



# Project Bridges Qatar

*Project Report*

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By

Migrant-rights.org  
Stichting Mideast Youth,  
Beukenlaan 5 3741 BN Baarn,  
The Netherlands

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Background

QATAR is the country of destination for over 150,000 migrant domestic workers, the vast majority of them female. If anything, the number alone is testimonial of relatively open migration policies, albeit needs-based, and the ease of obtaining a visa for a migrant in this category of work. Yet, within the walls of these relatively open migration policies are confined the socio-structural repression of the country's increasing domestic workforce.

Socially, domestic workers are overworked, denied decent working conditions and their basic right to a day off and freedom of movement. They work and live in extreme isolation; denied access to resources such as community, social welfare services, and even their own embassies.

Structurally, domestic workers are excluded from the Labour Law and their work and residence is controlled by their sponsors under the repressive Kafala law. This means that if a domestic worker is working for an abusive or exploitative employer, she will have no recourse: the worker has no opportunity to change the employer and if she leaves the employer without the latter's consent she can be legally arrested and accused of having 'absconded'. A domestic worker can also be legally arrested for not being in possession of a valid Qatari ID and liable to be fined QR10 a day for remaining in the country beyond visa validity, although the obligation of obtaining and renewing documents are that of the sponsor, and workers cannot renew their own visas without the sponsor's permission.

One may argue that the situation has changed with the promulgation of the Domestic Workers Law (Law No. 15 on Service Workers in the Home) in 2017, which provides legal safeguards for the rights of domestic workers for the first time in the history of Qatar. While the law is a step in the right direction, it is perforated with gaps, falls short of international labour standards (such as guarantee of mobility and wage protection), and makes no provision relating to enforcement. Pre-law realities remain much the same: a worker who leaves the residence of an abusive or exploitative employer stands to be criminalised legally. Furthermore, the legal exclusion of domestic workers continues in many respects, such as under Law no 13 of 2018, which removed the obligation of obtaining exit permits for migrant workers covered by the Labour Law.

THIS, in spite of migrant domestic workers performing a multitude of tasks ranging from tasks of limited complexity to high complexity tasks. A domestic worker cleans [cleaner], cooks [cook/chef], cares for children including children with special needs [nanny], cares for elderly or sick members of the family [nurse], does laundry and ironing [launderer], does gardening [gardener], guards the employer's house [security guard], drives for the family [driver], takes care of household pets [pet-minder] and as we discovered, in Qatar, MDWs also help the employer's children with homework [tutor] and even support their language skills. In general, domestic workers perform more than one of these activities in their workplace, and yet employers do not associate any personal economic gain with the tasks outsourced to the worker. Hefty recruitment fees, cultural attitudes, and nationality laws swathed in the Kafala law often plays a part in fostering a sense of ownership over domestic workers. As diverse as the tasks domestic workers are called to perform are the variety of statuses under which they live and work in Qatar: a domestic worker may live and work under the sponsorship of a single person, or may be employed one and sponsored by another, may reside in the sponsor's house (live-in) or at an accommodation paid for, by her/him (live-out), and may work full time or part-time.

EFFORTS, to extend legal and social protection to the domestic work sector, therefore, requires a combination of strategies and interventions. Developed to address the needs of a vulnerable group – homogenous in their vulnerability and heterogeneous in their exposure to those vulnerabilities – at the crossroads of two sovereign countries, both of which have a shared responsibility in developing and implementing fair and effective labour migration policies.

## 1.2 Our work

PROJECT BRIDGES (known as Shelter ME in Phase I) was designed to challenge the perception of migrant domestic workers as commodities, both in their home and host countries. From the very first consideration to go abroad, until return, we want migrant domestic work to be an experience that leaves women (and their families) stronger, respected, financially independent, and empowered – not weaker, dehumanised, impoverished, and made invisible. Female migrant domestic workers have a right to honest work in a safe environment free from isolation, to migrate under fair economic conditions, and to migrate free of gender discrimination.

The initiative was unique in that it was designed to be implemented in the country of destination, challenging the narrative surrounding domestic workers, and breaking their isolation through outreach programs targeting multiple, unconventional stakeholders, i.e employers/sponsors of domestic workers, business institutions and recruitment agents, and encouraging governments in countries of origin to act responsibly.

Employer Advocacy remained a primary component throughout the duration of the project and resulted in myriad outputs, including tools and campaigns aimed at changing employers' behaviour. Direct and non-confrontational engagement with employers created a lasting impact, often stimulating interest on the issue and prompting employers to change opinions and correct misinformation. Deliberate and consistent reference to the domestic worker as a worker instead of a servant or maid, for example, helped shift attitudes of ownership. As effective was peer education: when an employer in a group shared an effective employment practice the value of which was visible to the peer group, peers would adopt those practices in their own households. Our Recruitment Reform efforts began at the early onset of the project, although it was not envisaged in the design blueprint, the opportunity to pursue recruitment agency reform in Qatar came about unexpectedly, and we pursued the path willingly. During the project duration, we conducted 'Responsible recruitment' workshops with 89 agencies in Qatar. Our Business Outreach commenced in the last quarter of the first phase, when we began a conversation with business institutions regarding their responsibility to set proper standards and good practices as employers of a large number of expatriate executive staff who are employers of domestic workers. As the project comes to a close we have had roundtable discussions with over 30 companies and 30 entrepreneurs.

BRIDGES is implemented in an environment devoid of civic engagement, where public discourse is not amenable to 'sensitive' topics or criticism (constructive or otherwise). The extent of our work, our successes, our hits and misses, were all deeply affected by the political and legal environment around us. External influences strengthened some initiatives we undertook and complicated our advocacy efforts in others. As mentioned above, recruitment reform was not a part of the design blueprint of the project, however, the opportunity to interlace a recruitment reform component in the project arose when the Philippines

Overseas Labour Office extended an invitation to Project Bridges to orient their accredited recruitment agents. Similarly, the introduction of the Domestic Workers Law and the setting up of an ILO office in Qatar strengthened the legal framework of our advocacy and opened up space for discussion.

THE AIM of this report is to make country-specific literature available with a view to strengthening the capacity of policymakers, civil society and other stakeholders in developing fair, effective migration policies and procedures relating to women migrants in the domestic work sector. In the long term, it is hoped that the report (and the outputs of Project Bridges) will be instrumental in leveraging good working conditions for domestic workers.

Direct quotations from stakeholders and project participants are italicised and in green (unless expressly stated otherwise). Quotations are a result of recorded and transcribed reports or were received as emails or WhatsApp messages.

## Chapter 2

# Employer Advocacy

## 2.1 Introduction

Globally, domestic workers are considered a “difficult-to-cover” group by social security (ILO, 2016) due to the atypical characteristics of domestic work: work is performed in private households, wage payment is irregular, in-kind payments are frequent, and labour relations are rarely established through employment contracts. Combined, these characteristics lend themselves to the unbridled – often misused and abused – power vested in employers.

You can't buy loyalty even if you give 6,000 riyals. Maids are exploiting us. They don't have the attitude of giving their service anymore.

The sterner you are the better they work. If you let them go out, they come back with 50 phone numbers on their phone.

When we have nothing to do, they rest; when we have weddings they work 24/7 because we work 24/7.

In our house, we take the phone away when they arrive and we lock it in our safe and say you'll get it back when you leave. I let them call family once a month and if they want more than that then they pay for it. Maximum once a week.

The end goal of employer advocacy, therefore, is to inspire mutually beneficial changes in the way employers behave towards the domestic workers they employ. In practice, employer advocacy is a combination of group discussions with present and potential employers, one-to-one interviews with employers, the filling of knowledge gaps with specially designed tools, advocating ethical employment practices among businesses in Qatar, the promotion of best practices, and actively supporting employer empowerment.<sup>1</sup>

In Phase I<sup>2</sup> (Sept 2014 - Dec 2016), employer advocacy was focused on building relationships with employers, promoting best practices and monitoring behaviour change. In Phase II, the expected output of Phase I was put to the test by introducing employers to “Socialising and Skilling Workshops for Domestic Workers”<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 Overview

TOWARDS the end of Phase I, Bridges recorded over 500 interactions with employers over a 22-month period. At the time of writing this report, that number exceeded 700<sup>4</sup> interactions, in a variety of settings. The ripple effect of these interactions exceed these numbers. For example, the Employer's Guide (See Chapter 3 ) was used in a book club, distributed by the Canadian Embassy, and handed out to friends and family by employers who interacted with Bridges directly. Each one of these interactions were a part of the ripple effect and propelled the narrative forward. Of similar consequence were interactions with potential stakeholders – from those sought to push the Business Module forward to institutions reached as a part of the Ramadan campaign (Ex: Qatar Red Crescent and Embrace Doha). The online Ramadan campaign received huge traction with the output of the first year reaching over 2000 views.

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of the project, an employer is considered to be empowered when he/she demonstrates a willingness to multiply the Bridges narrative (as in, when an employer distributed Employer Guides among family members) or when an employer flags abuse and/or steps up to help such workers through formal and informal channels.

<sup>2</sup> See *Perceptions and Practices: Changing the narrative on domestic workers through employer advocacy and recruitment reform in Qatar (Migrant Rights, 2017)*

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 5

<sup>4</sup> This number does not include indirect interactions, such as was secured through recruitment agents who distributed Ramadan calendars

Direct interactions include:



Online surveys



Focus group discussions



Roundtable discussions



Market Research



Face-to-face surveys



One-to-one interviews



New and potential employer outreach: offering advice and guidance when advice/guidance was sought



Events (hosted by MR and those hosted by entities supporting the work of MR)



Community outreach when abuse of domestic workers (live-in and live-out) was reported

EMPLOYER ADVOCACY as an initiative is previously unattempted in Qatar: at its inception project interlocutors had no precedent to inform the work. Every attempt, every step then became a learning experience, informing and shaping the output planned next. The advocacy was aided by multiple tools (as evident from the list above), and in direct interactions the choice of the tool was almost always the prerogative of the employer. A focus group discussion for instance, placed the most demand on employers' time (a discussion would last up to 2 hours with a group of 6-12 participants) and employers who were unwilling to make this time commitment were reached through online or in-person surveys. Online surveys were also extended to employers who sought anonymity for often undisclosed reasons. Employers who were willing to commit their time but were unwilling to express views in a group setting were reached through one-to-one interviews. Tools, such as the Employer's Guides and the Domestic Workers Law served as entry points to start a conversation.

### 2.3 Hurdles along the way

I'm a little surprised by the topic. I will have to make a disclaimer at the beginning that (organization name) is not participating in the discussion and any thing I might say is not a reflection of the views and opinions of (organization name) or the government. We will also have to be very careful not to make any derogatory remarks about the government or the labour practices here in Qatar. Other staff may attend and will be in and out of the room and we do not have an in depth knowledge of Migrant Rights nor claim to have any information.

THE MOST pressing hurdle to our work is the disabling environment surrounding this line of work compounded by the subject matter ('decent work for domestic workers') at the heart of the project. The general absence of civic engagement, and a body of laws which stifle any meaningful critical engagement in the public sphere are elemental in creating this disabling environment. The invitation to engage in a (constructive) dialogue about one's 'experience recruiting and employing a domestic worker' was received with raised eyebrows: surprise, suspicion, open animosity, or words of caution (to be careful, for one may be deported for doing this work).

Who has hired you?

Why would recruitment agencies listen to you?

Has the Qatar government hired you to do this work?

Do you work for the embassy then?

## Box 1:

The central mechanism by which Qatar stifles oppositional civil society is through the use of its nationality laws. There is a spectrum of how this can work. Those who are non-nationals are at risk of being deported (in the case of migrant workers who go on strike for example.) Other non-nationals may moderate their oppositional activities for fear of being refused entry to Qatar after a trip abroad or for fear that such activities may affect the renewal of their visas.

Alongside this use of nationality laws there is a difficult regulatory environment for the establishment of NGOs. Not only is it expensive to form an NGO (requiring a starting capital of QAR 10 million) but certain types of activities are formally outlawed. An NGO, once it is formed, cannot engage in political activity and trade unions can only be formed in very particular circumstances.

These issues are compounded by the fact that there is very little space for free expression in Qatar, particularly of ideas that challenge government policy. There is a dangerously loosely drafted cyber-crimes law which gives state agents great power to engage in arbitrary crackdown on peaceful dissent.

There remains a need for healthy debate about government policy, among Qataris and non-nationals alike. While Qataris may be well looked after economically, and have little reason to disagree with the government, this is not the case for the many non-nationals in the country.

*Qatar, civil society and human rights: Lack of civil society space hinders work of human rights defenders, Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) Mission Report, 2016*

Securing the endorsement of employers to commit their time to an interview/discussion/survey required a variety of networking approaches. While the first round of contact relied heavily on a snowball sample, as the work expanded accidental samples emerged as a result of the business model and Ramadan campaign. Retaining the sample (participants) to track changes in behavior was then conducted by engaging with them at a personal level.

All interactions were approached with caution. An invitation to a discussion or interview always carried the assurance that it will be conducted under Chatham House rules, and permission was sought to record the discussion. Time and time again employers were reminded of the possible benefits of the discussion to themselves: their experience will inform and influence policy and lead to changes in pre-departure training programs and migration cycle in general, resulting in raising the bar of the standard of service provided by domestic workers in their homes.

