leverage national experiences and perspectives to identify potential solutions that consider local realities and concerns.

³⁷Reform in Oman was largely supported by a separate track of direct collaboration between Oman and ILO, to which this project was only complementary.

- New entry points identified through this evaluation include the development of robust business cases and reframing social protection as an investment in economic stability of institutions, the corridor approach for a shared responsibility for the transfer of benefits between origin and destination and addressing employment injury compensation and protection. Others have been and remain crucial entry points, such as access to health care and end-of-service benefits and provident funds and the engagement with the GCC bureau as a strategic partner in the Gulf area, while exploring more potential partners in the region.
- The complex political landscape in some countries may hinder dialogue on social protection, slowing progress and changing priorities. However, some views from the government stakeholders see that political change may offer an entry point to provide technical support on developing new frameworks that consider social protection aspects.
- Entry points may vary from one country to the other, for example, in Oman, working with the government, employers and labour communities on how the policy is considered and mobilising migrants and information sharing about the new policies and their rights.

Sustainability

- While immediate impact on migrant workers may not be realized, the project has laid a solid foundation at the mid- to long-term for their access to social protection. Despite this progress, disparities persist in social protection entitlements between nationals and migrant workers across the GCC countries and the emerging solutions that the project had facilitated face administrative and cultural challenges for their application.
- The achieved project results are likely to be sustainable with further country-specific interventions that may differ in their approach, design and implementation modality from one country to the other. Prospects of sustainability by the project increased by the effective collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Primarily, the connection with the GCC bureau.
- Social dialogue in the GCC region still lags behind, which may hinder sustainability of the efforts made by the project for inclusive social protection. Attributed to contexts within the GCC, limited focus was placed by the project on reaching out, engaging and building capacities of worker unions and associations.
- Adopting a gradual progressive approach facilitates acceptance by governments and employers for social protection reform recommendations and increases likelihoods of their successful implementation, where political will is at the core. This is specifically true when evidence-based research provides a solid foundation for high-level dialogue and promotes policy influence.
- The project's ToC focusing on evidence generation, followed by dialogue and policy recommendations, as well as capitalization on international labour standards, yields concrete results in terms of government buy-in and ownership. Additionally, the high level technical expertise of the project's human resources ensured that it progressed in the right direction and gained the trust of government stakeholders and partners.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Strengthen and promote a genuine social dialogue in the GCC countries, where possible, while engaging and strengthening migrant workers' associations, unions or federations. Bring together social partners in regional workshops and consultations to discuss the implementation of new legislations and policies; dialogue could focus in its initial phases on issues that are less controversial and that may trigger less sensitivities. Exchanges with countries of good practices within or outside the region (e.g. Kuwait and Oman) could help to change perceptions and attitudes of policy-makers towards bringing them on the table, together with employers, the private sector and constituents.

Responsible unit(s)	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ROAS & COs	High	Short-term	Medium

Recommendation 2:

Continue to promote innovative evidence-based research on workers' rights and social protection, including on business models, financial sustainability and labour market competitiveness. This could include reflection on the cost disparity between hiring nationals and migrants, addressing high unemployment rates, retaining skilled migrant workers, reduced turnover and increased productivity for the private sector, employment injury compensation, a more conducive work environment, among other things. It is important to create consensus around possible context-specific reform solutions that are acceptable by and interesting for each country.

Responsible unit(s)	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
HQ, ROAS & COs	High	Medium-term	High

Recommendation 3:

Develop a clear strategy for the implementation of the corridor approach in the next phase, considering a mix of country specific, as well as regional interventions and ensure that activities would not be siloed. The corridor approach involves collaboration with Asian countries adopting a shared responsibility for the transfer of benefits between origin and destination GCC countries, thus facilitating an increased access to social protection for migrant workers on both ends. This approach can address systemic challenges and promote equitable treatment and rights for migrant workers across borders.

Responsible unit(s)	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ROAS	High	Medium-term	Low

Recommendation 4:

Design tailored interventions specifically targeting women domestic workers to address and ease both legal and practical challenges they face in accessing social protection that leads to their increased

vulnerabilities. Additionally, ensure a systematic integration of a gender-transformative perspective throughout project activities, in alignment with the ILO’s mandate on gender equality. This requires careful allocation of financial and human resources and time to examine gender-specific constraints and barriers, particularly in sectors like domestic work. Conducting comprehensive country gender analyses and engaging with women NGOs/ associations, national gender machinery, development partners and relevant stakeholders to address disparities in social protection coverage.

Responsible unit(s)	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ROAS & COs	High	Medium-term	High

Recommendation 5:

Strengthen and maximize the impact of the partnership with the GCC bureau, clearly defining its role and potential contributions at the design phase. The convening power of the bureau and its strategic position could bring more valuable support to the coordination efforts, policy dialogue, opening doors with governments, capacity strengthening and regional exchanges and knowledge sharing. Along the same lines, identify and strengthen other emerging regional partnerships that were identified in this concluding phase of the project, including with the private sector, regional workers’ associations and federations, chambers of commerce and others.

Responsible unit(s)	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ROAS	High	Medium-term	Low

7 GOOD PRACTICES

1. Adopting a gradual progressive approach by facilitates acceptance by governments and employers of the proposed social protection reform and increases likelihood of implementation of the ILO and international organizations’ interventions, where political will is at the core. This is a good practice in the GCC region where migrant workers lack access to social protection benefits, which rely heavily on employers. The weak enforcement of labour laws and absence of dispute resolution mechanisms leave migrants vulnerable. Complex political economy contexts are hindering or slowing reforms at different degrees in the GCC countries, despite recognition of the importance to include migrant workers in their social protection schemes.
2. Evidence-based research provides a solid foundation for high-level dialogue and promotes policy influence. Contextualization ensures that reform solutions are well-received and can be successfully implemented, increasing probability of ownership and acceptance by governments. This is a good practice in the GCC region as research by ILO and international development organizations is significant for an in-depth understanding of the legal frameworks, socio-economic and cultural context and identifying gaps in social protection coverage in the GCC countries. Understanding the

context and nuances of each country is crucial for evidence-based policy dialogue with government and devising effective, relevant and country-specific social protection solutions.

3. A sequential project's TOC that is anchored around evidence generation, followed by dialogue and policy recommendations has the potential to yield concrete results in terms of government ownership, consequently achieving a transformative shift in attitudes towards social protection in GCC countries. This is a good practice in the GCC region where local realities, cultural sensitivities, sense of sovereignty and interests for regional influence cause resistance to external pressure or top-down approaches for reform, especially by ILO and international organizations. Rather than being solely donor-driven, understanding synergy with SDC's global migration programme is important for a continued positive outlook. A carefully designed project that is built around a realistic TOC and respects contextual realities and political economy challenges can be successfully implemented with higher sustainability prospects.
4. The strong technical expertise of the ILO's team, coupled by effective management and coordination, ensured that the project progressed in the right direction and gained the trust of government stakeholders and partners. The dedication of specialized human resources in fields relevant to the thematic focus of the project is critical and should continue to be adopted by ILO to augment the capacities at local and regional level in the GCC countries, including in social protection, labour and employment and migration. There has been also limited body of knowledge and evidenced research on social protection in the region to inform decision making and policy formulation, as well as limited knowledge of and adherence to international labour standards. Technically competent human resources and effective project management enables the provision of necessary technical support and policy recommendations to guide social protection reform efforts, hence the achievement project outcomes.
5. Engaging with a strategic regional partner such as the GCC bureau is instrumental in fostering regional dialogue, information sharing, identifying priorities and liaising at higher levels with key government stakeholders and influential decision-makers at the country level. Despite existing disparities between benefits for national and non-nationals, there is a general interest and appetite by the GCC countries for forward-looking discussions and initiatives on social protection reforms. Government stakeholders signified the effectiveness of the reforms and further work underway. In general, widening the array of partnerships with diverse regional players is important, including the private sector, regional workers' associations and federations, chambers of commerce and others. Leveraging the convening power of a trusted regional strategic partner can act as a catalyst to facilitate closed-door discussions and tactical directions for policy recommendations and reform entry points.

8. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Effective social dialogue is challenging in the GCC region yet remains critical for inclusive social protection efforts. Genuine social dialogue was hence hindered with the absence of prerequisites for dialogue at national and regional levels. Focus on social dialogue could be strengthened by ILO teams

in future projects given the current positioning of ILO as a strategic partner to governments on social protection reform, as well as by governments, workers' unions and federations, private sector/employers.

2. Women migrant workers in GCC countries face protection challenges, including risks of abuse, adverse working conditions, lack of access to any form of social insurance schemes or labour inspection, especially domestic workers who are residing within households and their work is not recognized. Despite legal provisions, end-of-service benefits for domestic workers are often not implemented. Focus by ILO, partners and governments should place more emphasis on social protection reforms that promote rights of domestic workers in the GCC countries. This should be repeated in the future with clear focus on domestic workers.
3. Collaboration and synergies with UN agencies and international organizations on social protection is limited, with the exception of a few examples that were managed, such as with the IOM, where the project established a space of coordination, while recognizing ILO's technical leadership on the subject matter. A unified structured approach to synergies or joint programming does not currently exist, which should be considered by ILO teams in the future to avoid lost opportunities in maximizing impact, complement experiences or efficiently utilize resources.
4. The ILO's gender equality mandate focuses on the rights and experiences of female migrant workers, particularly those engaged in domestic work. The ILO's mandate on gender equality can back efforts by ILO teams and governments to promote equal opportunities for them in the GCC region. This could be based on the knowledge and understanding gained as a result of the project's reviews of legal frameworks and research that examined the unique gender challenges faced by women in the migrant workforce and the extent of entitlements available to them.
5. Despite the identification of potential complementarities and synergies in the design phase with other projects, these are not structurally integrated in the description of activities by ILO as to how specifically they would be achieved, what would be the roles, inputs, contributions and outputs towards the common expected outcomes. Future projects should make attempts to clarify the potential complementarities and synergies from the onset of the project.

ANNEXE I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Final Independent Project Evaluation: Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

ILO ROAS - January 2024

Information	Details
Project title	Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries
DC Symbol	RAB/20/01/CHE
Type of Evaluation	Independent
Timing of Evaluation	Final
Countries	Gulf Cooperation Council Countries
P&B outcomes	1, 2, 7, 8
SDG (s)	1, 3, 5, 8, 10
Duration	39 months
Start Date	January 2021
End Date	March 2024
Administrative unit	Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS)
Technical Backstopping Unit	DWT Beirut
Collaborating ILO Units	SOCPRO and MIGRANT
Donor	Swiss Development Cooperation
Evaluation Manager	Hiba Al Rifai
Budget	1,023,224 USD, (plus ILO contribution of 274,605 USD)

1. Introduction

Social protection mechanisms for migrant workers in the GCC countries are mostly defined as an employer-liability.

In general, labour regulations in some of these countries only include employers' obligation to provide certain social security benefits, in most cases coverage for medical care, insurance for employment-related injuries, paid sick leave, and end-of-service benefits. In some cases, labour legislation provides for such risks to be covered by employers through privately-purchased insurance.

- *Medical care and sickness benefits* are usually provided to migrant workers only as part of an employer-liability model in all GCC countries except for Oman. While GCC nationals benefit from free or highly subsidized medical care and health insurance, medical care for migrants is dependent on their employers' goodwill or ability to pay.³⁸
- Labour legislation in most GCC countries provides that employers must pay an '*end of service*' indemnity, which is usually calculated as equivalent to one month of salary for every year of service,³⁹ but there are common challenges faced by migrant workers in enforcing this requirement, particularly in cases where the company has become bankrupt or otherwise unable or unwilling to pay.
- Most GCC countries do not have *maternity* insurance schemes in place, even for nationals, and the responsibility to pay the salary during maternity leave rests with the employer.

Worldwide empirical evidence has shown that employer-liability based systems leave a number of important gaps.

They do not provide for any form of solidarity in financing and risk pooling (across workers/employers, across sectors of the economy), hence lacking the core attributes of a comprehensive social security system as determined by the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). Such a system leaves migrant workers exposed to the risk of an individual employer non-compliance, inability or unwillingness to pay, which is further aggravated by generally weak labour law enforcement and the absence of effective labour dispute resolution mechanisms for migrant workers. It puts workers in a weak bargaining position *vis-à-vis* the employer given the absence of avenues for collective action and workers organization. It excludes from protection workers in an irregular situation, while disregarding a comprehensive coverage for some specific types of migrant workers, including domestic workers, who are usually not covered by labour law.⁴⁰ It also has a negative impact on the extension of social protection to women and in the promotion of gender equality, in particular in relation to maternity and medical benefits.

³⁸ UN ESCWA and IOM (2020) *Situation Report on International Migration 2019. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Context of the Arab Region*. United Nations, Beirut.

<https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/situation-report-migration-2019-en.pdf?language=en>

³⁹ For example, Law 68/2015 concerning Domestic Work and Law 6 of 2010 (Labour Law in the Private Sector), both in Kuwait.

⁴⁰ Liability and coverage for worksite injuries differs between GCC countries. For a comparative assessment, see e.g. Migrant Rights Org (2020) *Comparison Of Health Care Coverage For Migrant Workers In The GCC*, available at <https://www.migrant-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Comparison-Of-Health-Care-Coverage-For-Migrant-Workers-In-The-GCC-.pdf>

The lack of a coherent social protection system with an inclusive approach for migrant workers in the GCC countries, is further exacerbating inequality between national and non-nationals, while coverage and provision of protection to migrant workers remains inadequate. It has been proven during the pandemic crisis, that a “*business-as-usual*” approach would come with a substantial risk for the countries of destination and origin – and greater socio-economic pressures could also lead to wider repercussions. For instance, remittances are vital for many low-income fragile countries, as they serve as a lifeline for these countries when they experience macroeconomic shocks. As a result of the economic downturn caused by the crisis, the remittances flows have dropped considerably, which in the countries of origin will further deepen the hardship of migrant workers’ families depending on this source of income.⁴¹

Overall, the complexity of extending social protection coverage to migrant workers is not unique to the Gulf region.

Globally, there are many underlying issues preventing migrant workers from accessing social protection:

- Migrant workers may face loss of social protection coverage or entitlements when moving to another country, or not qualify for social security benefits because of **insufficient periods of contribution, employment or residence in their host country** (principle of territoriality);
- Migrant workers may be excluded from contributory and non-contributory social protection schemes or receive **less favourable treatment based on their nationality** (principle of nationality);
- Migrant workers may be excluded from social protection because of their **status (irregular residence status, working in the informal economy, etc.)**; or certain categories of migrants may be excluded, such as migrant domestic workers;
- **Lack of social security coordination through bilateral/multilateral agreements** (no maintenance of social security rights or rights in course of acquisition and lack of payment of benefits abroad, difficult for migrant workers to qualify for benefits in any country, risk of double taxation).
- Apart from legal obstacles, migrant workers may also face **practical and administrative obstacles** including a lack of adequate information about their social protection rights, complex administrative procedures, language barriers, status in employment in countries of destination and origin,⁴² absence of dispute resolution or complaint mechanisms, etc.

Social security is a fundamental human right and an important element to ensure the well-being of workers, their families and communities as a whole. Extending social protection to migrant workers is a priority, given the benefits to individuals and their families, communities and societies, as well as to economic growth, sustainable development, and social cohesion. In light of the pandemic, there is now widespread acceptance that comprehensive social protection systems serve as social and economic stabilizers in times of economic and financial crises. Moreover, it has been recognized that the most vulnerable groups in the GCC countries, in particular migrant workers, were at high risk and were significantly affected by the COVID-19 related shocks, mainly due to limited access to social protection or total absence of any coverage.

⁴¹ Sayeh, A. and Chami, R. (2020). Lifelines in danger: The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to dry up a vital source of income for poor and fragile countries. *Finance and Development*, 57(2), 15-19.

<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/06/COVID19-pandemic-impact-on-remittance-flows-sayeh.htm>

⁴² This is particularly true for domestic workers in countries of destination who often build a small business upon their return to the country of origin, falling between the cracks of both destination and origin country’s social security systems, since on the one side domestic work is not subject to the labour law and on the other self-employed workers are excluded from social security systems.