## Box 2:

In Phase I the project was called 'Telephone Tree - Shelter Me' reflecting a project goal: to apply technology to break the isolation of domestic workers, thereby empowering them.

Many employers (respondents) were uncomfortable with the associations often made with the word 'shelter'. It is commonly perceived that Filipina workers are more vocal than others because they have a shelter to go to, or that Shelter Me connotes the idea that the project interlocutors were attempting to shelter domestic workers thus removing them from the homes of sponsors. The name was then changed to the more abstract and less likely to be misconstrued "Project Bridges".

## 2.4 Outcomes

I was not in favour of vaccinations after all I had read and heard. When I went to Somalia I met my Canadian friend. She said three of my kids got measles, they almost died. They were not vaccinated. I am like khalas, I am vaccinating my children. It's the same thing with natural birth. Some people are anti-intervention. And if all you keep hearing is natural, natural, natural (you will not seek intervention) If you keep on hearing information, one type of information you will never ever believe anything else. If you only hear bad things about domestic workers, you only hear the worst of them...how can you live in a house with a person like that? That's why I control my thoughts.

This (grateful submission from the worker) is a mentality I don't want to fall into...what do you mean she is not grateful? She's working, she's here to do a job, she is getting paid, what is there to be grateful for? I think it is because of the hierarchy they expect this person to be grateful.

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**Outcomes of direct engagement with employers in group and private settings, and multiple engagements with the same employer over a period of 2 to 4 years indicates the lasting impact of the project. As a result we have,**

1. An intimate overview of the nuances that make up the employment relationship. Discussions and dialogues laid bare details such as expectations of employers, techniques used to control workers, justifications for abuses such as overworking, the struggle 'to do the right thing' by employers who are conscious of best practices, and the impact of legal norms and religious obligations on behaviour.
2. Opportunities for project interlocutors to promote the use of language that promotes decent work (such as the use of the word 'worker' instead of maid or servant) and ask targeted questions, challenging stereotypes and misinformation, stimulating interest in the project and prompting respondents to conceptualise issues from a different perspective.
3. A forum for peer sharing: employers in group settings were often sharing tips and techniques that helped the employment relationship. This type of 'advice' was often well received as it came from someone 'in the same boat'.
4. The perspective emerged of the journey between the employer and worker (and at times state institutions). Multiple engagements unravel stories and offers deeper learnings.
5. A track record of attitudinal changes over a period of time, and assessing project impact becomes possible with multiple engagements with employers. See Appendix A.
6. Tools produced to fill the knowledge gap reflecting the depth of employer advocacy. Three versions of the Employer's Guide (before and after the enactment of the Domestic Workers law) produced by Project Bridges addresses various layers of the employment relationship based on the experience of employers, making it's appeal stronger.

## 2.5 Matching expectations at the ends of the corridor

The CV is pure fabrication.

Below is a comparative exploration of the expectations of employers: the output of employer advocacy, and expectations of employees: the output of MR's work with local partners in sending countries, i.e. Indonesia and Uganda and MDWs resident in Qatar.

According to our research, employers' perceptions of the value of the work MDWs perform is shaped by perceptions associated to the worker's nationality, the employer's nationality, the worker's primary tasks, and the degree to which the worker is not considered a worker, i.e. a family member or a 'servant' in the feudalistic sense. Employers behaviours are further mediated by broader social structures such as gender, race, class and caste (such as bedouine or urban Arab).

**MR: Migrant Rights    E: Employer    W: Worker**

### 1. Tasks:

**MR:** What are the tasks a domestic worker should be expected to fulfill?

**E:** I need someone to help-around the house. We have always had maids.....40 years of hiring.

**W:** Is scrubbing walls domestic work? Is washing cars considered domestic work? Will I be expected to wash the employer's underclothes?

### 2. Language:

**MR:** Should a common language be an essential prerequisite for employment?

**E:** My last maid spoke only a dialect of Bahasa Indonesia which was not even available on Google translate, I sent her back to the agency because communication was a daily struggle between us.

**W:** We learnt some Arabic words at the training center. That is of no use since my employer does not speak Arabic.

### 3. Day off

**MR:** What would the worker do on her day off?

**E:** Having her out of the house gives us privacy and the family time to de-stress.

**W:** The agent has told horrible stories of maids being kidnapped and arrested for all sorts of things, so she decided it is better not to leave the employer's house even on her day off. (Retold by employers)

**E:** Their off days are with me. Whenever I go to the restaurant I will take them with me. Don't work but you will be with me.

**W:** I came to Qatar because my mother and sister are both here.... I was not allowed to keep in touch with family. Did not have a local phone even.

### 4. Previous work experience

**MR:** Is previous experience a prerequisite for employment?

**E:** I needed someone with experience to care for my new born baby (An employer who asked the worker if she has children during the pre-placement phone call)

**W:** (When the potential sponsor asked if she has children, she said yes) Her children were always cared for by her mother, because she was away working soon after the birth of her first child.

### 5. Dress code expectations

**MR:** Is the worker expected to follow a dress code?

**E:** She will wear an abaya and scarf at all times when out of the home and will wear conservative, loose fitting clothing when in the home.

**W:** In Saudi there is no freedom and maids are locked up in the house. Qatar is more open (she can therefore choose how she dresses)

## 6. Termination of employment

**MR:** What happens if the worker wants to terminate the contract prematurely?

**E:** Prices are so expensive (worker should complete the two year contract period)

**W:** In Uganda only those with education and connections can find work (Explains reason for migration and intent to work as a domestic worker for a few months and then find a job in the hospitality sector putting her previous experience and diploma to good use)

## 7. Privacy

**MR:** How is privacy secured in the employer-worker relationship?

**E:** (Has the 'maid's quarters' ready for the worker and is glad it will help the family maintain privacy at certain times of the day). I was strict with her rest time, just to ensure that she did not come into the house (and stayed at her quarters) when we needed privacy

**W:** Does not come from a culture that values privacy and is expecting the unwallled, communal life found in her village

In our pre-decision trainings in Uganda we found ourselves unable to vernacularize 'privacy'. The word had no equivalent in the local language. Trainers had to resort to a lengthy explanation of the concept.

## 2.6 Good practices and beyond

MORE OFTEN than not, employers acclimate to the standards maintained by peer groups. An employer denies the worker mobility on her day off (*She will take her day off inside the house!*) because the worker employed by a neighbour shared ‘family secrets’ with domestic workers in the neighbourhood. Another employer denies the worker a day off because her extended family denies the same to their workers, and she (the employer) does not wish to ‘rock the boat’ and cause friction in the family, by being the only one who gives a day off.

Swimming against this current, would then mean that those who choose that path are expected to justify their (morally correct) actions to society. Yet, over the course of over 500 interactions with employers Project Bridges uncovered employers who (in the absence of an inclusive legal system and a humane social narrative) adopted good practices and minimum standards, out of a moral consciousness. These employers were also making an impact within their circles of influence.

*\*It is necessary to make a distinction between international best practices and good practices found on the ground. Simply put, good practices are a step in the right direction. However, they are not holistic and do not always offer the worker the protection offered by international standards.*

Abuse stems from people who don't see them as someone doing a job.

I try to be different than the rest of the people when it comes to the way I treat my maid. Some of them are older than me and I don't let them carry heavy stuff for example. I believe that if a woman left her country just to work for us, the least they deserve is someone to respect them. They are seen as people who don't think and feel in most families. But I consider them differently.

I word things in a way that is not confrontational. For example, my husband always has to have some kind of meat in his sandwich. She wrapped the sandwich with no meat. He messaged me saying: there's no meat in the sandwich. I didn't go to her and say 'why didn't you put meat in the sandwich?' Then she will know that my husband messaged me. So I was in the refrigerator, (looking at the meat) I said 'oh did you not put the meat in?'...things like that. Just to maintain a level of respect and for her not to feel that I am coming at her in every way.

This is what other people were complaining about. Oh we are going to spoil the maids and that's a comment I have heard for years. And they did not want me to take my maid to their homes because then she would tell them I have fridays off, I have break times, I only work certain hours a day. We are not spoiling her, we are treating her like an employee who can get a day off and get paid a decent salary...

From experience it seems to be true that when you are overly nice to people generally they don't work as you would want them to work. They don't live up to standards. My challenge is balancing that thought and being a kind employer. How do I do that? I show her that I care...eat, don't wait for me...I want her to be comfortable enough to eat but at the same time I don't want her to over do it as well. I do appreciate and expect that she has some common courtesy. Yes she's entitled to food and drink but at the same time being considerate. I hired her for a job and I expect a job to be done

The employer maintains a written agreement (since before the promulgation the DW law), signed by both parties. It specifies working hours (12 hours a day), a day off and house rules (for example, that the employee cannot entertain guests without the employer's prior consent, among others.) The contract is in English. Since the employee is not conversant in English it was explained to her in Arabic (both parties are fluent in Arabic).

The employer explained how the current and previous employee benefited from the contract and is a vocal advocate of written agreements within her circle of friends.

The employer is the owner of a local company which provides life coaching and related services. The company's CSR initiative is supporting domestic workers in Qatar who have little or no support emotionally when it comes to leaving behind their families on top of potentially being mistreated whilst working in Qatar. The employer has, in many forums expressed the need to support domestic workers with skills training such as life coaching, and told us that her current employee received life coaching from her.

*(We need) to empower workers that they are somebody. They don't feel that they are worthy. (They can be taught) to stand up for themselves (and) not be a people pleaser.*

The employer is a working mother of four. She has been employing multiple domestic workers from a number of sending countries for over a decade. She maintains a document titled "House Information, Guidelines etc" for domestic workers, both household workers and drivers. Translated into four languages, she shares the same with friends who are employers. The document does not have the effect of an employment contract. It does not have the impact of levelling the playing field for both parties. Basic rights guaranteed to a worker under international law (and now local law) are not mentioned in the agreement. Neither the worker nor the employer place their signatures on it, to even assure symbolic validity to the document.

Its effectiveness lies however, in communicating expectations and some of the employer's obligations clearly, such as providing food and clothing for the worker.

*See Appendix B for House Information, Guidelines etc and Appendix C for Guidelines for driver.*

The employer is an ardent proponent of skilling domestic workers. Her current employee is attending lessons to obtain a Certification as a secretary at the Philippines Training Centre - a course paid for by the employer.

*She is studying six Fridays in order to get her certification as a secretary. The Diploma agency is really affordable to employers to send their home staff for training. It is only 350 riyals for the entire course with the uniform. All you do as an employer is send your employee for six Fridays, after that she will be empowered and secure. For 350 riyals you can change the way your employee sees you accepts you and work even harder for your home and kids because you have helped her for her future.*

The employer maintains a rigorously planned 'Maid's schedule'. This document communicates expectations, and also has the twin advantage of being promising enough to help a worker (and employer) connect the workload to the time invested, and by extension the money earned.

It is an effective tool, in that it provides a visual of the workload and the myriad of tasks undertaken by a worker. It also track rest, and break times.

*See Appendix D for "Maid's schedule"*

The employer's husband (the worker's sponsor) is an athlete who consumes five regulated meals a day. They have tasked the domestic worker with the preparation of these special meals for an extra payment, because this task was not a part of the initial agreement and they are specialty meals.

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*The employer has a business partnership with her Filipina domestic worker. In addition to the worker's annual leave to the Philippines she also makes business trips a couple of times a year.*

It's shoes and accessories made in the Philippines. Basically the way we work is that she helps me out a lot in terms of speaking to people in the Philippines in Tagalog, pushing them to get it done. She speaks to them frequently. When she's in the Philippines a couple of times a year she collects items from the shoemaker and handbag maker. The business relationship is really good, because we understand each other and we are on the same level with a lot of thinking.

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The employer is writing a book together with the employee about their experience working together. The purpose of the book as identified in the book proposal is to improve the position and working conditions of female migrant domestic workers in the Middle East, while its focus is understanding our cultural differences.

*Giving people a good example on how we can work together even when you come from very different countries, cultures and backgrounds, that there are ways around it, to understand each other.*

## 2.7 Employer empowerment

In Qatar, migrant domestic workers exist in a vacuous legal system. While there is no precedent nor provision for the enforcement of the rights guaranteed to them in the black and white of the law, general isolation and restrictions on mobility leaves distressed workers with no recourse. In this context, the goodwill of the population, the activism of neighbors and strangers has a significant impact on the life of a worker.

Employer empowerment is visible when employers not only report abuse, but also support distressed workers by stepping in to resolve issues through various means, such as supporting them financially (to purchase repatriation tickets) or by reaching out to state institutions or Bridges. Employer empowerment is an indicator of attitudinal and behavioral change. Ultimately it also has the underlying impact of empowering workers, transforming them from adopting coping mechanisms to voicing dissatisfaction and seeking help.

I have a live-out maid and the agency is threatening to deport her, they probably already have the paperwork (done) only because she speaks up when they don't pay her over time.

We heard the story of a domestic worker who was burned and her employer gave birth so the nurses noticed the burns and she was taken to Hamad hospital. (A public servant who informed MR about the worker)

In the following pages we have documented the experiences of employers who demonstrated employer empowerment. The names of the employers and workers have been changed.

## Lina's Story

Lina has been employing workers for over five years. In the last two years she helped the mother (Mala) and sister (Nira) of the MDW she employs presently, to leave abusive situations. Both Suba's and Nira's escape from exploitative situations have been detailed below along with direct quotations from Rana.