The extension of coverage to migrant workers has, in turn, the potential of strengthening social protection systems, reducing unfair competition, promoting *formalization* of the labour market, and enhancing labour mobility. By providing proper access to a comprehensive social protection coverage, such policies will facilitate migrant workers' *mobility*, promote higher *productivity*, and the increased likelihood of (at some point in time) their return to the country of origin, while creating a *level playing field* between national and migrant workers in terms of equality of treatment, and reducing unfair competition and perverse incentives for employers to recruit migrant workers as "cheap and unprotected" labour.

2. Project background

It is against this backdrop that the ILO has launched the project 'Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries', financed by the Swiss Development Cooperation.

The overarching strategy of the project is to promote the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment between national and non-national workers, making the necessary links with the social protection systems in their country of origin (mostly in Asia and Africa). This can be achieved by ensuring proper coordination of social protection rights of migrant workers through: a) the reform of social protection systems in countries of destination, b) bilateral or multilateral social security agreements, as well as c) through unilateral social protection measures.

The project operates along three main axes or components:

- (1) **Regional and national mapping of social protection provisions** in the GCC countries, including mapping of how social protection is covered by employer liability schemes, national social security schemes, and private insurance schemes, and of any BLAs, SSAs and unilateral measures in place. The mapping includes assessment of coverage and adequacy of provision using international labour standards as a benchmark;
- (2) **Assessment of legal and implementation gaps regarding migrant workers' access to social protection in selected countries,** particularly in the aftermath of COVID-19, and identification of entry points for policy reform, from the perspective of both countries of origin and destination;
- (3) **Promotion of policy dialogue for the extension of social protection to migrant workers, identification of workable models, technical assistance and support** to the design and implementation of selected reforms in the area of extension of social protection to migrant workers.

The review and identification of entry points for reform aim at addressing the nine branches of social security included in ILO Convention No. 102 (medical care, sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, old-age benefits, employment injury benefits, family benefits, maternity benefits, invalidity benefits; and survivors' benefits) **covering primarily regular migrant workers across different sectors and employment arrangements,** with a specific focus on the barriers faced by and specific solutions for **migrant women**. Wherever possible, specific efforts will also be made at assessing the situation of **migrant workers in an irregular situation** and identifying progressive reform options for gradual extension of core social protection rights.

The project focuses on undertaking **action-oriented research,** while supporting national and bilateral policy dialogue, possibly followed by some **exploratory reform efforts** to enhance access to social protection of **migrant workers in two selected GCC countries** at the level of regulatory, design and/or operational reforms. Progress will be dependent on the level of openness and interest demonstrated by the GCC countries at the analytical and policy discussion stages. Reform entry points identified in the two "**champion**" countries should have the vision of being **scalable and**

replicable, with the necessary contextual adaptations, in other GCC countries, as a demonstration of feasibility and benefits of expanding social protection to migrant workers.

The specific choice of two countries for in-depth assessment and support to policy dialogue and reforms is based on further dialogue and exploration that would take place with potentially interested GCC countries⁴³ during the inception phase of the project.

While the project advocates for a comprehensive national Social Protection mechanism for migrant workers, support to national dialogue and progressive reforms will be focused on selected areas (e.g. health care, end of service, employment injury) and target groups (e.g. by employment arrangements, by sector) based on the **specific country context and concrete entry points as they are identified throughout the project**.

The project aims at ensuring as much as possible adequate provision and portability of social protection rights of all migrant workers, on the basis of equality of treatment with nationals, and, where feasible, providing for the particular situations of migrant women and migrants in an irregular situation.

The project ensures the proactive engagement, at all stages, of **governments of countries of origin and destination, representatives of migrant workers, and other relevant social partners such as trade unions, employers' organisations, and civil society in general**. It also works on ensuring synergies with current private sector services/insurance schemes covering migrant workers in GCC countries, in order to ensure possible complementarity while reinforcing the on-going SDC partnership with UNCDF focused on countries of origin.⁴⁴ Existing regional consultative processes on migration, such as the **Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue**, and relevant regional projects and programmes, such as the ILO **FAIRWAY programme** and the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) for Africa⁴⁵, are considered as privileged entry points and platforms for sustained engagement. Mechanisms for South-South and triangular cooperation will also be supported to foster exchange of good and bad practices on the matter.

The project directly contributes to the acceleration of the following worldwide adopted SDG targets:

- Target 1.3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
- Target 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.
- Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

⁴³ Initial discussions are planned to be held with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman.

⁴⁴ Launched in 2016, the UNCDF Last-Mile Finance Trust (<https://www.uncdf.org/article/4678/switzerland-becomes-fourth-contributor-to-uncdfs-last-mile-finance-trust-fund-lmf-tf>) is a multi-trust fund that supports the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in the world's least developed countries, some of which are countries of origin of migrant workers. The fund is a vehicle for lightly earmarked development funding or tied to thematic priorities such as the Green Economy, Food Security, Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth, Infrastructure and Services, Financial Inclusion and Innovation, and Country Expansion. Through this fund, public and private resources are mobilized in an innovative way, contributing to reduction of poverty and inequalities, and promotion of local sustainable development. In 2019, Switzerland became one of the key donors contributing to this fund, through its development agency – the SDC.

⁴⁵ Implemented by the African Union Commission (AUC), ILO, IOM and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

- Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
- Target 10.4: Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.
- Target 10.7: facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

The project contributes to the achievement of the ILO’s programme of work and results framework for 2020-21, “which is guided by the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2019” (p. xi),⁴⁶ particularly within the scope of the following outputs:

- Output 1.4. Strengthened social dialogue and labour relations laws, processes and institutions.
- Output 2.2. Increased capacity of the member States to apply international labour standards.
- Output 7.5. Increased capacity of constituents to develop fair and effective labour migration frameworks, institutions and services to protect migrant workers.
- Output 8.1. Increased capacity of member States to develop new or reformed sustainable national social protection strategies, policies or legal frameworks to extend coverage and enhance benefit adequacy.
- Output 8.3. Increased capacity of the member States to integrate social protection in comprehensive policy responses to support and protect workers and employers during their life and work transitions.

A social protection officer oversees the project under the supervision of the regional social protection specialist. The technical officer leads on the research, policy dialogue and project coordination. Technical backstopping and direct technical inputs are provided by the Regional Specialists on Social Protection and Migration Policy.

Elements of the action research activities and support to policy dialogue at country level are sub-contracted to international consultants: Overseas Development Institute and Clyde and Co.

3. Evaluation Background

ILO considers evaluation as an integral part of the implementation of development cooperation activities. Provision is made in the project in accordance with ILO evaluation policy and based on the nature of the project and the specific requirements agreed upon at the time of the project design and during the project as per established procedures. As the project is coming to an end and in line with the evaluation policy, a final independent evaluation is due. The final evaluation aims to assess the achievement of the results, identify the main difficulties/constraints, assess the impact of the programme for the targeted populations, and formulate lessons learned and practical recommendations to improve future similar programmes.

Objectives

This evaluation will examine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and potential impact of the project. It will provide recommendations for future similar projects. This evaluation will also identify strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy, and implementation as well as lessons learned and good practices.

Specifically, the evaluation will examine the following aspects:

⁴⁶ ILO. 2020. *Programme and budget for the biennium 2020-21*. Geneva: ILO, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---program/documents/genericdocument/wcms_736562.pdf

- **Changes in context and review of assumptions (relevance):** Is the project’s design adequate to address the problems at hand? Were the project objective and design relevant given the political, economic, and financial context?
- **Coherence:** Is the project compatible with other interventions in the region on migration?
- **Results in terms of outcomes and outputs achieved (effectiveness):** How has the project contributed towards project’s goals? To what extent did it contribute to the ILO’s Programme & Budget, Country Programme Outcomes, and more largely SDGs?
- **Use of resources in achievement of projected performance (efficiency):** How have the resources been used to fulfil the project performance in an efficient manner with respect to cost, time and management staff?
- **Assessment of impact (impact):** To what extent has the project contributed to long-term intended impact?
- **Sustainability:** Will the project’s effects remain over time?

The evaluation will comply with ILO evaluation policy⁴⁷, and the UNEG ethical guidelines⁴⁸ will be followed.

Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation will assess the project’s overall performance in line with its planned outcomes and outputs. It will cover all aspects of the project highlighting the main challenges and good practices. The evaluation will integrate ILO’s cross-cutting issues, including norms and social dialogue, gender equality, disability inclusion, and other non-discrimination concerns throughout its methodology and all deliverables. The geographical coverage is the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states (which currently comprise the State of Kuwait (Kuwait), Kingdom of Bahrain (Bahrain), United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), State of Qatar (Qatar) and, Sultanate of Oman (Oman)). The evaluation should cover the period of January 2021 – February 2024, while the project ends in March 2024.

Clients of the Evaluation

The primary clients of this evaluation are ILO ROAS, ILO SOCPRO and MIGRANT departments, the donor, ILO constituents in the countries of studies, and the project’s key stakeholders. Secondary users include other project stakeholders and units within the ILO that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation.

A participatory approach involving key stakeholders will be ensured to the extent possible.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation utilizes the standard ILO evaluation framework and follows the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria with emphasis on integrating gender:

Relevance and strategic fit

- How did the project contribute to the ILO’s Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, Country Programme Outcomes, and United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2020-2024, and the SDGs?
- How well was the project designed to address relevant priorities and needs of constituents and migrant workers and whether goals have been clearly specified?
- How relevant was the project to the needs of female migrant workers?

⁴⁷ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/policy/wcms_603265.pdf

⁴⁸ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

Coherence

- To what extent is the project coherent with other interventions of the ILO in the region? To what extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of the countries under study including work on gender?

Effectiveness

- To what extent did the project achieve the overall objective, outcomes, and outputs?
- How did the project's outputs and outcomes contribute to ILO's mainstreamed strategies including gender equality, social dialogue, and labour standards?
- To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the implementation of the project? Did the pandemic hinder or reverse the progresses that had been made? What were the mitigation steps taken by the project?
- How effective was communication among the project teams, the regional office and the responsible technical department at ILO headquarters? Has the project received adequate technical and administrative support/response from the ILO backstopping units?

Efficiency

- To what extent were the project activities cost-efficient? Were the resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise etc.) allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent can the project results justify the time, financial and human resources invested in the project?
- To what extent has the project been able to create synergies in cost sharing with other ILO or non-ILO initiatives either nationally or regionally?
- How did the project's governance structure facilitate good results and efficient delivery? And if not, why not?

Impact orientation

- How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment between national and non-national workers?
- What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers?
- Did the project identify and use specific reform entry point for the extension of coverage?

Sustainability

- Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?
- Can future projects be built upon the results of this current project, ensuring sustainability and optimal use of results?

4. Methodology

The evaluation will be carried out by an external consultant. The following is the proposed evaluation methodology. Any changes to the methodology should be discussed with and approved by the Evaluation Manager.

Document review and analysis

In preparation of any evaluation, an important first activity that should be carried out is the review and analysis of project-related documents. These include but not limited to project documents or concept notes with logical

framework, work plans, progress and technical reports, financial reports, any materials/ studies/ events proceedings prepared or undertaken within the framework of the project.

Briefing and inception report drafting

The evaluator will have an initial consultation with the Evaluation Manager and the relevant ILO staff managing the project in ROAS. The objective of the consultation is to reach a common understanding regarding the status of the project, the priority questions, available data sources and data collection instruments and an outline of the final evaluation report. The following topics will be covered: status of logistical arrangements, project background and materials, key evaluation questions and priorities, outline of the inception and final report.

Individual Interviews

Following the desk review conducted by the evaluator and after the initial consultation/briefing with the project manager, as well as the approval of the inception report, the evaluator will hold virtual meetings with constituents/stakeholders together with interpreters supporting the process if needed. Individual or group interviews will be conducted with the following:

- ILO staff that have been active in the project;
- ILO ROAS DWT Director, RPU, Senior Social Protection Specialist and Senior Migration Specialist at ROAS;
- Interview with the donor (SDC)
- Interviews with consultants (Overseas Development Institute and Clyde and Co).
- Interviews with research participants (state and non-state actors that participated in the research)

Presentation of preliminary findings

The evaluator will convene a workshop inviting individuals who have taken part in the interviews as a way to present preliminary findings and validate the interpretations.

Drafting the evaluation report

The evaluator will draft the evaluation report based on the outline agreed upon in the inception report. The evaluation manager will share the draft report with relevant ILO staffs, partners and stakeholders will consolidate their feedback. The evaluator will thereafter, amend the evaluation report and submit a final version to the evaluation manager.

Evaluation Timeframe

The evaluation is to commence in January and complete in March 2024. The following table describes the tentative timeframe:

Tasks	Number of Working days
Kick-off meeting	0.5
Desk review of documents related with project; drafting and submitting an inception report	6
Revise and resubmit inception report	1
Conducting interviews	7
Data analysis	5
Presentation of preliminary findings	0.5
Drafting submission of evaluation report	5

Revising draft final report	2
Integration of comments and finalization of the report	1
Total	28

Total estimated payable working days of consultant: 28 Days

Deliverables

The main outputs of the evaluation consist of the following:

- Deliverable 1: Inception Report
- Deliverable 2: Draft evaluation report
- Deliverable 3: PowerPoint Presentation on preliminary findings
- Deliverable 4: Final evaluation report with separate template for executive summary and templates for lessons learned and good practices duly filled in (as per ILO's standard procedure, the report will be considered final after EVAL's approval)

Payment Terms

- 10 per cent of the total fee against deliverable 1 above approved by the evaluation manager
- 30 per cent of the total fee against deliverable 2 above
- 60 per cent of the total fee against deliverables 3 and 4 above, approved by the ILO Regional Evaluation Officer.

Management Arrangement

The evaluator will report to the ILO's evaluation manager and should discuss any technical and methodological matters with her. The ILO ROAS will provide administrative and logistical support during the data collection. The Evaluation Office will approve and sign off the final evaluation report.

The evaluator is responsible for conducting the evaluation according to the terms of reference (ToR). He/she will:

- Review the ToR and propose any refinements to EQs and methodology during the inception phase
- Review project background materials (e.g., project document and progress reports).
- Prepare an inception report
- Develop and implement the evaluation methodology (i.e., interviews, review documents) to answer the EQs
- Conduct preparatory consultations with the evaluation manager prior to the evaluation mission
- Conduct key informant interviews and collect information
- Either conduct focus group discussions or guide and coordinate with a national consultant to do so
- Analyse findings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions
- Present preliminary findings
- Prepare an initial draft of the evaluation report with input from ILO specialists and constituents/stakeholders
- Prepare the final report based on the ILO, donor and other stakeholders' feedback on the draft report.

The ILO Evaluation Manager is responsible for:

- Drafting the ToR
- Finalizing the ToR with input from ILO colleagues and other stakeholders
- Hiring the evaluator

- Providing the evaluator with the project background materials
- Assisting the implementation of the evaluation methodology, as appropriate
- Reviewing the inception report, initial draft final report, circulating it for comments and providing consolidated feedback to the evaluator on the inception report and the final report
- Reviewing the final report
- Coordinating with the Regional Evaluation Officer for the Evaluation Office's clearance of the final report
- Disseminating the final report to stakeholders
- Coordinating follow-up as necessary.

The ILO Regional Evaluation Officer⁴⁹:

- Provides support to the planning of the evaluation;
- Approves selection of the evaluation consultant and final versions of the TOR;
- Reviews the draft and final evaluation report and submits it to the ILO Evaluation Office;
- Disseminates the report as appropriate.

The Project team is responsible for:

- Reviewing the draft TOR and providing input
- Providing project background materials, including studies, analytical papers, reports, tools, publications produced, and any relevant background notes
- Providing a proposed list of stakeholders
- Participating in the preparatory briefing prior to the assessment missions
- Support in logistical arrangements for the missions
- Reviewing and providing comments on the initial draft report
- Participating in the debriefing on the findings, conclusions and recommendations

5. Qualification

The evaluator is expected to have following qualifications,

- Master's Degree in social sciences, economics, development studies, evaluation or related fields, with demonstrated strong research experience;
- A minimum of 7 years' experience in conducting projects and programme evaluations, with demonstrated experience in development related programmes.
- Previous experience in evaluations for UN agencies is required. Evaluation experience with the ILO is an advantage.
- Relevant regional experience and familiarity with implementation of programmes and projects in the region. Experience in the gulf is an asset.
- Full proficiency in English. Command of Arabic is a strong advantage.
- Knowledge of the ILO and its normative mandate, tripartite structure and technical cooperation activities is an advantage
- Excellent communication, interview and report writing skills;
- Demonstrated ability to deliver quality results within strict deadlines.
- Facilitation skills and ability to manage diversity of views in different cultural contexts.