MALA is in her 20th year of employment and has worked in five Gulf countries. Her current employer in Jordan is **not bad**. However **there was domestic violence between the couple. The woman ran away from the man** (and took Mala with her) **They were going from place to place**. Mala felt unstable and wanted to leave the employment six months after arrival. Her employer did not decline her request but said **you can go if you pay back what I gave the agency, 3,000 Jordanian dinars** (approximately 15,000 riyals).

Meanwhile Lina's neighbour was in the process of hiring a domestic worker. She suggested the possibility of recruiting Mala, by paying the amount requested by the Jordanian employer **because they would have to pay the same to the agency here anyway**. The transaction happened as planned and soon Mala was settling into life in Doha.

Mala's new employer was not treating her well. **She's mean to her. She insults her. She put away the younger child's clothes in the older boy's cupboard so she says 'Are you a monkey? Even a monkey will know where it is'**.

**She is not allowed to speak in the house. She (the employer) has this rule, when she enters a room if Mala is there, she has to leave. She doesn't want to feel as though there is a stranger in the house. So even if she is washing dishes, she has to leave it and leave the kitchen. She (the employer) makes her do things that are so hard – (like carry) huge pots of plants that need two people to carry, she hurt her back after this and she had to go to doctors, who gave her pain injections. She makes her put 10 gallon water bottles on top of the cupboard.**

**They don't see it like an employer-employee relationship, they see it as ownership. She did not give a day off, even after agreeing to give a day off before hiring. She used her new born baby as an excuse to refuse a day off. I confronted her (the employer) – I brought her (the worker) she is my responsibility – I told her "isn't it better to have a part time maid?"**

After numerous confrontations between Lina and Mala's employer, the employer decided to let Mala terminate her contract and go back.

NIRA has never left the shores of Sri Lanka. Qatar was her first experience as a domestic worker. Her employment in Qatar was facilitated by her sister's employer - Lina. She was employed by a working couple who said they wanted someone to care for their new born baby.

During the course of her employment which lasted five months Nira **was not treated like a human being**. She was not given proper food - **only stale bread**. Her room was the store room in the house. **The day she arrived there were four light bulbs in the room every time a bulb would burn in the main house they removed a bulb from Nira's 'room'. Until she was left in the dark. She worked round the clock, she was exhausted. They did not even give her clothes. She was cleaning the house in her formal clothes.**

Lina was in constant contact with the employer: **I advised her, asked her to maintain a schedule and to take time to train her she is a first time maid.**

On Nira's request, Lina intervened and asked Nira's sponsor to send her back. The employer grudgingly agreed.

## Aimee's Story

Kimberly's story begins with a message we received from Aimee. Aimee was the employer of Kimberly's friend, Hera and reached out to Bridges through a friend (also an employer who had participated in a Bridges group discussion). Kimberly and her colleagues were working for a cleaning company for almost a year with no ID and health cards. Kimberly's colleague Hera was ill and could not access the health service.

*These were Aimee's messages to Bridges:*

*Hi, Two ladies I know from the Philippines are in a terrible situation. They have been treated badly by their employer. They are working here to support their children back at home. They have 0 money, no food and in 1 month no home.*

*So their agency in the Philippines told them they have the right to resign. They wanted to but it meant the employer wouldn't pay for their flights. So he proposed they stay working until November to make it 12 months. Then he will pay for their flights home.*

*The new problem is that Hera is struggling with pain every day. She needs to have surgery to remove her gallbladder. The doctor said it's now affecting her liver. She is due for an ultrasound scan next week to confirm it. (She had this diagnosed in the Philippines before coming here) she has been asking the boss each day can she go to the hospital because of the pain but he is making her work instead!*

*He promises that she can go to the hospital tomorrow but when the day comes he sends her to work. Then says after this job you can go to the hospital. When she finishes he then sends her to another house. He's a liar and does not care.*

*The AC is broken and he is in no rush to repair it. There are 6 ladies in one room! Plus Hera is feeling very sick today*

*So yesterday was the deadline. Still no ID, VISA or passports handed back!*

*Within a month the issue was resolved with the intervention of POLO and Kimberly and her friends were ready for repatriation. At the airport they missed their flight due to immigration paperwork, and could not exit the airport once the visa was cancelled. They had to stay at the Hamad International Airport for two days, without any money. Only on the second day did they manage to get food coupons from their embassy.*

*Aimee reached out to Project Bridges again. This time we sent out a message asking for help from travellers. An employer (who did not know Aimee or the workers) who participated in our group discussions posted this message on a whatsapp group she manages, of over 200 members:*

*A friend of mine works supporting maids. She has been assisting five Cleaners from the Philippines. They have gone through an extremely difficult time here in Doha. However, with the Philippines Embassy they have secured the release of these workers. Everything was sorted and they were on their way home...their employer, who is facing deportation for what he's done to them has caused further problems. They are now stuck inside the airport. ...The Embassy are trying to sort out the paperwork so they can leave ...but this will take time. The cleaners are stuck without money to buy food. If anyone is travelling today or early tomorrow can you please contact my friend? Please pass this message on to friends who are travelling.*

*Within one hour of posting this message six travellers (four of whom employ domestic workers) reached out to Bridges. However since the first of these employers would reach the airport only after the workers had been there for several hours, another employer suggested that Kimberly and her friends have a meal at the airport lounge and the employer picked up the payment online.*

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**Their story was published on Migrant-Rights.org:**

Kimberly (26), Hera and three of their colleagues were brought to Qatar in October 2016 by Vida Services. They were promised a salary of QR1200 plus QR200 as food allowance. After enduring months of trauma, the women went back to the Philippines without their due wages in June. Kimberly, speaking to Migrant-Rights.org from the Philippines, says the very first day they arrived, they were taken to an accommodation without proper facilities. “We complained and the manager promised to improve it. Which he did to an extent. He also promised to issue our ID within a month, which he never did.”

So effectively, the five women had become undocumented when the visa they arrived on expired three months later. If caught, they were at risk of arrest and deportation. Still, they continued to work until early May of this year.

“After seven months we stopped working. It was not right. We went to the POLO office to seek help.”

Even during the months they worked, the women were not paid on time or as promised. The contract stated a salary of QR1200 plus food allowance of QR200.

“We were paid only 1200 and no food allowance. First five months there was a delay. When we complained, then he paid on time.”

Technically, the women worked only eight hours a day – two clients for four hours each. The company charged the clients QR100 for four hours of service per worker. “In one day we worked 2 clients. But our hours were much longer. We left home at 8 am and sometimes reached as late as 10 pm or 11 pm. There was just one driver to take us around. Clients houses were very far from each other, and far from our accommodation in Aziziya. But those hours were never calculated.”

According to Kimberly, the manager claimed he did not have money to pay for their work visa. For seven months, the women stood by each other and continued to work. However, Hera had fallen gravely ill, suffering excruciating pain due to a gallbladder problem.

“Even then the manager didn’t allow her to go to Hamad Hospital. He kept saying she has clients. But it was because she had no papers.”

Finally, with the intervention of the Philippines embassy the women travelled back home on June 23.

The fare for travel was paid by the agency in the Philippines.

“We paid 30000 pesos as placement fees, about 3000 riyals. Now we want to go back and work. The agency is willing to find a new job, but they want us to pay more money.”

Migrant-Rights.org spoke to the General Manager of Vida Services Ziad Kassab who said because the sponsor of the company was from Saudi he could do little to help. “I can’t pay money. I can’t transfer money. They want to now close the company. That’s all.”

<https://www.migrant-rights.org/2017/07/cleaning-services-company-unequal-playing-field-for-migrant-women/>

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**In May 2017, Norah reached out to Bridges.**

I have some girls here who you might be able to help. They've done cleaning for me. They're having issues with their employer. Can they talk to you? You can advise them better than me and maybe your organization could help them. They messed them around on their contract. Now they won't accept resignation.

They have a guy posted outside the villa and it's a girls villa and they feel uncomfortable.

He told them that he will give them an exit visa in a months time if they continue to work even though it's not according to the contract they signed. They have all collectively decided to take this option for now. I personally don't know what to advise them as I don't have any experience with these situations.

I have my doubts because he won't even let them go to another employer even though he will be able to get money from them. And the guy seems very vindictive towards them.

Abbie, Norah's cleaner came to Doha on a general cleaner's visa with a promise to work in 'establishments' – schools, hospitals, and restaurants. Instead, she and five colleagues who traveled together were deployed in houses as domestic workers. After working for three employers while they were under the sponsorship of the first employer they were transferred to their current employer.

It is like renting people, you own me, they didn't even ask us they just kept changing sponsor. – Abbie.

They work two shifts of five hours a day and leave the accommodation 2 hours before work starts. They wait long hours outside the house after the shift, waiting for transport back to the accommodation. On a regular day they leave at 6.30 am and do not return till 9 pm or later (their waiting and travel times are not considered overtime).

Not all employers are good they feel they have to make us work for every second they pay for. – Abbie.

The company employs 30 workers, five are from Nepal. The rest are from the Philippines. Six workers including Abbie were recruited together. Abbie and her friends are refusing to accept this exploitation. Abbie's employer reached out to Bridges, seeking advice and support.

In August of 2017, Abbie and her colleagues left Qatar after the MOI intervened in the matter and ordered the employer to grant them their exit permits. They went back forfeiting their end of service benefits and purchasing tickets on their own.

Before her departure, Abbie put MR in touch with her former colleague Annie from the same company. Annie left Qatar traumatised after an employer groped her breasts and she had to run out of his residence for safety.

Abbie's story was documented by MR: This happened ...to me (MEY Media) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kq\\_MS5B2JT8&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kq_MS5B2JT8&feature=youtu.be)

## Chapter 3

# The Tools

Before I hired my first maid, I spoke to people about what I should and should not do. And every time someone would say to me how they go about it (treating/managing the worker), I would say to myself...I wouldn't do that!

THE PREVALENT narrative surrounding MDWs dehumanises them, providing employers a leeway to justify the wielding of unbridled control over them. Changing this narrative then requires that the discourse is routed into one that is constructive, in that it guides employers to conceptualise issues differently, primarily identifying MDWs as workers with inalienable rights. A part of this effort is in filling the knowledge gap – the lack of reference material for employers - and educating them about minimum standards.

THE FIRST EDITION of the Employer's Guide (*Your Guide to Employing a Foreign Domestic Worker - Qatar*) was the outcome of over 100 discussions with employers, and drew from their experience recruiting and employing workers. A year later, a revised version of the Employer's Guide based on the feedback received on the first Guide was disseminated. Both Guides provided an entry point to sustain indirect advocacy and monitor changes in behaviour.

The Employer's Guides were based on international best practices and minimum standards. It approaches employment holistically, broaching on pre-decision issues (such as the cost of hiring a domestic worker), and pre-placement arrangements (such as the pre-placement phone call between the parties, making arrangements to maintain privacy in one's home after her arrival etc). In contrast to the first, the second edition was altered with more forthright rights-based language. A contract template and Task List (tracking working hours, rest periods) were also introduced<sup>5</sup> in this edition.

*Box 4 From: Your Guide to Employing a Foreign Domestic Worker - Qatar (Second edition)*

## Section 6: Your employee's rights and responsibilities

1. Your employee must be informed of the terms and conditions of employment in an easily understandable manner, preferably through a written contract prior to travelling to your country. This will help her understand the work that she is expected to do and will remove many miscommunications that may otherwise arise between you and your new employee.
2. You must respect the terms and conditions that you have agreed with her.
3. She has a right to reasonable working hours, with maximum work hours a week specified. The Qatar labour law serves as a guideline in stipulating reasonable working hours.
4. Your employee is entitled to have suitable periods of rest during the working day, which allow for meals and breaks to be taken. This too must be stated in her contract.
5. Her residence permit, passport and health card are to be kept in her possession.
6. A domestic worker is entitled to access communication and communication devices. Bear in mind that she may be homesick and longing to speak to her folks back home. Mention in the employment contract if you would be providing her with mobile reload card/s. If you are concerned that she may be on the phone during her work hours, set clear guidelines for phone use. Ensure she knows when she may and must not use the phone. Denying her access to a personal phone amounts to the violation of a basic human right: i.e. to be in communication with one's family.
7. She is obliged to perform domestic duties requested by you competently. Bear in mind that she may be in need of your supervision and management before she is able to perform some tasks as well as you expect.
8. Your employee has a right to know the conditions under which she will be prematurely repatriated should you decide to do so. Similarly you must discuss the conditions under which she may request premature repatriation should she decide to do so.
9. Your employee is entitled to a day off. Decide her day off with her input, taking into account her work exigencies and the cultural, religious and social requirements she may have.
10. Your employee has a right to the wages stipulated in the contract. Her salary must be paid in cash directly at regular intervals of no longer than one month.
11. You must ensure that your employee is not subject to neglect, exploitation, ill treatment, verbal or physical abuse by you, your family members or people she comes into regular contact with, in the course of her employment.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix E and F

WITH THE ENACTMENT of the Domestic Workers law in August 2017, a new ‘Employer’s Pocketbook’ (Your Guide to Employing a Migrant Domestic Worker) was disseminated. The Pocketbook promotes minimum standards set by the law, retains right-based language of the Guide and is designed in a question and answer format, (based on questions asked by employers) thus making the appeal stronger.

*Box 5 From: The Pocketbook - Your Guide to Employing a Migrant Domestic Worker*

### **What is a reasonable wage for a migrant domestic worker? How should I pay her salary?**

The Domestic Workers law does not specify minimum wages for domestic workers. The employer therefore, is obliged to determine her salary responsibly. Employers should be aware that some countries mandate a minimum wage through bilateral agreements with the state of Qatar. A Filipina domestic worker for example, is entitled to a minimum US\$400/QR1500 (approx.) monthly wage.

In determining wages, remember that a well-remunerated worker is likely to work more efficiently and contribute towards a harmonious home.

### **What is sufficient food for a domestic worker? Should I ask her to cook her meals separately?**

Sufficient and nutritious food is essential to maintain health and wellbeing.

Some workers may prefer to cook their food separately, especially if there are cultural and/or religious differences between the worker and employer. If this is the case, you must provide her with ingredients and condiments regularly, in addition to facilitating other requirements necessitated by this arrangement, such as time to prepare her meals. [She may also be unwilling to handle certain types of food. It is important to recognise that she has a right to refuse and the employer must be sensitive to these preferences].

Alternatively, you may give her a sufficient food allowance or ask her to join family meals.

*“For example at dinner time: you want this to be a family time but at the same time you don’t want to be rude and tell her to leave the room. You want her to be part of the family but at the same time she isn’t family”. An employer*

Tip: it is important to recognise that the worker has a right to refuse to handle certain types of food based on her cultural/religious preferences.

*“The worker complained that she was not receiving food from the employer. We called the client (employer) to inquire. During the conversation it became clear that there was a misunderstanding between the worker and employer: The employer regularly ate bread-based meals, unlike the worker who was used to a rice-based diet. This led to the miscommunication“*  
– A recruitment agent

### **What can I do to help her feel at home but also ensure that she understands that she is here to do a job?**

*In addition to the tips and guidelines above you must,*

- » Encourage communication
- » Appraise the work she does, this will help her to develop the mindset of an employee
- » Give her instructions clearly and give her time to learn
- » Educate her about the laws governing domestic workers in Qatar
- » Be informed about her culture, values and lifestyle
- » Explain the contractual terms under which she may be repatriated

### 3.1 Reception/Feedback

I had no idea about what is right and wrong in the way [a worker] should be treated. I wasn't sure if it was ok to let her live with her husband. Where do I find these things out without giving myself away and then I get into trouble?  
This (the pocket book) is the first step - to have something written down that you can actually say, ok that's allowed, and that's not allowed...and it has to be readily available. I feel in this country things are not readily available or given out.

Many problems could be avoided (with this pocketbook).

Do you give out a book on housemaids rights and tips on how to live with them? Sara (an employer) recommended a book that you distribute.

They (a majority of the employers) are so afraid of their maids knowing what their rights are. This booklet to them was ...they are scared of it. They are scared of their maids knowing they can keep their passports, that she can leave the house on her day off...to them that was terrifying... how can we control her? Specifically more so for the local population they don't know how to do the things the maid does, they never learnt ...they don't know how to do the laundry, or clean up a mess and they are scared of not having their maids there to do it for them ...and then their houses would fall apart. They don't manage the house, they manage the help a whole generation has grown up not knowing how to do the hands on work. (An employer who voluntarily distributed the Employer's Guide)

The Guide is useful to new people coming into the country who have never had a maid before.

There is a need to advertise norms of employment. It is very hard to find out what the norm is. This is useful to newbies (new employers).

It would be good to make it downloadable online. And maybe approach community groups, oil companies and relocation agents to disseminate.

Some employers extended their feedback only on the contract template and timesheet:

For someone who has been in employment for as long as five years...this timesheet is not necessary.

It may be useful for first time workers not the experienced ones. A task list or schedule with daily, weekly, monthly tasks would be better.

"Participants agreed that neither the time sheet nor the sample contract was of any value to their reality. The timesheet is unrealistic because domestic situations differ from house to house, culture to culture and therefore cannot be standardised. Contracts on the other hand, even if signed by both parties is of no relevance as it will sit in a cupboard, uneducated maids will not be affected by it and requirements like the attitude of service cannot be included in a contract."

Bridges report - Focus group discussion, November 2016

### 3.2 Outcomes

- » Georgetown University-Qatar adopted standards stipulated in the Guide in an independent document binding employees should they choose to hire a domestic worker. A part of its HR policy, the Guidelines were premised on the understanding that the mistreatment of a domestic worker by its employees presents an acute reputational risk to the organization so mitigating measures in the form of education are essential to limit any kind of negative impact that might arise and that the document be handed out to all employees who sponsor or who wish to sponsor a domestic worker in conjunction with a copy of the MR publication - 'Your Guide to Employing a Foreign Domestic Worker'.
- » The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, through the intervention of the ILO, is in the process of using the Employer's Pocketbook as a resource for employers who go to the Ministry for paperwork related to hiring.
- » Qatari Diar Vinci Company, a Qatari-French partnership has been disseminating the Guide among staff.<sup>6</sup>
- » An employer requested 10 English copies of the Employer's Guide to distribute at her book club which included a presentation and discussion based on the Guide.<sup>7</sup> We have received similar requests for multiple copies from at least two employers who participated in our discussions.
- » An expatriate employer married to a Qatari requested 10 Arabic copies to distribute among her family members.
- » Country specific versions of the tools have been produced for UAE and KSA
- » The Pocketbook is currently being distributed by two employers.

### 3.3 Supplementary Tools

1. Code of Conduct for Employing Domestic Workers.
2. See chapter 7 and Appendix K.
3. Ramadan Calendars.
4. See Chapter 4 and Appendix G.
5. Know Your Rights [KYR] leaflets.
6. KYR was developed to provide a reader friendly, easily accessible explanation of domestic workers' legal rights in Qatar. KYR is currently in use by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs. KYR leaflets are also used by the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) See Appendix M.
7. The Four Step Ethical Process, a responsible recruitment blueprint for recruitment agents.
8. See Chapter 6 and Appendix J.
9. Skilling and Specializing Workshops for domestic workers module.
10. See Chapter 5.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 7 'Business Outreach'

<sup>7</sup> On her first encounter with Bridges, this employer conceded to a group discussion only hesitantly cautioning interlocutors, "We will also have to be very careful not to any derogatory remarks about the government or the labour practices here in Qatar". The requests for the Guides were made around the employer's fourth interaction with the project.

## Chapter 4

# Ramadan Campaign

**“Ramadan is a very hard month because there is a lot of work and we sleep only for two to three hours”.**

*Latifa Mahmoud, Ethiopian domestic worker to Migrant Rights, 2017<sup>8</sup>*

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“Participants agreed that managing time and tasks in Ramadan is challenging. [A participant] explained how the employee **wakes up earlier to cook hot food for the family and [that] she stays up until the children leave for school. She added that the domestic worker catches up on sleep once the children leave for school and that Iftar, suhoor and taraweeh [night prayers specific to Ramadan] are all family events joined by the household helper.** “

*Bridges report - Focus Group Discussion, March, 2016*

## 4.1 Rationale

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Lunar calendar and the month of fasting for Muslims across the world, is the hardest time of year for domestic workers in the GCC region. One of the most trenchant signs of dehumanising domestic workers – long working hours without breaks and rest – is rampant in the month of Ramadan.

During Ramadan routines change. Observers of fasting begin their day with a pre-dawn meal (suhoor). The fast is broken with iftar – the meal at sunset. Iftar, particularly among the native population is a lavish meal often in the company of extended family and friends. Workers, then are expected to attend to preparations pre-dawn, continue with the regular workload during the day time and continue preparation for large iftar (“parties”). Such are the dictates of culture, that one often finds people awake from iftar to suhoor (i.e sunset to pre-dawn), and domestic workers are required to stay awake to attend to the needs of the household during this period and continue with regular tasks during the day, completely obliterating sleep, rest, and breaks from their schedule. In Ramadan, which is observed for a whole moon cycle of 29 or 30 days, routines are also affected by seasonal changes – in summer the hours of fasting are longer than in winter.

Ramadan is why they [employers] would have to keep their live-in maids. Someone needs to be getting up at suhoor to help you. [working hours] would depend on the household and how they are running it. We’ve got this completely messed up schedule – people are staying up till fajr [prayer before sunrise] and you have school aged children who have to get up and have breakfast and be off to school. Maids are expected to take that as an extra responsibility in Ramadan because the parents are sleeping. I do hope that as Ramadan moves out of the summer and moves in to the school year [it will become better] because people won’t have the option of staying up all night and sleeping all day which is what they have been able to do in the last 6/7 years since Ramadan moved into summer. These last few have been really hard on domestic workers. Hopefully we will see an improvement this year.

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<sup>8</sup> Saraswathi, Vani, *Stories of Origin, The invisible lives of migrants to the gulf*. 2018

Unregulated, unpaid work hours during Ramadan are documented, primarily from data collected from returning migrants. This is further corroborated by both law enforcement agencies and rights groups and at times by stakeholders.

- » A high number of absconding workers are recorded by the Search and Follow-up Department (a specialised department, operating under the General Directorate of Border Passports and Expatriates Affairs at the Ministry of Interior). The head of the department was quoted in the Qatari media: “We have found during investigations with housemaids and drivers who escaped from their sponsors, that maltreatment, domestic violence, overwork in Ramadan and no day-off in the week are some of the major woes that prompt household hands to escape”.<sup>9</sup>
- » Recruitment agents have been voicing their dismay over a growing practice among employers: workers are recruited in Ramadan and ‘returned’ to the agency soon after Ramadan. Thus availing the privilege to ‘return’ workers within the three month period and retain the right to have agency fees refunded.
- » The Philippines Embassy, the only one to operate a public and formalized shelter<sup>10</sup> for citizens in Qatar, records the highest number of workers to check-in to the shelter during or immediately after Ramadan. In August of 2018 (less than two months after Ramadan), accounts hold over 200 workers at the POLO shelter, highest numbers were also recorded in Ramadan 2017, (138).
- » Reports emerging from the region are indicative of widespread abusive practices. “With the beginning of Ramadan, the demand for domestic workers’ labour is high (in Saudi Arabia). Recruitment fees are reported to increase by 20%, especially through irregular channels. Employers look for visa-transfers to hire workers instead of following procedures and waiting for workers from abroad who will need time to adjust and learn. Ramadan is also a season for undocumented workers, or others “rented-out” by their employers, to work with an hourly rate”. And “Ramadan has doubled the cost of visa-transfer in Kuwait to as high as KD1400 (\$4,600).”<sup>11</sup>
- » The need for public awareness is greater given that the domestic workers law is silent on working hours during Ramadan, this too in the broader context of a legal system which recognises reduced working hours for subjects of the labour law, and state machinery.

## 4.2 Intervention 1

### *Ramadan Calendar.*

Ramadan calendars are a cultural fixture in the GCC region. Most homes will have this single sheet of paper – “Ramadan calendar” – pinned on a door throughout the month of Ramadan. Calendar contents are presented on a Table (usually spread across an A5 size sheet) with lunar dates, the corresponding Gregorian calendar dates and daily prayer times. Calendars are typically printed by businesses and distributed free. The Bridges’ Ramadan calendars were designed to represent GCC cultural mores (making its appeal unique) and contains messages intertwining Islamic ethics and the Bridges’ narrative.<sup>12</sup>

### *Outreach:*

- » In the 2016 - 2018 period over 2500 bi-lingual calendars were disseminated to more than 15 institutions including,
- » Women’s Islamic study centres
- » Schools
- » Universities
- » Businesses
- » Employers (who engage with Bridges directly)
- » Employers (through recruitment agencies).

Most women’s Islamic-study centers are populated by middle and upper middle class expatriates, and owned/managed by Qataris, making hired help a common phenomenon among students and staff. These centers are also places where the issue of worker maltreatment is discussed. And it is not uncommon to find teachers advising students on the do’s and don’ts of employing workers, from an Islamic ethics perspective.

Recruitment agencies were encouraged to distribute Ramadan calendars as a part of the pre-Ramadan outreach to families (clients), during the Four-Step Ethical Process Training (as a part of this outreach agencies were also encouraged to speak to clients about time management and over working).

Although the tool is non-confrontational and well within the boundaries of the law, extensive networking with supporters of the project/cause was essential in order to secure dissemination. Securing the support of institutional heads was a challenge given the depth of censorship within the country, absence of civic engagement, the general apathy related to the subject matter and

<sup>9</sup> Gulf News, 21 August 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Most embassies of sending countries operate ‘shelters’ informally.

<sup>11</sup> Migrant-Rights.org, June 16, 2016

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix G

sanctity accorded to privacy. We were more likely to secure the support of the institutions when we introduced Bridges as a ‘social justice’ project and not a ‘human rights’ project.

Schools and universities were reached with the support of teachers and/or students. In all of the cases the willfulness of the supporter was the driving factor in dissemination. Many managers of women’s Islamic-study centres requested for more calendars. In print the number of calendars has grown from 400 to 2,500: new supporters and points of distribution were secured with three years of activism. Employers (other than those who engage with Bridges) were reached with the support of recruitment agents from the Bridges RA orientation program.

#### 4.3 Reception /Feedback:

For the calendar... Very mixed feedback. Some people really liked it and some got very agitated. They didn't like being reminded that they might be doing something wrong. Some were a little aggressive.. Asking me "do you really do this?" and wanting to know why I would expect others to.  
- An employer who distributed the calendar at her workplace

An employee of a semi-government institution decided to leave a few copies on her desk ‘conspicuously’ instead of leaving a copy on each desk or handing directly to colleagues, for fear of ‘offending coworkers’.