⁴⁹ For this evaluation, the Regional Evaluation Officer is the evaluation manager.

- The evaluator(s) must have no previous involvement in the delivery of the project under evaluation.

6. Legal and Ethical Matters

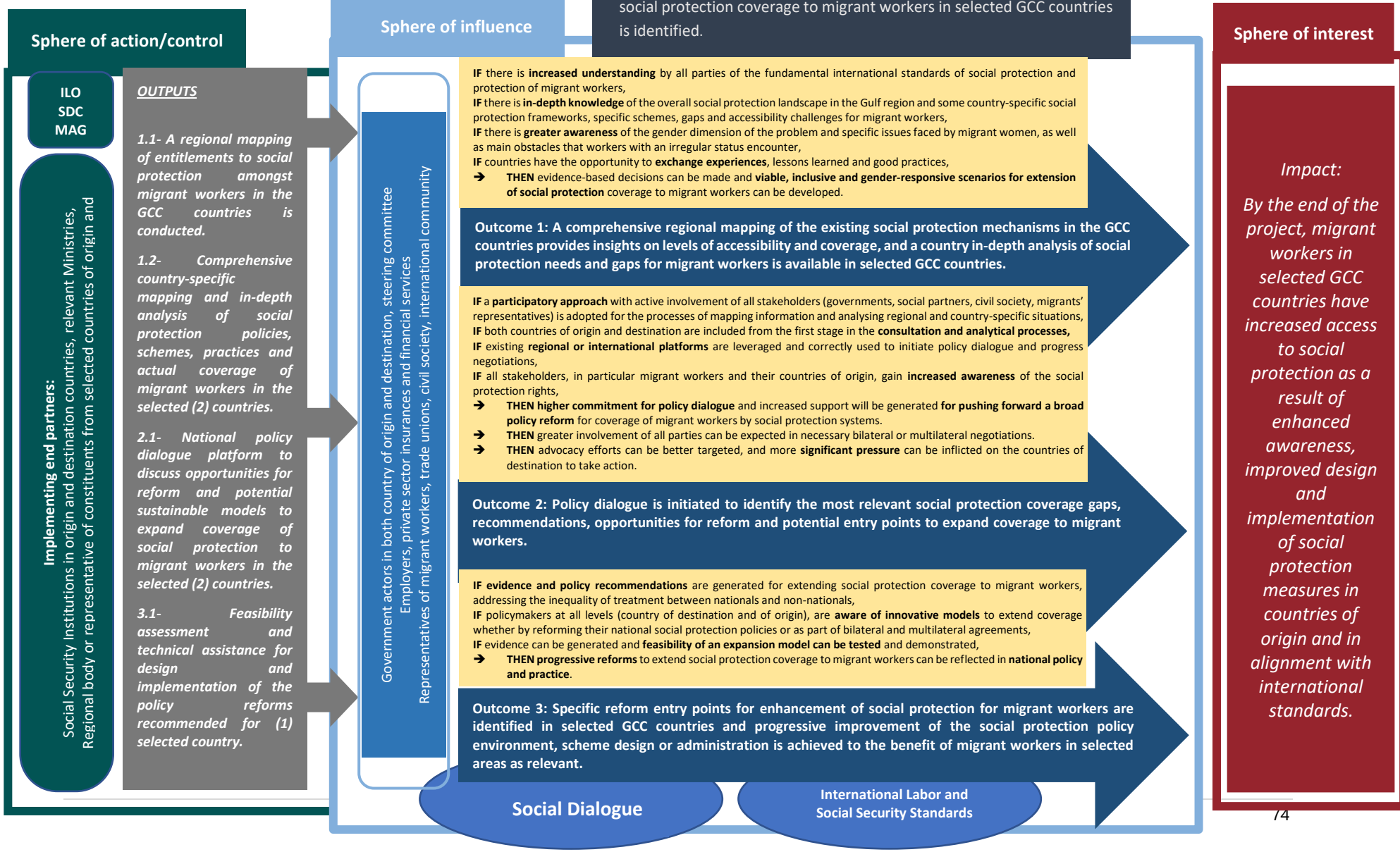
- This evaluation will comply with ILO evaluation guidelines and UN Norms and Standards.
- The ToRs is accompanied by the code of conduct for carrying out the evaluation “Code of conduct for evaluation in the ILO” . The selected consultant will sign the Code of Conduct form along with the contract.
- UNEG ethical guidelines will be followed throughout the evaluation.
- The consultant will not have any links to project management or any other conflict of interest that would interfere with the independence of the evaluation.

ANNEX 2: PROJECT'S THEORY OF CHANGE

MILESTONES

By 2022, a comprehensive mapping and analysis of the existing social protection mechanisms in the GCC countries, levels of coverage and accessibility, is developed.

By 2023, a set of inclusive and rights-based policy reforms to extend social protection coverage to migrant workers in selected GCC countries is identified.



ANNEX 3: EVALUATION MATRIX

#	Question	Measures/ Indicators	Data Sources/ Collection Methods	Stakeholders
Relevance				
1	How did the project contribute to the ILO's Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, Country Programme Outcomes, and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024 and the SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References in the project document, project outputs or monitoring reports to the ILO P&B, UNSDCF, Country Programmes and SDGs. Extent of alignment by the project to the ILO P&B, Country Programmes, UNSDCF and SDGs. Perception of ILO staff (P&B and SDGs), constituents and partners (SDGs). 	<p><u>Desk review:</u> P&B, PRODOC, progress reports, project publications.</p> <p><u>Informant Interviews</u></p>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. SDC Constituents
2	How well was the project designed to address relevant priorities and needs of constituents and migrant workers and whether goals have been clearly specified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of the conduct of a context analysis, needs assessments or risk matrix to guide/ back the project design and if continuously updated. Evidence of participation or consultation by different constituents and stakeholders in project design. Perception of all stakeholders on national ownership of project activities. 	<p><u>Desk review:</u> P&B, PRODOC, progress reports, project publications, workshop or meeting reports, surveys.</p> <p><u>Informant Interviews</u></p>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Constituents. NGOs. SDC. UN and development partners. Researchers/ research institutions.
3	How relevant was the project to the needs of female migrant workers? Or other most vulnerable groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the project has considered inclusivity (women, men and vulnerable groups of different ages and nationalities). Evidence of dialogue, participation or consultation with different constituents and stakeholders in project design. 	<p><u>Desk review:</u> P&B, PRODOC, progress reports, project publications, workshops or meeting reports, surveys.</p> <p><u>Informant Interviews</u></p>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Constituents. NGOs. UN and development partners. Researchers/ research institutions.
Coherence				
4	To what extent is the project coherent with other interventions of the ILO and UN in the region? To what extent is the project consistent with the policies and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References in the project document, project outputs or monitoring reports to the GCC regional or national strategies, constituent policies in relation to migrant 	<p><u>Desk review:</u> P&B, PRODOC, progress reports, project publications, national</p>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Constituents. SDC. UN and development partners.