A founder of a privately managed public interest project refused to use the premises to distribute Ramadan calendars. The venue is frequented by domestic workers who accompany children attending programs at the venue, and said she feared that contents of the calendar may ‘offend employers’ who may then isolate workers further, thereby removing the only space for socialization enjoyed by the workers.

Lot of people [at the institution] were very upset [with the calendar]...it gives the worker rights. They [management] didn't want to put it out here. They get tons of workers coming in everyday. They didn't want to be held responsible for the change [in the workers behaviour] they didn't want a backlash from the employers.....they come here for a purpose and now they want a day off? The staff took personal copies.

-The employee of a semi-government institution who voluntarily approached the management to disseminate calendars and was declined, who then decided to hand-out copies to coworkers and guests in her private capacity

#### 4.2 Intervention 2

##### *An Iftar for employers and domestic workers*

The annual Bridges Iftar is a bold idea. Banking on the transition of the meal of breaking the fast at sunset from the realm of the religious, to the cultural, the project hosted an iftar for workers and employers.

In its first year, the invitation was obliged by eight participants: four employers and four workers. The idea appealed only to those employers who identified with the Bridges narrative. In fact, the first invite was sent out to a few handpicked employers who were already on ‘friendly-terms’ with the project for fear that a widely circulated invitation may deter some employers from engaging with the project at all; adversely affecting employer advocacy.

#### IFTAR INVITATION

When you employ a domestic worker, your most private space becomes another's work space. Developing a mutually beneficial working relationship within this confined space is no easy task. An interaction between you and the domestic worker outside the confines of the home/work space helps to introduce an element of ease in to the employment relationship.

Over the last two years, the Project Bridges' Iftar has been part of our annual calendar due to positive reviews we received from employers like yourself.

When:

Where:

Who:

Rsvp:

## 4.5 Outcomes

*The Bridges iftar challenges the status quo.*

'Iftar tents' sponsored by individuals and organizations are a common sight in Ramadan. These tents are set up to provide free iftar meals to low-income male workers, promoted through various media they have a conspicuous presence in the landscape and oftentimes expatriates and citizens volunteer their time to distribute iftar packs and sit through the meal as well. Social and cultural mores however, are silent with regard to a similar outreach towards domestic workers, a sign of widespread acceptance of their restricted mobility and extreme isolation. An iftar for domestic workers and the employers challenges this status quo. Simply receiving an invitation then prompts one to question this accepted social standard, even if the recipient chooses to decline the invitation.

An employer responded to the invitation via WhatsApp: Is this for free meals for maids? Or what?

I did not know that it was important for her [worker] to be here - An employee who attended the event unaccompanied by the domestic worker.

In its third year the number of guests grew to 22, (from 8 in its first year). The idea is finding an increasing number of takers: some hope to see 'improved versions' of the iftar continuing into the future.

It was such a lovely evening. We had a wonderful time. Maybe next year make it more interactive. That we not just sit with our own nanny but mingle more. And that for example everyone introduces herself and what for example are her struggles and how we can overcome these, tips & tricks.

It's a lovely tradition

In her 20 years of working as a domestic helper she had never been anywhere as nice as this she said. So it totally blew her away

Rani had a wonderful time. She is over the moon

Thank you again for inviting us. We both had a great time. Jhonna really enjoyed and found it very special to be part of this evening's gathering.

In Ramadan 2017, we began a discussion with Embrace Doha<sup>13</sup> about a possible collaboration for a Ramadan-related event. Embrace Doha developed an event titled 'Hand in Hand' – a day-long event that aims to better the relationship between employers and their household workers (i.e. nannies, cooks, caregivers, and others). It is a series of activities that not only help appreciate the services of these workers, but also to acknowledge the skills and talents that they bring to our homes. Provide an opportunity for employers and household workers to learn new dishes, and also to get tips on time management and prepping to ensure that one is not overwhelmed with work during the Holy Month.<sup>14</sup>

The proposal however did not materialise due to funding and other related obstacles.

<sup>13</sup> Embrace Doha is a locally grown company providing a wide range of cultural services that cater to the needs of clients, both businesses and individuals in Qatar.

<sup>14</sup> From the proposal - Hand In Hand

## Chapter 5

# Skilling and Socialising Workshops for Domestic Workers

## 5.1 Introduction

The idea of being employed is not something they understand. The pre-departure training is irrelevant. A post-arrival training is a must.

She is not able to connect hours of work with earnings, she does not see the breakdown - I am doing this much work every hour.

A live-in worker just blends into the household unlike a live-out [making it all the more harder to make the wages to working hours connection]

Across cultures, economies and legal systems domestic work is undervalued. Even domestic workers have a low consciousness of the work they perform. The idea of making the connection between earnings and hours of work or simply tracking hours of work is non-existent. This despite 'domestic workers' covering a wide range of caregivers and service providers including cooks, pet-carers, child-minders, gardeners, and speciality care givers, and being expected to multi-task, juggling between tasks of limited complexity such as ironing with high complexity tasks such as caring for a person with disabilities.

Yet, domestic work is perceived as unskilled work; skill level and specialization are neither explicitly nor implicitly recognised pre-placement (by employers and recruitment agents), leading to poor skills matching between the expectations of the employer and worker. At destination migrant domestic workers acquire a range of new competencies and skills (including language skills, workplace skills and even entrepreneurial skills) yet receive no vertical recognition of these skills leading to deskilling of workers, effectively disempowering them and furthering dependency on the migration cycle.

Many employers from our focus group discussions expressed frustration over the pre-departure training offered in the country of origin. A sentiment that cannot be dismissed. Pre-departure trainings are reductionist, in that the focus is placed solely on the technical know-how related to the job such as learning how to operate household appliances, making a bed or laying a table for a meal. This approach overlooks transversal skills, such as communication, organizational and psychosocial skills demanded by employers.

They don't know how lonely it can be when they are here without family. They don't know how to cope with it.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT programmes for domestic workers play an important role in reinforcing the view that domestic work is real and professional work, among employers and domestic workers. It is also an effective tool in empowering workers both within the current workplace and upon return.

## 5.2 Intent

Skilling and Socialising Workshops for Domestic Workers was designed as a component of Phase II of Project Bridges with the intention of:

1. Empowering workers with work related competencies and life skills. The modules include financial literacy, digital literacy, first aid, health, nutrition and hygiene.
2. Provide workers with a 'safe space' to socialise, thus breaking their isolation. This safe space is known to employers, and the workers are in that space for a pre-specified period of time, a means of securing the buy-in of employers for the program
3. Embedding information and education components in the curricula supporting workers access to support services and justice when needed.

The program was designed as an extension of Bridges' Business Outreach and the concept (see concept note) was presented to businesses at "Responsible Business Roundtables" hosted by MR. Businesses were asked to,

1. Open the program to employees who employ domestic workers
2. Consider the program as a CSR<sup>15</sup> venture
3. Request employees to sign up as trainers fulfilling volunteer hours mandated by the company.

Workshop modules were chosen to strike a balance between recognising existing skills on the one hand (as a means of reinforcing recognition of the professional value of the work performed by MDWs) and skilling on the other, to empower domestic workers in the long term.

### 5.3 Concept Note

#### *Intent*

Women engaged in domestic work live and work in extreme isolation. The planned skilling and socialising sessions hope to provide a platform for them to break that isolation, while also putting their time to good use.

These sessions will be possible only with the support of individual employers, hence, the modules are tailored to appeal to them as well.

#### *What can Bridges offer?*

Skilling Modules  
Resource Persons  
Coordination of the programme

#### *What is the company offering?*

Venue and refreshments  
Commitment from employees (and students if at an university) to register their workers  
Partnering with other companies/institutions for the programme  
Resource persons if the company decides to tie in with employees' volunteer hours

#### *The Module*

The programme is structured in three 45-mt sessions with a break after each multi-language presentation, based on language requirements

#### *Topics covered:*

- » Cyber security/ digital training
- » Health and Wellbeing
- » Workout/Physical fitness
- » Life coaching/Personal Development - "How to maintain a positive mindset at work"
- » Nutrition
- » Self care (facials and nails)
- » Health and safety

### 5.4 Outreach and Outcomes

Georgetown University - School of Foreign Services Qatar (SFS-Q) supported the program since inception, offering across-the-board support, including a space to conduct workshops, nominating trainers from the University, and reaching out to their employees to enroll workers in the program.

Given that the initiative is a first of its kind, a survey<sup>16</sup> was conducted to gauge employer interest and offer in-demand modules. The survey received only one response. Later in the year, a Bridges information desk was set up at the SFSQ Community Fair, to provide information on the program. The event attracted a footfall of 200 people from the SFSQ community, however no employer signed up for the program.

We began a conversation with the Volunteering and Local Development department at Qatar Red Crescent about possible collaborations. QRC expressed their interest in supporting the program with a module on first aid, delivered by their first aid instructors. The conversations culminated in the submission of a proposal to collaborate with QRC to implement skilling and socialising workshops on a request from the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. A proposal was submitted in June 2018. At the time of writing this report, no workshop or related preparation has materialised.

#### Box 7 From- Proposal:

#### **Collaboration with QRC in the Implementation of Skilling Workshops for Migrant Domestic Workers**

In the first phase of the project our aim was to change the employer's (i.e. sponsor's) approach to managing domestic workers by informing employers to establish a healthy employer-employee relationship, and orienting employers on gaps in insights into each other's position and cultural differences between employer and employee. For this purpose, we hosted several group discussions between employers to enable the sharing of best practices and we created a booklet with tips and guidelines to help new and experienced employers. Entitled "Your Guide to Employing a Migrant Domestic Worker" the book contains rights and obligations from both sides both legally and morally.

The next necessary step to create this change is to ensure that domestic workers receive an information and education service. The system should give domestic workers the opportunity to receive job-related information (such as health, hygiene and nutrition), teach them Arabic and English as well as local customs. We envisage that this will improve the communication and relationship between employers and their domestic workers.

<sup>15</sup> Corporate Social Responsibility

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix H

In addition, it will make domestic workers feel more at home in Qatar, more knowledgeable and therewith more inclined to deliver their best.

We propose to have training/skilling workshops for domestic workers in various modules relevant to their work and life in Qatar. Certified trainers will deliver these workshops, spread over 3-4 training sessions/workshops.

A proposal was submitted to POLO to mobilise support for the program through recruitment agents accredited to the Philippines Embassy. An invitation was sent out to recruitment agents who are also a part of the Bridges recruitment reform initiative. However no expression of interest has been received to date.

Box 8 From, Letter of Invitation to POLO

#### **Securing the sponsor's support**

These sessions, however, will be possible only with the support of individual employers and therefore these sessions are tailored to appeal to them as well. Cultural awareness, health, nutrition, hygiene and English language are some of the planned modules tailored to appeal to employers and benefit workers.

#### **Our request**

In furtherance of this objective we request POLO to put this forward to the recruitment agencies accredited by you, and call on them to recommend these sessions to employers at the time of placing domestic workers and after.

At the time of writing this report, no workshop has materialised. The lack of direct access to domestic workers is the most stringent impediment to the implementation of this project. The concept note was presented to employers, who were deciding for the workers. Although every effort was made to make the modules appealing to employers (such as changing the 'life coaching' module in to a module on 'How to maintain a positive mindset at work') it was not possible to secure their buy-in. The success of the program depended mostly on the buy-in of the employers who did not have the worker's best interest at heart. As one employer mentioned the program should ideally provide skills training in subjects separately so that employers have the *option of enrolling workers in only those courses/areas which need improvement.*

## 5.5 Feedback

Up-skilling the domestic worker would mean (I) would have to pay her more money

Our worker has lived in Qatar for a very long time and she does not need this training.

She has no time for a workshop.

## Chapter 6

# Recruitment Reform

## 6.1 Introduction

RECRUITMENT AGENTS play a powerful role in the labour migration of domestic workers, connecting employers with employees across migration corridors, and navigating through a complex maze of immigration laws in multiple countries. Both employers ('client') and domestic workers ('applicant')<sup>17</sup> depend on recruitment agents. A domestic worker is likely to have a safe working environment if the employer is satisfied. The employer's satisfaction depends on having realistic expectations of the worker on the one hand and the worker's skills and ability to carry out these expectations on the other. A match therefore needs to be made between worker and employer, pre-placement. The absence of this match often results in disastrous consequences for the worker and feelings of frustration for the employer.

Recruitment agents are uniquely positioned to make this match, contributing towards satisfied employers and protected workers. In Qatar recruitment through agencies remains popular although a vast majority of the employers who engaged with Project Bridges expressed the sentiment that they are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous recruitment agents.

You know you're getting a bum deal (from the Agency) and you go with it because you are in desperate need for someone to help you.

Because going to the Indonesian embassy is not very attractive, the agency provides a short cut.

They (recruitment agents) are all human traffickers

Everyone has got a fear of agencies. If there was assurance that one can go back and follow up then people would stop faffing with paper work.

(It is hard) To trust somebody at home, someone that I don't know anything about, that I have only read through a piece of paper, which will most likely be false, but we have no options.

A growing body of employers actively hoping for the reform and regulation of recruitment agencies are visible: some employers viewed the focus group discussions as a forum to seek this redress, while another employer insisted on a one on one interview with the facilitator simply in order to suggest her own recommendations to change the current situation.<sup>18</sup>

MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS on the other hand are faced with a double edged sword: depending on RAs for employment and protection in a country of destination with neither laws nor societal standards to protect them. In our Pre-decision Training in Uganda, we found that the major obstacle to pursuing migration for most aspiring migrants seemed to be in procuring funds for the recruitment process. In our discussions with survivors of rape and sexual harassment in the workplace, for most workers the first point of contact post-experience is the recruitment agent.

RECRUITMENT AGENTS, positioned between the worker and employer, do not receive information in a constructive manner from either party. The only feedback they receive are complaints. And often they adhere to regulations out of fear of blacklist, and not with an interest to ensure a fair and ethical recruitment process. Listed below are a list of complaints RAs have voiced to Project Bridges.

The expectations of the sponsor, cultural differences, working hours, and language are a barrier to a smooth relationship between the employer and employee.

Employer's returning workers without a valid reason is a problem.

When workers are not being paid what's on contract it is a problem to us. If the sponsor has more than 1 worker, from another nationality, he will pay the lower figure. Sponsor says we have agreed with worker, why do you interfere? The worker agrees out of fear.

<sup>17</sup> Client and applicant are terms commonly used by agents.

<sup>18</sup> Perceptions and Practices, Migrant-Rights.org, 2017

Workers have no day off - 95% of sponsors will not allow housemaids to go out even if they give off day. Even if the contract says so. This is a problem because one should not give workers hope.

Workers with negative attitudes. Workers are not trying their best to please the sponsor. (This is) problem to a good work relationship.

Workers who take advantage of the agency's kindness are a challenge.

Runaway housemaids are a big problem to us.

## 6.2 The Bridges Outreach

The Bridges RA outreach consisted of four primary components:

1. “Responsible Recruitment and Placement of Migrant Workers” - a series of orientation workshops for RAs
2. “Recruitment of domestic workers through agencies - A Qatar perspective”, a quantitative research on employers’ experience of recruiting MDWs through Qatar-based agencies
3. Dissemination of animation videos for employers and employees on rights and responsibilities of employment
4. The Four-step Ethical Process - a series of workshops for RAs

IN PHASE 1 Project Bridges collaborated with the Philippines Embassy in Qatar, to organise a series of orientation programs titled *Responsible Recruitment and Placement of Migrant Workers*. The workshops were attended by representatives from 87 recruitment agencies accredited to the Philippines Embassy. Our Project module was integrated with the current Philippines embassy training module (Post Arrival Orientation Seminar/ POAS) and drew on our experience gathering information from MDWs and employers.<sup>19</sup>

The intent of the Orientation program was to feed the broken information cycle, by informing and educating recruitment agents on the gaps in expectations between employer and employee, thereby initiating change in RAs’ current practices. The orientation included discussions around key concerns of RAs, challenges faced in collaborating with counterparts in sending countries, and tools they require to work more efficiently. The orientation emphasised that these changes will benefit RAs and lead to satisfied clients, with a simple message: *the recruitment industry’s reputation desperately needs a revamping, as popular opinion in both sending and receiving countries are against them. An agency that provides good services will automatically receive more referrals.* The Orientation Program culminated in the signing of a pledge by the agencies present. (See Box 9)

The quantitative research was based on 400 face-to-face surveys with employers (in English and Arabic) on their experience recruiting MDWs through Qatar-based agencies.<sup>20</sup>

Towards the end of Phase I, we developed two animation videos<sup>21</sup> targeting employers and domestic workers. These videos were shared with RAs, who were encouraged to share these with employers and domestic workers.. The employer’s video was drawn primarily from the Employers Guide and touched on training the worker, developing task lists, maintaining a timesheet, providing decent accommodation etc. The employee’s video was based on the POAS<sup>22</sup> module with a focus on rights.

### Pledge of Responsible Recruitment and Placement of Migrant Domestic Workers

I pledge,

- To respect and protect the rights of migrant domestic workers, from abusive and fraudulent practices during the recruitment and placement process.
- To ensure that workers are not made to pay recruiting fees or other payments in the course of securing employment.
- To ensure that upon arrival, domestic workers receive comprehensive instructions on their rights in Qatar, in their native language.
- To inform domestic workers in writing, in their native languages, names, addresses and contact numbers of - the recruitment agency, any available local help centers/shelters, and embassies of the workers’ country.
- Ensure no wages are withheld in return for security.
- To cease working with recruitment agencies in sending countries that are engaged in deception regarding contracts.

I pledge to make a difference.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

<sup>19</sup> See *Perceptions and Practices: Changing the narrative on domestic workers through employer advocacy and recruitment reform in Qatar, for report.* (2017, Migrant-Rights.org)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix I

<sup>22</sup> Philippines embassy’s Post Arrival Orientation Seminar

IN PHASE II of the project we intensified the training module and provided training to a group of nine agencies nominated by the Philippines Overseas Labour Office. Agents were requested to nominate two or more senior staff in decision making roles - ideally those who interact directly with employers and household workers - for the training. Nominated agents were delivered a training on “The Four-Step Ethical Process” developed by Project Bridges and invited to work with project interlocutors over a ten week period. At the end of the period RAs were asked to check-in with interlocutors and share their experiences.

The Four-Step Ethical Process is designed to transform the way employers are matched with domestic workers and shift the way recruitment agents view domestic workers: from a commodity (housemaid/applicant/servant/drama<sup>23</sup>) to a client on par with the employer. The process begins pre-placement and continues throughout the probationary period.

*Box 10:*

**FOUR-STEP ETHICAL PROCESS**

STEP 1: The pre-placement phone call between the two parties

Step 2: The on-arrival check in and orientation between employer, worker and agency

Step 3: Nomination of a relationship manager (at the Agency)

Step 4: Check-in call with the worker and employer at 10-11 weeks of placement

**Step 1**

We ensure that the agent facilitates a phone call between the two parties, while the worker is still in the home country. We provide a questionnaire<sup>24</sup> that needs to be followed at this stage. Each step was guided by tools to be used and action steps to be taken:

**Tools**

- Only use the terms worker and employer (not housemaid, khadama, madam, sponsor)
- The questionnaire for this interview
- Task list
- Employment animation videos for worker and employer
- Record this conversation where possible.

**Action Steps**

- Discuss Employment Conditions in this step:*
- How many hours of work
  - Monthly salary. By cash or bank?
  - Food habits
  - Off day and how can she spend it
  - Can she have a personal phone? How can she communicate with her family?

**Step 2:**

The agent insists that the employer comes in person to pick up the workers from the agency and there is a reiteration of the call in step 1, at this stage. This step is guided by a questionnaire.<sup>25</sup>

**Tools**

- Only use worker and employer (not housemaid, khadama, madam, sponsor)
- Questionnaire for interview
- Task list agreed on in Step 1
- Wage Slip (for worker and employer)
- Bridges Employer’s Guide (For employers)
- Documents renewal checklist (for workers and employers)

**Action Steps**

- Request employer picks up worker not driver. (Explain this is to make sure the worker understands the job and settles in quickly for the benefit of the employer.)
- Reiterate all the decisions made in Step 1

**Step 3**

The agent nominates a point of contact or relationship manager, to whom either party can reach out to in case of problems or concerns. We emphasised communication as an important tool, and that the relationship manager’s role would be to sort out any communication gaps between employer and worker.

<sup>23</sup> Applicant/servant/drama/runaway were all terms used by RAs in the Responsible Recruitment Orientation in Phase I to refer to MDWs

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix J

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix J

**Step 4**

In this last step towards the end of the three month probation period a call is made to both (individually) to ensure terms and conditions of the employment relationship (contractual and the softer social elements) are met and are being followed. RAs were provided with a scripted questionnaire<sup>26</sup> for this step.

**Tools**

- Only use worker and employer (not housemaid, khadama, madam, sponsor)
- Document renewal checklist
- Questionnaire

**Action Steps**

- Ask if employer is satisfied, and if any help is required
- Ask about visa processing
- Remind her that the 3-month probation is coming to an end

**6.3 Feedback**

Based on our experience this week, usually we always (ask) the sponsor to call to our applicant, or I do personally talk to them over the phone discuss don'ts and do's by sponsor, but since our meeting I was suggesting to sponsor that let them (ask the worker) personally. - Recruitment Agent

We tried using video call between the sponsor and the applicant. And I can say it really works. Right away, the sponsor can discuss the rules and regulations inside his household. - Recruitment Agent

We usually do this (pre-placement phone call) to let the sponsor discuss what is their job as a worker inside the house, like if they know how to take care of kids cleaning, washing and mostly if they are willing to learn how to cook Arabic food. And we start also to tell to the sponsor that if possible before they will make iqama they need to call us to talk with the worker if they are ready to work for the sponsor for 2 years. And also to ask about the treatment of the sponsor so far some of our workers when they have a sim card they call us to inform us that they have a number. - Recruitment Agent

**6.4 Outcomes and Findings**

Nine agencies were represented at two Four-Step Ethical Process orientation programs conducted in Phase II. Eight agencies recruit only domestic workers and recruit from multiple countries. None of the agencies present were aware of the new Domestic Workers Law, they were however familiar with some of the provisions in the law in practice. They all agreed that they could not influence the overworking of DWs in any way (This is in contrast to the admission that they can influence non-payment of wages/ payment of lesser than what was promised) and that a majority of the problems are with the local population. One RA suggested the possibility of attaching the Employer's Pocketbook to the employer's copy of the contract.

To many, language is a barrier to the pre-placement call, as is the lack of network connection in remote areas. Implementing Step 2 (On-arrival check-in) was problematic when the sponsor tasked the family driver with picking up the worker. (3 out of 5 RAs in one discussion noted that the driver was picking up the worker

on arrival). Some participants noted that an open discussion on arrival is not possible because workers are not willing to openly voice their requirements/concerns etc because they are shy. Many participant RAs either have a designated relationship manager or a person who fulfills this role. Some RAs feared that a call at 10 weeks would serve as a reminder that the sponsor's guarantee period is ending (adversely affecting the intended outcome), or that the call may be met with surprise or anger. Some agencies initiate the phone call to remind the sponsor to conclude paperwork.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix J

At the end of the 12-week period we reconvened with the participating agents to collate their feedback on each step and the program as a whole.

### Step 1 - Pre-placement phone call

All the agents claimed that they implemented Step 1, except with potential employees who did not have an internet connection or the network connectivity was poor.

### Step 2 - On-arrival check-in and in person pick up

4 out of 5 agents (in one session) said that the agent initiates the initial discussion between the two parties at this point. This discussion is 'helpful' (it is not clear if this discussion is guided by the questionnaire in the Four-Step Process).

### Step 3 - Appointment of relationship manager

All of the agents claimed that they implemented Step 3, with some even saying that they have been doing this before they attended the Bridges training.

### Step 4 - Check-in call

To many this was the hardest part in the process. Some employers found the call offensive. It was possible to call the worker, as many employers were willing to allow workers to carry regular phones. (Which also opened opportunities to agents advise/intervene when necessary. Such as advising employers about food preferences or advising workers about maintaining a good work attitude.)

The Four-step process is helpful.

The Four Step process is helpful, does not need any changes and should be continued.

(The agency) is engaging in the Four-Step Process and requests a simplified version of the document for record keeping.

(Agency finds) the Four-Step Process helpful and finds that the receipt of wages has improved.

The agency finds the Four-Step Process questionnaire useful.

(The agency maintains) a written record of the Ethical Process and will continue the program. 'There are less complaints now (i.e after implementing program)'

The number of returned workers has remained the same as before and after (implementing) the Process.

## 6.5 Challenges

One of the main challenges to the program was our inability to monitor implementation of the four-step process or verify the feedback we received from participating RAs. Securing attendance and retaining attendees to succeeding phases proved to be difficult. This was anticipated and therefore the invitation was sent out by POLO and yet not all the invitees demonstrated commitment to attend. Furthermore at every phase communication were primarily from POLO and Bridges. Although lines of communications were kept open (through a WhatsApp group that was created by Bridges and a representative from POLO) and contact details were shared, RAs did not reach out. RAs were also asked to submit a monthly progress report, none were received. Incentivising RAs was difficult. This is probably attributable to the fact that none of them received a certification or formal training relating to this field. In our first training of 87 agents only one agent had received a certification, and most of the agents did not choose recruitment as a career path.

## Chapter 7

# Business Outreach

## 7.1 Introduction

PRINCIPLED business leadership and responsible corporate behaviour actively contribute to good public policy and to the protection of human rights in the communities in which they operate. Such businesses then, respect human rights and democratic institutions, promoting them wherever practicable.

In Qatar, businesses and business leaders have significant room to exercise leadership and leverage to influence their workforce, bring about change in the larger community and have invaluable effect on the lives of vulnerable migrant domestic workers, particularly those employed by their employees. This scope presents it self:

1. *When an employer (the business) presents an employee with the mandatory No Objection Certificate (NOC) to employ a domestic worker.* At this juncture businesses have the opportunity to set standards and the responsibility to guide their staff to best practices relating to the employment of domestic worker.
2. *When a business institution provides housing facilities to their employees complete with a 'Maid's room' / 'Maid's quarters' (as is likely with most transnational corporations, whose senior staff are likely to be employing domestic workers).* The accommodation space allocated for a domestic worker sends out a message: a squalid accomodation facility will have the effect of justifying dehumanization.