	goals of the countries under study including work on gender?	<p>workers, labour and human rights, economic growth and development priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of alignment of project three outcomes with GCC regional or national strategies, government policies in relation to migrant workers, labour and human rights, economic growth and development priorities. • Evidence of linkages and working relations with other interventions by ILO and other agencies in the region. • Evidence of integration of lessons learned in design included in project design documents. 	<p>policies, strategies, research/reports. <u>Informant Interviews</u></p>	
Effectiveness				
5	To what extent did the project achieve the overall objective, outcomes and outputs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of achievement of results against plan, based on logical framework, project document and revisions. • Extent to which the project approaches have enabled the achievement of results. 	<p><u>Desk review:</u> P&B, PRODOC, progress reports, project publications. <u>Informant Interviews</u></p>	<p>ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Social Partners Government counterparts</p>
6	How did the project's outputs and outcomes contribute to ILO's Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 and its mainstreamed strategies, including gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence and availability of adoption of human rights and inclusion approach. • Evidence of consideration of PwDs, women and other vulnerable groups' priorities in implementation and outputs. • Feedback by staff and constituents on contribution to human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women. 	<p><u>Desk review:</u> Progress reports, project publications, national policies, other UN or national published research. <u>Informant Interviews</u></p>	<p>ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Social Partners.</p>
7	To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic or the other external factors affect the implementation of the project? Did these hinder or reverse the progresses that had been made? What were the mitigation steps taken by the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to and extent of enabling or hindering factors affecting implementation and achievement of results. • Degree of success in addressing challenges, adjusting modalities and extent to which implementation strategies have been flexible and resilient. • Potential lessons learned and positive/ negative change in implementation modalities. 	<p><u>Desk review:</u> progress reports, M&E, project publications, other UN or national published research, meeting notes. <u>Informant Interviews</u></p>	<p>ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Social Partners Government counterparts</p>

8	How effective was communication among the project teams, the regional office and the responsible technical department at ILO headquarters? Has the project received adequate technical and administrative support/response from ILO backstopping units?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of partnership strategy, visibility or communication approaches adopted by the project. • Level of engagement, technical support and backstopping provided by HQ to ROAS and COs. 	<u>Desk review:</u> progress reports, M&E, project publications, meeting notes <u>Informant Interviews</u>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs.
Efficiency				
9	To what extent were the project activities cost-efficient? Were the resources allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent can the project results justify the time, financial and HR invested in the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of staffing and organogram of the project • Analysis of budget expenditures against plan and evidence of timely disbursement of funds. • Timeliness of output implementation and extent to which delays have been accounted for by the project. • Feedback by staff on adequacy of human and financial resources. 	<u>Desk review:</u> PRODOC, progress reports, M&E, financial reports. <u>Informant Interviews</u>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. SDC.
10	To what extent has the project been able to create synergies in cost sharing with other ILO or non-ILO initiatives either nationally or regionally?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of steering committee, technical committees or donor thematic group meetings. • Evidence of joint activities and coordination with other ILO interventions, UN or other development partners, nationally or regionally. • Views of ILO and partners' staff on collaboration and synergies and potential improvements. 	<u>Desk review:</u> progress reports, M&E, meeting notes. <u>Informant Interviews</u>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs.
11	How did the project's governance structure and M&E systems facilitate good results and efficient delivery? And if not, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence towards efficiency of project's described governance structure, points of strengths or weaknesses. • Perception of ILO staff and partners on governance structure. • Extent to which M&E system is developed and used, indicators were adequately developed and well defined. • Examples of changes as a result of M&E data generated. 	<u>Desk review:</u> PRODOC, progress reports, M&E tools and reports, meeting notes. <u>Informant Interviews</u>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs.
Impact Orientation				

12	How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment between national and non-national workers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that the project contributed to evidence generation for long-term policy reform, consideration on workers' integration in social protection. Extent to which the project contributed to evidence generation, institutional or individual capacity strengthening and policy environment. 	<u>Desk review:</u> progress reports, M&E and reports, project publications, other UN or national published research, meeting notes, meeting notes. <u>Informant Interviews</u>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. UN Partners NGO Partners Social Partners Governments
13	What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers? What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers and other identified most vulnerable groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of constituents and stakeholders about potential impact of project outputs on female migrant workers and vulnerable groups. 		ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. UN Partners NGO Partners Social Partners Governments
14	Did the project identify and use specific reform entry point for the extension of coverage? What other entry points could be used and in which GCC countries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explanation of how the project was able to identify reform entry points. Perceptions of ILO staff, constituents and partners on used entry points and potential others. 		ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. UN Partners. NGO Partners. Social Partners. SDC. Governments.
Sustainability				
15	Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to a clear exist strategy/ plan for the project and extent of its consideration of women workers and vulnerable groups. Feedback from constituents about prospects of sustainability and potential ownership of project outputs by constituents (eg: budget allocations, procedures). 	<u>Desk review:</u> Progress reports, project publications, national policies, published research. <u>Informant Interviews</u>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Social Partners. Governments.
16	What good practices are useful for future projects to build upon from this current project to ensure sustainability and extending social protection to migrant workers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the project considered and addressed financial risks that could affect continuation. 	<u>Desk review:</u> Progress reports, project publications <u>Informant Interviews</u>	ILO staff in HQ, ROAS & COs. Social Partners. SDC. Governments.

ANNEX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDES

ILO HQ, ROAS and COs

Name of Interviewee:

Position:

Country:

Date of Interview:

Consultant:

*Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me about the ILO's project '**Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries**'. We anticipate that it will take approximately one hour to respond to these questions. If you need to break off the interview at any point, we will re-schedule and continue later. I am an independent evaluator and want to assure you that your answers are confidential and anonymous and will only be analysed by category of stakeholder. Should I need to directly quote you, this will only happen after receiving a written consent from you.*

Before we start the formal interview, we would like to know your level of involvement with HQ/ROAS/CO, specifically in this project

Relevance

1. in your view, in what way has this project contributed to the ILO's Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, Country Programme Outcomes, and United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2020-2024 and the SDGs?
2. How was this project designed? In what ways does it respond to the relevant priorities and needs of constituents and migrant workers and whether goals have been clearly specified? How were those needs identified?
3. How were the needs of female migrant workers identified during the design phase? In which ways does the project respond to those needs?

Coherence

4. what other projects is the ILO implementing in the GCC? How coherent is this project with the other projects? Are there UN projects in the region? What are they? How do they all complement each other if at all?
5. what extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of the countries where it was implemented including work on gender?

Effectiveness

6. What was achieved from the project? Which outputs and outcomes? What explains the success or the challenges?

7. In what ways have the project's outputs and outcomes contributed to ILO's strategies including gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards?

8. How did COVID-19 affect the project if at all? Were there any other external factors that have affected the project? What are they and how did the project address them?

9. How was the work modality between the project team, the RO and HQ technical departments? What type of technical and administrative support/response did the project receive from ILO backstopping units?

Efficiency

10. How were resources used? How were budgets designed? Were the resources allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent would you consider that the project has been cost efficient and why?

11. What Synergies were in place in terms of cost sharing with other ILO or non-ILO initiatives either nationally or regionally?

12. How did the project's governance structure facilitate good results and efficient delivery? And if not, why not?

Impact Orientation

13. How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination?

14. What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers and other identified most vulnerable groups?

15. which reform entry point for the extension of coverage were identified by the project? What other entry points could be used and in which GCC countries?

Sustainability

16. Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?

17. What good practices do you find useful for future projects to build upon from this current project to ensure sustainability and extending social protection to migrant workers?

Constituents/Social Partners

Name of Interviewee:

Position:

Country:

Date of Interview:

Consultant:

*Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me about the ILO's project '**Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries**'. We anticipate that it will take approximately one hour to respond to these questions. If you need to break off the interview at any point, we will re-schedule and continue later, as we know that time is limited, and lives are increasingly busy. We also want to assure you that your answers are confidential and will only be analysed by category of stakeholder. Should we need to directly quote you, this will only happen after receiving a written consent from you.*

I would also like to stress that I am an independent evaluator, and as such, I do not work with ILO so anything positive or negative would never affect your opportunity now or in the future for collaboration with ILO.

Before we start the formal interview, we would like to know your level of involvement with UNFPA especially in this project

.....

Relevance

2. How was this project designed? In what ways does it respond to the relevant priorities and needs of constituents and migrant workers and whether goals have been clearly specified? How were those needs identified?

3. How were the needs of female migrant workers identified during the design phase? In which ways does the project respond to those needs?

Coherence

4. What other projects is the ILO implementing in the GCC? How coherent is this project with the other projects? Are there UN projects in the region? What are they? How do they all complement each other if at all?

5. What extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of the countries where it was implemented including work on gender?

Effectiveness

7. In what ways have the project's outputs and outcomes contributed to ILO's strategies including gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards?

Impact

13. How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination?

14. What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers and other identified most vulnerable groups?

15. Which reform entry point for the extension of coverage were identified by the project? What other entry points could be used and in which GCC countries?

Sustainability

16. Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?

17. What good practices do you find useful for future projects to build upon from this current project to ensure sustainability and extending social protection to migrant workers?