**I would not give the maid's room to my pet. - An employer on the worker's room in the company accomodation.**

Another employer mentioned that they were forced to custom-make a bed because the worker's room was not wide enough to fit a regular sized single bed.

Regardless of the self-presenting scope mentioned above, the way executives and staff treat personnel within and outside the organisation reflect on the core values of the company. Furthermore, the cascading responsibility of businesses comes into play in emergency situations, for example if the employee leaves employment and the country as a result, or is forced to evacuate the country due to political instability within, then the business has a responsibility to ensure that the employee does so only after providing for the welfare of the worker he/she employs.

## 7.2 Bridges' Outreach

TOWARDS the end of Phase I we were able to start a conversation with business institutions, with a simple message: while most institutions will have high recruitment and employment standards for those directly in their employ, the same may not be true for those indirectly associated with the organization.

Bridges together with our sister project Ensaniyat hosted a series of interactive roundtable discussion sessions with diverse business entities. These interactive sessions were developed to help institutions educate their staff and implement best practices. Participants were also introduced to customizable tools which will allow institutions to implement and customize the materials to fit the organization's needs.

Our asks;

1. To implement the Code of Conduct<sup>27</sup>
2. To distribute the Employer's Guide to staff who hire domestic workers
3. To distribute Know Your Rights leaflets to domestic workers
  1. *Employee Code of Conduct for Employing Domestic Workers*  
The Code of Conduct is a company policy template that is designed to be tailored to a company's needs and should be considered as a starting point for setting up human resource policies pertaining to employees employing domestic workers. The Code of Conduct was developed with the guidance and due diligence of our local legal advisor Clyde & Co. and takes into account rights, responsibilities and softer elements of employment.
  2. *The Employer's Guide*  
The Guide was developed to educate direct employers of domestic workers about the minimum legal requirements of recruitment, in addition to tips and advice on building a mutually beneficial relationship with the DW they employ.
  3. *Know Your Rights*  
Know Your Rights is a one page leaflet designed to educate domestic workers about their rights under the DW law.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix K

By the end of Phase II Responsible Business Roundtables had been conducted with over 30 business institutions in Qatar, including those listed below. The roundtable discussions were based on a module developed by Bridges. See Appendix L, 'Responsible Business: Small Measures, Big Impact'

- The College of North Atlantic in Qatar
- 2 Business Outreach programs with QDVC (A joint venture between France's Da Vinci and Qatari Diar)
- Members of the Qatar Human Resource Forum (QHRF) – managed by HR professionals, QHRF arranges networking and topical HR events multiple times a year.
- Members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Qatar
- Canadian businesses through the Canadian Embassy in Qatar
- The Bedaya Centre – a locally grown institution providing advisory services to new and potential entrepreneurs in Qatar.

At the time of writing this report, the following embassies/entities were discussing the possibility of hosting Roundtable discussions with their business communities:

- Swedish Embassy
- The Embassy of the United Kingdom
- The Swiss Embassy
- The Dutch Business Council
- The Indian Businessmen and Professionals Council

## 7.2 Findings

Our findings were based on the questions posed by facilitators during the discussion.

### *Why does this subject speak to you?*

- » It is a moral obligation to endeavor to change the norm
- » It reflects on the value system embraced by the company
- » The treatment of domestic workers falls short of what one is accustomed to in one's own country
- » Companies take disciplinary action against employees who are found to have violated the state's law or for being involved in unethical dealings. The same principle is applicable in relation to employees who exploit or abuse MDWs.
- » Employees have asked about the process of repatriation of domestic workers should they have to leave unexpectedly (as a result of the blockade against Qatar).

### *What is the challenge you face in dealing with the issues?:*

- » Absence of national legislation and therefore the lack of a framework/foundation to educate employees (this was the sentiment at discussions conducted prior to the enactment of the Domestic Workers law)
- » Inability to monitor implementation of legislation and standards set by the business. Many participants talked about the absence of a governing body that is solely for the purpose of ensuring that the law is obeyed. They mentioned that the overriding principle is the sanctity of privacy - "What I do in my household is my business and nobody can open the door and check up on me and the employee."
- » The company's actions can go only so far as being reactionary (i.e. the employer can act only after a violation/misdemeanor has occurred)

### *Small successes in addressing the issue:*

- » Being able to identify and address the root cause was recognised as a successful way of addressing this issue. An employee was found stealing within the company premises. The HR officer decided to investigate the reason (root cause) behind the theft. It was then discovered that the worker had paid 30,000 riyals to 'buy' the employment visa and as a result had a large debt to settle. It was also found that the recruitment agency collaborated with the creditor in this visa trade. The company then blacklisted the agency.
- » A few HR personnel maintain a record of employers who request NOCs to employ workers and ID copies of the domestic workers employed. The record is updated with information such as termination or end of contract. This initiative was viewed favorably by other participants in view of the blockade.

### *Additional findings:*

- » The Guide was received well with some stating that they would use the Guide during initial onboarding.
- » Awareness and education were seen as key to behavior change, the Guide then would play a key role in fulfilling this requirement.
- » Many businesses were not aware of issues pre-departure, for example the commodification of workers prior to departure and pre-decision, exploitation in sending countries
- » Some participants noted that an agency rating system would fulfill a gap
- » Some participants did not think that "policing" or "monitoring" employees' treatment of workers they employ was possible or practical.

## Chapter 8

# Domestic Workers Law - A Year On

THE MOST PERVASIVE of barriers to upholding the rights of domestic workers is legal exclusion. For over four decades after migrant domestic workers started arriving in Qatar, they existed in a vacuum, excluded from the labour law, stripped off even remote recognition as a worker and entirely subjugated by the Kafala law.

In the absence of a legal framework our engagement with stakeholders throughout Phase I of Bridges Project and the first half of Phase II, was informed by and drew on international best practices, and the little we could salvage from the national legislation and bilateral agreements between CoOs and Qatar (where available) to humanise domestic workers. Discussions with employers for example were trite with ‘what the embassy (of the sending country) requires is....’

*Bridges: Minimum wages according to the Philippines embassy is 400 dollars.*

*Bridges: The Sri Lankan embassy requires that the employer bear the cost of repatriation if the worker dies in Qatar.*

Box 11: From Phase 1 of Project Bridges (Shelter ME)<sup>28</sup>:

“...participants were often found applying rules and regulations based on societal norms, personal inclinations (often justified based on the hefty recruitment fees they paid to secure an employee) or what feels like the right thing to do. Many respondents observed that Shelter M.E initiatives were the first time they were engaging in discussions related to laws. Only employers who had a brush with law enforcement authorities were cognisant of legalities, when the worker absconds or is found to be pregnant for example.

***Problem is I don’t know what’s legal and what’s not.***

Permitting the employee to work in homes other than the employer’s and complying with a live-out living arrangement with a full-time worker were the most common practices falling within the gray realm of the law.

Allowing employees to work in the homes of friends and neighbors to earn extra income was viewed as a sign of goodwill in group discussions. One employer said he ***even drives [his employee] to friends homes*** on the days she works for them.

Some employers encouraged the employees to live-out in private accommodations, particularly when the employee’s spouse lived in Qatar. ***[This arrangement] worked really really well.***

When asked if the employer considered the legality of her decision to allow the worker to live with her husband who was in Doha as “a bachelor” she replied: ***It’s wrong of us to keep them [employee and husband] apart***, indicating that she (the employer) made this significant decision based on what she assumed was the right thing to do.\*

One employer related that an agency offered her a considerable discount to have a live-in arrangement with a worker under the agency’s sponsorship: the employer was housing a worker who was not under her sponsorship, which is clearly illegal under Qatari law. The agency also retained access to the worker’s earnings, deducting a part of the employer’s payment every month, contravening the provisions of UNTOC<sup>29</sup> to which Qatar is a signatory.”

*\*The same employer later mentioned that she gave the domestic worker a free supply of contraception, to prevent the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy. Unwanted because it is illegal for a woman who is 'single' in the eyes of the law to be pregnant and for faulty implications against her husband or sons.<sup>30</sup>*

Another employer explained to us that the gardener they employ is under the sponsorship of the company owned by her husband, because they as a single expatriate family cannot employ more than one worker.

I had no idea about what is right and wrong in the way [a worker] should be treated. I wasn't sure if it was ok to let her live with her husband. Where do I find these things out without giving myself away and then I get into trouble.

THE PROMULGATION of the Domestic Workers Law in August 2017 strengthened the legal framework for our advocacy and we adjusted our tools and campaign materials to reflect the new law.

1. A revised version of the Employers Guide (Employer's Pocket Book) including provisions under the new law and practical ways of implementing legal principles in a household.
2. Know Your Rights - a leaflet for MDWs stipulating in lay terms their rights and responsibilities. See Appendix M.
3. A comparison of legal provisions across the GCC region to inform all our pre-decision trainings in Uganda. See Appendix N

Box 12: From Employer's Pocketbook

#### Is it necessary to have a contract with the migrant domestic worker? What must the contract include?

Yes, a contract of employment is legally required. In Qatar, a domestic worker can be hired only through a written contract accompanied by a translation in the worker's language, approved by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (ADLSA).

According to the new domestic worker's law, the core elements in this contract include (but are not limited to) the nature and type of work, the wages agreed between the parties, the method and date of payment of wages, duration of contract, and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract. [Law no 15 of 2017]

A solid contract reflects the expectations of the employer, the rights and responsibilities of both parties, and sets clear boundaries for the employment relationship.

*Tip: A contract has little value if not comprehensively understood by the parties to the contract. Avoid ambiguous language and ensure that the contract is explained clearly to the worker.*

#### Is there a limit to a domestic worker's daily working hours and how do I calculate daily and weekly working hours?

According to Article 12 & 13 of Law No 15 of 2017, working hours cannot exceed 10 hours a day. During this period the worker is entitled to breaks for worship, rest and food, and such break periods should not enter into the calculation of the hours of work. She is also entitled to 24 continuous hours of rest per week, totalling no more than a 60 hour working week.

Implementing a strict 10-hours per day rule may not appear practical at first, as all homes are susceptible to unexpected needs, but it is achievable with mindful planning and proper scheduling. Foster a healthy work environment in your home by ensuring that the worker does not work for over 4 - 5 continuous hours without a break, and has sufficient rest periods during the work day, night and week.

Periods during which domestic workers are not free to dispose of their time as they wish and remain at the disposal of the household in order to respond to possible calls should be regarded as hours of work.

Under national legislation workers are entitled to overtime payment when working hours exceed 10 hours day/60 hours a week.

A 10-hour limit on daily working hours (in the national Domestic Workers legislation), by implication means that a worker is entitled to overtime payment for working hours exceeding the 10-hour limit.

*Tip: Introduce the worker to a timesheet – an easy-to-record chart with start and end times of a task. Keeping a record of the hours she works will help you both be conscious of her working hours.*

*Consider: In Qatar's formal sector, working hours are no more than 8 hours a day. Workers are also entitled to a rest period after 5 continuous working hours, and work hours are shorter during Ramadan.*

<sup>30</sup> It is widely understood that when a domestic worker is found to be pregnant that the male/s in the household employing her are the first suspects.

## 8.1 Findings

I don't know about the domestic workers law. But it has not been publicised

A vast majority of the employers did not know about the new law. As mentioned in the chapter on Recruitment Reform, RAs who participated in our Four-Step Ethical Process workshops did not know about the new law too. In a spot survey we conducted with a random sample (most of whom were employers) only a few respondents knew about the domestic workers law. In this survey even the few respondents who knew about the law had little to no knowledge about its provisions.

However, once informed about the law many employers reverted with questions about the application of one or more provisions. And Some employers were skeptical about the enforcement of the law.

What is working hours? What is it when she is just being in the house?

About the mandatory day off, an employer asked:

How will the law be enforced, is the maid willing to lose her job to go and complain that she is not getting her day off? For her it doesn't leave her the option to look for another job or come back immediately if there was another family offering her a job, that leaves them in a really difficult situation

Must the end of service be paid even though it was not in the employer's knowledge at the time of hiring her?

Quick question it says in the booklet that it is legally required to have a contract written before hiring. Does that also include me making a contract for my Maid now ? (An employer who hired before the enactment of the law)

My nanny's iqama expires in March. If the company renews then she works with them until her 2yrs is up. If they don't renew she said she's done with them. Can you tell me what the labour laws allow. Can I transfer her under my sponsorship at that point? They're pimping these girls!

About the course of action a worker should take when her rights under the law are violated an employer asked:

There is a lady we are hoping to hire in February who's employer is threatening her not to pay her ticket home, nor give her NOC to find another opportunity. So her plan is on her last official contractual day according to her contract she will go to POLO and have POLO speak with her employers and demand her rights. It's unlikely to be able to demand it from them then if they are hesitant on a crystal clear "right" they are hardly likely to pay her end of service since they hired her in 2016.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Embassy of Canada

American Chamber of Commerce in Qatar

Embassy of the United States of America

Embassy of Netherlands

Embassy of Sweden

Georgetown University in Qatar

Qatar HR Professionals Network

ILO Technical Office in Qatar

National Human Rights Committee

# Appendix (external links)

[Appendix A](#)

[Appendix D](#)

[Appendix G](#)

[Appendix H](#)

[Appendix I](#)

[Appendix J](#)

[Appendix K](#)

[Appendix L](#)

[Appendix M](#)

[Appendix N](#)

## Appendix B

# House information, guidelines etc

## 1. Probationary period

- a. There will be a 1 week, 2 month, and 6 month probation period. I will give you feedback about your job performance and let you know what you are doing well and what you need to improve on.