NGOs and Research Institutions

Name of Interviewee:

Position:

Country:

Date of Interview:

Consultant:

*Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me about the ILO's project '**Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries**'. We anticipate that it will take approximately one hour to respond to these questions. If you need to break off the interview at any point, we will re-schedule and continue later, as we know that time is limited, and lives are increasingly busy. We also want to assure you that your answers are confidential and will only be analysed by category of stakeholder. Should we need to directly quote you, this will only happen after receiving a written consent from you.*

I would also like to stress that I am an independent evaluator, and as such, I do not work with ILO so anything positive or negative would never affect your opportunity now or in the future for collaboration with ILO.

Before we start the formal interview, we would like to know your level of involvement with UNFPA especially in this project

2. How was this project designed? In what ways does it respond to the relevant priorities and needs of constituents and migrant workers and whether goals have been clearly specified? How were those needs identified?

3. How were the needs of female migrant workers identified during the design phase? In which ways does the project respond to those needs?

Coherence

4. What other projects is the ILO implementing in the GCC? How coherent is this project with the other projects? Are there UN projects in the region? What are they? How do they all complement each other if at all?

5. To What extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of the countries where it was implemented including work on gender?

Effectiveness

7. In what ways have the project's outputs and outcomes contributed to ILO's strategies including gender equality, social dialogue and labour standards?

Impact Orientation

13. How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination?

14. What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers and other identified most vulnerable groups?

15. which reform entry point for the extension of coverage were identified by the project? What other entry points could be used and in which GCC countries?

Sustainability

16. Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?

17. What good practices do you find useful for future projects to build upon from this current project to ensure sustainability and extending social protection to migrant workers?

UN and Development Agencies

Name of Interviewee:

Position:

Country:

Date of Interview:

Consultant:

*Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me about the ILO's project '**Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries**'. We anticipate that it will take approximately one hour to respond to these questions. If you need to break off the interview at any point, we will re-schedule and continue later, as we know that time is limited, and lives are increasingly busy. We also want to assure you that your answers are confidential and will only be analysed by category of stakeholder. Should we need to directly quote you, this will only happen after receiving a written consent from you.*

I would also like to stress that I am an independent evaluator, and as such, I do not work with ILO so anything positive or negative would never affect your opportunity now or in the future for collaboration with ILO.

Before we start the formal interview, we would like to know your level of involvement with UNFPA especially in this project

.....

Relevance

Relevance

1. in your view, in what way has this project contributed to and United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2020-2024 and the SDGs?
2. In what ways does it respond to the relevant priorities and needs of migrant workers and
3. How were the needs of female migrant workers identified during the design phase? In which ways does the project respond to those needs?

Coherence

4. Are there UN projects in the region? What are they? How do they all complement each other if at all?
5. what extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of the countries where it was implemented including work on gender?

Efficiency

11. What Synergies were in place in terms of cost sharing with other ILO or non-ILO initiatives either nationally or regionally?

Impact Orientation

13. How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the inclusion of migrant workers in the social protection systems of GCC countries of destination?

14. What is the project's expected impact on female migrant workers and other identified most vulnerable groups?

15. Which reform entry point for the extension of coverage were identified by the project? What other entry points could be used and in which GCC countries?

Sustainability

16. Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?

17. What good practices do you find useful for future projects to build upon from this current project to ensure sustainability and extending social protection to migrant workers?

ANNEX 5: EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

Name	Surname	Title	Organization	Role	Gender
Peter	Rademaker	Deputy Regional Director	ILO		M
Lea	Bou Khater	Technical Officer, Social Protection	ILO		F
Vitalili	El Dani	Programme Officer	ILO	Programme support	M
Luca	Pellerano	Senior social protection specialist	ILO	Backstopping	M
Ryszard	Cholewinski	Senior migration specialist	ILO	Backstopping	M
Clara	Van Panhuys	Social protection specialist	ILO	Backstopping	F
Sophia	Kagan	CTA	ILO	Coordination	F
Moustapha	Said	Workers' specialist	ILO	Backstopping	M
Max	Tunon	Head of office - Doha	ILO	Coordination	M
Niyama	Rai	Technical officer - Doha	ILO	Coordination	F
Siham	Nuseibeh	Technical officer - Kuwait	ILO	Coordination	F
Jaber	Ali	Country coordinator - Kuwait	ILO	Coordination	M
John	Fahy	Head of policy liaison - Bahrain	IOM	Collaboration	M
Tanja	Dedovic	Regional Thematic specialist on labor mobility and social inclusion	IOM	Collaboration	F
Shaikha	Hachem	Researcher - Kuwait	Independent	Researcher	M
Christina	Lowe	Expert	ODI	External collaborator	F
Sara	Khoja	Lawyer	Clyde and Co	External collaborator	F

Ali	Alhossayan	Director	Kuwait Chamber for Commerce and Industry	Constituent	M
Mohamad	Al Arada	General Secretary	KTUF	Constituent	M
Ahmed	Siyabi	International relations	MOL Oman	Constituent	M
Khalil	Buhazaa	Director of labour affairs	GCC Bureau	Constituent	M
William	Gois	Regional coordinator	Migrant Forum in Asia	Participant	M

ANNEX 6: TIMELINE AND WORKPLAN

Evaluation activity	Timeline															
	February 2024				March 2024				April 2024				May 2024			
Inception	W-1	W-2	W-3	W-4	W-5	W-6	W-7	W-8	W-9	W-10	W-11	W-12	W-13	W-14		
Kick-off meetings between consultant and ROAS	■															
Desk review of documents		■	■													
Evaluation methodology, guides, matrix, participants			■													
Submission of draft Inception Report			■													
ROAS review and feedback				■												
Submission of final Inception Report				■												
Data collection & Analysis																
Field data collection and mission for KIIs							■	■	■							
Data organization and analysis								■	■							
Data triangulation & in-depth analysis										■	■					
Submission of draft evaluation report by consultant											■					
Ppt on emerging findings for ROAS											■					
Reporting																
ROAS review and feedback												■	■			
Submission of final Evaluation Report, incorporating comments														■		
Submission of executive summary, lessons learned & good practices														■		
Approval of final submissions by EVAL															■	

ANNEX 7: LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

ILO Lesson Learned Template

Project Title: Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

DC Symbol: RAB/20/01/CHE

Name of Evaluator: Nahla Hassan

Date: April 2024

The following emerging lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	Social dialogue platforms are necessary to ensure the voices of workers are heard and their needs understood, which can happen when targeted interventions are designed to support workers associations, unions or federations become more engaged and capacitated to represent workers needs and aspirations for social protection.
Context and any related preconditions	Effective social dialogue is challenging in the GCC region yet remains critical for inclusive social protection efforts. The region is characterized by a dominance of government-led institutions, weak to no existent trade unions and workers' associations, as well as the lack of freedom of association. Genuine social dialogue was hence hindered with the absence of such prerequisites for dialogue at national and regional levels.
Targeted users / Beneficiaries	ILO, governments, workers' unions and federations, private sector/ employers.
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Entrenched cultural and political sensitivities, lack of freedom of association in GCC countries, lack of ownership by employers, weak legal frameworks and policies to support social dialogue.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Focus on social dialogue could be strengthened in future projects given the current positioning of ILO as a strategic partner to governments on social protection reform. Recognizing the lack of freedom of association, dialogue efforts could bring their voices into the discussion forums. Additionally, capacitating them through training and resource sharing would enhance their ability for advocacy on social protection policies, promoting greater engagement and empowerment within migrant communities.

ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Design
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Name of Evaluator: Nahla Hassan

Date: April 2024

The following emerging lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	Social dialogue platforms are necessary to ensure the voices of workers are heard and their needs understood, which can happen when targeted interventions are designed to support workers associations, unions or federations become more engaged and capacitated to represent workers needs and aspirations for social protection.
Context and any related preconditions	Effective social dialogue is challenging in the GCC region yet remains critical for inclusive social protection efforts. The region is characterized by a dominance of government-led institutions, weak to no existent trade unions and workers' associations, as well as the lack of freedom of association. Genuine social dialogue was hence hindered with the absence of such prerequisites for dialogue at national and regional levels.
Targeted users / Beneficiaries	ILO, UN agencies and international organizations.
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Women migrant workers in GCC countries face protection challenges, including risks of abuse, adverse working conditions, lack of access to any form of social insurance schemes or labour inspection, especially domestic workers who are residing within households and their work is not recognized. Generally, migrants in irregular status lack access to consistent level of protection, including any contributory schemes, placing them in a situation of vulnerability. Despite legal provisions, end-of-service benefits for domestic workers are often not implemented.

Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	<p>The ILO's gender equality mandate focuses on the rights and experiences of female migrant workers, particularly those engaged in domestic work. The ILO's mandate on gender equality can back efforts to promote equal opportunities for them in the GCC region. This could be based on the knowledge and understanding gained as a result of the project's reviews of legal frameworks and research that examined the unique gender challenges faced by women in the migrant workforce and the extent of entitlements available to them.</p>
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	<p>Design and implementation</p>

ILO Lesson Learned Template

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Name of Evaluator: Nahla Hassan

Date: April 2024

The following emerging lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	<p>Collaboration and synergies with UN agencies and international organizations on social protection is limited, with the exception of few examples that were successfully managed. A unified structured approach to synergies or joint programming does not exist, which results in lost opportunities to maximize impact, complement experiences or efficiently utilize resources.</p>
Context and any related preconditions	<p>In the GCC countries, UN agencies work collaboratively to leverage their unique strengths and create synergies that enhance social protection and development outcomes. This coordination is facilitated through the UNDG to align their country-level activities with the broader development goals of the region and address the multifaceted challenges faced by the GCC countries. This collaborative approach is also reflected in the UNSDCF developed at country level.</p>
Targeted users / Beneficiaries	<p>ILO, SDC, UN agencies and international organizations.</p>

Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Despite the identification of potential complementarities and synergies in the design phase, these are not structurally integrated in the description of activities as to how specifically they would be achieved, what would be the roles, inputs, contributions and outputs towards the common expected outcomes.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The synergy between the FAIRWAY programme and this project was evident, as both teams maintained effective coordination on activities and resource utilization at the regional and country levels. Both shared the same funding source, SDC's support and had a common focus on migrant workers across Asia, Africa, and the Arab States. Both were addressing issues related to wage protection, end-of-service indemnity reforms and fair recruitment practices. As a result, this approach ensured that efforts complemented each other, ILO staff indicated effective coordination on activities and resource utilization at the regional and country levels.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Design

ILO Emerging Good Practice Template

Project Title: Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers: Exploratory Research and Policy Dialogue in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

DC Symbol: RAB/20/01/CHE

Name of Evaluator: Nahla Hassan

Date: April 2024

The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GP Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Adopting a gradual progressive approach facilitates acceptance by governments and employers of the proposed social protection reform and increases likelihood of implementation, where political will is at the core.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	This is a good practice in the GCC region where migrant workers lack access to social protection benefits, which rely heavily on employers. The weak enforcement of labor laws and absence of dispute resolution mechanisms leave migrants vulnerable. Complex political economy contexts are hindering or slowing reforms at different degrees in the GCC countries, despite recognition of the importance to include migrant workers in their social protection schemes.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Introducing reform solutions as intermediary steps are more likely to be adopted by GCC countries, rather than more complex universal social protection measures led by the government.

Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Political reform measures that entail the inclusion of nationals and non-national workers in the social protection systems, frameworks, legislations, funds in the GCC countries, while making the necessary links with the social protection systems in their country of origin.
Potential for replication and by whom	Medium. It can be replicated by the ILO or any other international organization in future social protection projects in other GCC countries.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. ILO B&P and Budget Policy Outcome 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue; Policy Outcome 2: International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision; Policy Outcome 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all; and Policy Outcome 8: Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all.
Other documents or relevant comments	

ILO Emerging Good Practice Template

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Name of Evaluator: Nahla Hassan

Date: April 2024

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GP Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Evidence-based research provides a solid foundation for high-level dialogue and promotes policy influence. Contextualization ensures that reform solutions are well-received and can be successfully implemented, increasing probability of ownership and acceptance by governments.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	This is a good practice in the GCC region as research is significant for an in-depth understanding of the legal frameworks, socio-economic and cultural context and identifying gaps in social protection coverage in the GCC countries.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Understanding the context and nuances of each country is crucial for evidence-based policy dialogue with government and devising effective, relevant and country-specific social protection solutions.

Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Political reform measures that entail the inclusion of nationals and non-national workers in the social protection systems, frameworks, legislations, funds in the GCC countries, while making the necessary links with the social protection systems in their country of origin.
Potential for replication and by whom	High. It can be replicated by the ILO or any other international organization in future social protection projects in other GCC countries.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. ILO B&P and Budget Policy Outcome 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue; Policy Outcome 2: International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision; Policy Outcome 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all; and Policy Outcome 8: Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all.
Other documents or relevant comments	

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GP Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	A sequential project's Theory of Change that is anchored around evidence generation, followed by dialogue and policy recommendations has the potential to yield concrete results in terms of government ownership, consequently achieving a transformative shift in attitudes towards social protection in GCC countries.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	This is a good practice in the GCC region where local realities, cultural sensitivities, sense of sovereignty and interests for regional influence cause resistance to external pressure or top-down approaches for reform, especially from international organizations. Rather than being solely donor-driven, understanding synergy with SDC's global migration programme is important for a continued positive outlook.

Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	A carefully designed project that is built around a realistic Theory of Change and respects contextual realities and political economy challenges can be successfully implemented with higher sustainability prospects.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Production of regional research, policy papers and country assessments. Effective policy dialogue, knowledge sharing platforms and exchanges, political reform for the inclusion of nationals and non-national workers in the social protection systems in GCC countries.
Potential for replication and by whom	High. It can be replicated by the ILO or any other international organization in future social protection projects in other GCC countries.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. ILO B&P and Budget Policy Outcome 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue; Policy Outcome 2: International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision; Policy Outcome 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all; and Policy Outcome 8: Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all.
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GP Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The strong technical expertise of the ILO's team, coupled by effective management and coordination, ensured that the project progressed in the right direction and gained the trust of government stakeholders and partners.

Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	This is a good practice in the GCC countries because the dedication of specialized human resources in fields relevant to the thematic focus of the project is critical to augment the capacities at local and regional level in the GCC countries, including in social protection, labour and employment and migration. There has been also limited body of knowledge and evidenced research on social protection in the region to inform decision making and policy formulation, as well as limited knowledge of and adherence to international labour standards.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Technically competent human resources and effective project management enables the provision of necessary technical support and policy recommendations to guide social protection reform efforts, hence the achievement project outcomes
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Achievement of project expected outputs and outcomes, effective partnership established, quality research and assessments conducted, country capacity strengthened in social protection as a result of the project.
Potential for replication and by whom	High. It can be replicated by the ILO by hiring project staff with the expertise that is fit for purpose.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. ILO B&P and Budget Policy Outcome 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue; Policy Outcome 2: International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision; Policy Outcome 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all; and Policy Outcome 8: Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all.
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The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GP Element	Text
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Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Engaging with a strategic regional partner such as the GCC bureau is instrumental in fostering regional dialogue, information sharing, identifying priorities and liaising at higher levels with key government stakeholders and influential decision-makers at the country level.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	This is a good practice in the GCC countries where, despite existing disparities between benefits for national and non-nationals, there is a general interest and appetite by the GCC countries for forward-looking discussions and initiatives on social protection reforms. Government stakeholders signified the effectiveness of the reforms and further work underway. In general, widening the array of partnerships with diverse regional players is important, including the private sector, regional workers' associations and federations, chambers of commerce and others.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Leveraging the convening power of a trusted regional strategic partner can act as a catalyst to facilitate closed-door discussions and tactical directions for policy recommendations and reform entry points.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Political reform measures that entail high-level dialogue to influence policy and reform for the inclusion of nationals and non-national workers in the social protection systems in the GCC countries.
Potential for replication and by whom	Medium. It can be replicated by the ILO or any other international organization, given political will and effective partnerships are established by strategic partners.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	SDG 1: End Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. ILO B&P and Budget Policy Outcome 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue; Policy Outcome 2: International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision; Policy Outcome 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all; and Policy Outcome 8: Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all.
Other documents or relevant comments	

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