## 2. Inventory

- a. Upon your arrival, I will make an inventory of everything you bring with you, including how much money you have
- b. When you travel I will check your bags
- c. Please tell me if anyone gives you gifts or money
- d. I will keep track of how much money I give you
- e. I will do this so that we both are clear about what is in your room and there is no doubt about your belongings. This is safer for you and me.

## 3. Food

- a. I will provide your food
- b. If you need special ingredients please let me know.
- c. You can make your own special Ethiopian food, you do not have to eat what we eat if you don't like it

## 4. Cooking

- a. Cook what you know. We like to try new things; don't be afraid to make anything. You will be expected to learn certain dishes from me, sister-in-laws, and friends.

## 5. Cleaning

- a. I expect a clean house, you have 7 hours 3 days a week that all you are expected to do is clean and cook. You are not responsible for watching the children.
- b. Please follow the cleaning schedule I provide.
- c. Remember there will always be things that need to be cleaned that are not on the list.
- d. If you don't think you have something to do you can always find something to clean.

## 6. Hygiene Items

- a. I will provide the following personal hygiene items for you; let me know if you have run out. Please do not stock up to take home. These are for you only.
  - » Soap
  - » Shampoo
  - » Deodorant ( a must)
  - » Toothbrush
  - » Toothpaste
  - » Lotion for the body
  - » Monthly pads
  - » Cotton buds
  - » What else do you need?

## 7. Hygiene

- a. Please take a shower at least once a day
- b. Put on deodorant after each shower
- c. Please change into new clothes each day

## 8. Clothing

- a. I will provide your house clothes and dresses (you must USE these items while you are with us, please do not stock up on them and save them to go home with. Dresses, sandals, underwear, bras, socks, abaya).
- b. Please wear these clothes while working.
- c. Please stay covered unless you are in your room.
- d. Wear an abaya when you are outside of the compound.

## 9. Schedule

- a. You are expected to be in the house by 6:30 am on weekdays, 9:00 am on Friday, and 8:00am on Saturday. You will be given breaks during the day during which you can sleep, read, or relax in your house. We generally go to bed at 8:30pm
- b. You are not expected to clean or do laundry on Friday, but occasionally you will need to cook. You will go with us to lunch at a family member's house.
- c. Remember that life is not planned on paper and the schedule is flexible. We try and keep a normal schedule, but sometimes we go to bed late and sometimes we sleep late. I will always make sure that you get enough rest and make up for days that you work late.
- d. When we have guests remember the schedule may change.

## 10. Communication

- a. If you do not understand something let me know, I will not get mad.
- b. You may talk to me about any problems you are having and express your likes and dislikes, but please do so at appropriate times. Don't try to discuss something important when I am trying to work on something else.

## 11. Your room

- a. If the children are in your room do not ever lock the door.
- b. Please keep your room clean and tidy, change your sheets weekly and vacuum.
- c. Keep your bathroom clean.
- d. Keep anything important put away.
- e. Tell me if there is anything that needs repair, lights, washing machine, AC.

## 12. Outside and safety

- For your own safety do not speak with men that work in the compound.
- Do not go inside other houses (unless you are with me).
- Do not open the door to anyone (unless we tell you).
- Always keep the door locked.
- When we are outside, stay with us, help keep the children close.
- You may talk with other women when we are out, but do not give out any telephone number without my permission, and do not neglect the children while you are talking.

## 13. Telephone

- Do not use the telephone unless I am home and you have permission.
- If we are not home you may answer the telephone and take a message, if the person does not speak a language that you speak just say madam and sir are not home and hang up.
- If the phone rings and I call your name to pick up the phone, pick it up.
- If there is an emergency you can call me or Mr. XX.
- You may not have a mobile telephone.

## 14. Pay and sending money home

- I will pay you at the end of each month.
- If you need to send money home let me know at least 1 week in advance.

## 15. Letters

- If you need to mail a letter please give it to me to mail at least 1 week in advance.

## 16. Take care of yourself

- Always take time to eat three meals a day.
- Let me know if you are sick or need medicine.

## 17. Personal hobbies

- I will try to provide you with books and magazines in your own language.
- If you have a special hobby, like jewelry making or sewing let me know.
- If you would like to learn any of the hobbies I do please let me know.
- I will provide you with notebooks, pens and pencils.

## 18. Our Summer vacations

- We will travel in July and August. During the summer vacations you will stay with one of our family or friends, I will ask your opinion about where you want to go, but Mr. XX will make the final decision.

## 19. Your Rights

- I promise not to talk behind your back. I may only speak to someone to give me ideas on how to resolve problems and communication.
- You have the right to discuss anything you are unhappy about without fear that I will become angry.
- You have the right to contact your family as often as you need. You can buy Q-cards and use our house phone, just let me know when you need to buy a Q-card.

## 20. Our Rights

- Do not speak about intimate details of our home, our lives, what we do In our home we are open with each other and even if we fight we know we can work things out faster through communicating rather than being silent and what we say, what we buy etc. This is private. Just like your life is also private. If you are having a hard time and need to speak to someone you can talk to \_\_\_\_\_, but do not give details about our family or problems. Do not gossip about us to other women.

## 21. My Promise:

I promise to treat you with dignity and respect. I am a patient person, but I don't like to be tricked, lied to or pretended with. I am not a game player or a mind reader, if something is wrong, you need to let me know.

## 22. Our home is an Islamic home.

I expect you to follow the moral and social rules of Islam. You will not be alone with men. You will not call men other than your family members.

## 23. Kids:

I expect my children to listen to you. You are an adult. For their own safety they must learn to listen to you. Do not allow them to boss you around, even if it means they cry sometimes. You must treat them in a kind and patient manner, but also be firm with the rules.

I also expect my kids to work too, if I ask you not to pick up after the kids, please do not, you are not doing me or them a favor. I will be upset if you clean up after them behind my back. I need them to be productive members of the family too. If I ask you not to put on their shoes for them, not to hand feed them, not to pick them up when they are crying, do what I say and ask me about it later if you don't understand. Do not argue with me in front of the children.

We must support each other to make sure the children respect us and do not try to make one of us the bad guy If something happens to the children (they get hurt, are sick, get in trouble) while I am not home you MUST tell me. Never hide anything that happens, even if you think I might be mad. I will be more mad and not trust you if I find out later.

Please note that the above rules must be followed at all times, if you have a question about any of them, please let me know.

## Appendix C

# Guidelines for Driver

## 1. Commencement

Employment will begin on \_\_\_\_\_ 2016 and continue for two years.

## 2. Place of work

\_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Job description

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Driver \_\_\_\_\_  
(e.g., Domestic worker, childminder, gardener, etc)  
Duties: See attached job description

## 4. Wage

The employee's wage shall be paid in cash on the last working day of every month and shall be:

\_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Friday off

Friday is the day off for the employee. Any work on Fridays will be by agreement between parties and will be compensated with time off according to a case by case agreement.

## 6. Public Holidays

Any work on holidays (National Day, Eid al Adha, Eid al Fitr) will be by agreement and will be compensated with time off as agreed upon prior to the holiday.

## 7. Annual Leave

The employee is entitled to two months leave after every 24 months of continuous service.  
Such leave is to be taken at times convenient to the employer and the employer may require the employee to take his/her leave at such times as coincide with that of the employer.

## 8. Sick leave

8.1 The employee is to notify the employer as soon as possible in case of his/her inability to work due to illness.  
8.2 A medical certificate may be required if absent for more than 2 consecutive days or has been absent on more than two occasions during an eight-week period.

## 9. Health Care

Health care, including dental, will be provided through Hamad Medical Corporation. The employee is responsible for making their own appointments and following through with any necessary care. Cost of medications and lab work are the responsibility of the employee.

## 10. Accommodation

- 10.1 The employee will be provided with accommodation for as long as the employee is in the service of the employer, which shall form part of his/her remuneration package. The employer will provide a bed, closet, small table and curtains.
- 10.2 The accommodation may only be occupied by the worker, unless prior arrangement with the employer.
- 10.3 Prior permission should be obtained for visitors.
- 10.4 The employee is not to enter the main residence, except for the kitchen, except with permission.

## 11. Food

The employee will provide with daily meals and beverages. Requests for particular foods will be accepted at any time. The employee may use the main kitchen to prepare any food.

## 12. Clothing

The employee will wear an abaya and scarf at all times when out of the home and will wear conservative, loose fitting clothing when in the home.

## 13. Internet/phone

Free wifi will be provided in the home and a mobile pack of QR200 per month for the employee's mobile. The employee's mobile phone must have charge and credit at all times.

## 14. Driving

- 14.1 The employee will drive at or under the speed limit at all times, obey all traffic laws and wear a seatbelt.
- 14.2 When children are in the car, they will wear a seatbelt and be properly seated at all times.
- 14.3 The employee will never use a mobile phone while driving.
- 14.4 Any speeding tickets or parking tickets will be paid by the employee.
- 14.5 Keep any receipts. Give them to the employer at the end of each day.
- 14.6 No smoking or alcohol use at anytime
- 14.7 Never leave the children unaccompanied in the car
- 14.8 Always be on time for school runs

## JOB DESCRIPTION

- General driving duties and errands
- Basic car maintenance (water, oil, air)
- Taking cars for routine maintenance
- Washing exterior of cars
- Cleaning interior of cars
- General tidying, washing of the yard
- Cleaning of outside room's and store
- Caring and cleaning of pool
- Grocery shopping
- Pass any messages or notes from the boys teachers to the employer
- Help the boys in and out of the car and help with their bags

## Appendix E

# Contract of Employment

This agreement is entered into on --/--/---- between the following parties.

**Employer/Sponsor:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Passport number: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Employee/Domestic worker:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Passport number: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name and contact number of  
 father/husband/kin: \_\_\_\_\_

The employer, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of employer) agrees to employ \_\_\_\_\_ (name of employee) as a domestic worker at the employer's residence located in the address mentioned above.

2. Both parties agree to abide by all the obligations and regulations stipulated in this contract.
3. Employment will begin on --/--/---- and continue until --/--/---- or this contract is renewed by both parties or terminated according to clause number 11.
4. The employer undertakes the responsibility of providing adequate food and drink to the employee.
5. The employer shall provide safe and suitable accommodation to the employee.
6. The employer shall bear the cost of the employee's medical care and treatment.
7. Work and rest:
  - 7.1 The employer agrees to task the employee only with tasks/duties related to the maintenance of her home and its permanent inhabitants in a reasonable manner.
  - 7.2 The employee is obligated to abide by this contract, and perform the tasks agreed between the two parties competently.
  - 7.3 The employee will work no more than ----- hours a week. Reasonable working hours will be agreed between the two parties taking into account rest/break periods.
  - 7.4 Meal times and time used for sleeping will not be considered rest/break times.
  - 7.5 The employee shall have two or more rest periods during her working day.
  - 7.6 ----- shall be the employee's weekly rest day.
8. Wages:
  - 8.1 The employer agrees to pay the employee a monthly salary of Qatari Riyals  
 ----- (in words and numbers).
  - 8.2 The salary shall be paid on the last day of every month in cash or bank transfer upon the request of the employee and with the help of the employer.
  - 8.3 Cost of food, drink or accommodation will not be deducted from the employee's monthly wage.
  - 8.4 Agency fees, travel and other related costs incurred by the employer, in the course of recruitment will not be deducted from the employee's monthly wages.
  - 8.5 Salary advances paid to the employee upon request shall be deducted from the monthly salary.

## 9. Good treatment

- 9.1 The employer undertakes to treat the employee with dignity, and ensure her wellbeing and safety.
- 9.2 The employee undertakes to treat the young, elderly and disabled members of the employer's residence with necessary care and competence.
- 9.3 The employee promises to maintain the privacy of the household and not share photographs or details of the family, especially minor children.

## 10. Communication

- 10.1 The employer undertakes to help the employee communicate with family, and the embassy of her country of origin on request.
- 10.2 The employer agrees to purchase a SIM card, and -----number of reload cards at the value of QR.-----each, every -----week/month period.

## 11. Contract Length

- 11.1 The length of this contract shall be for two years from the date of the employee's arrival in Qatar.
- 11.2 At the expiration of the contract period (without renewal) the employer shall bear the cost of the employee's airfare back to her place of origin.
- 11.3 This contract may be renewed by mutual agreement between, and free-will of both parties.
- 11.4 In case of renewal, the employee is entitled to a thirty-day vacation before the commencement of the second term. The employer shall bear the cost of the return air ticket and provide one month-salary to the employee.
- 11.5 The employer or the employee may initiate the termination of the contract before the end of the contract period. The party initiating the termination shall provide 30-days notice.
- Should the employer initiate termination, she shall provide the repatriation ticket and one month's salary.

## 12. Death and burial

In the event of the employee's death during this contract period and during the course of employment, the employer shall undertake the repatriation of the remains and personal belongings to the employee's home country. The employer shall pay any compensation due to the employee's heirs within one month of the latter's death.

Disclaimer: This is only a suggested contract with minimum standards and does not stand in the place of any official document that might be required by the governments of sending and receiving countries.





