

# The State of Qatar and the ILO

## Executive Summary

The State of Qatar has been an ILO member State since 1972, and has ratified 6 ILO conventions, including five fundamental conventions and one governance convention. Over the past decade, Qatar has demonstrated a growing commitment to advancing decent work and aligning its labour market with international standards. This commitment is reflected in the third phase of the ILO Technical Cooperation Programme in Qatar (2024–2028), which builds on the achievements of earlier phases and focuses on three strategic pillars: workforce policies, labour market governance, and international and regional cooperation and knowledge sharing.

Between 2018 and 2021, Qatar undertook a series of labour reforms that have transformed the country's labour landscape. These reforms addressed long-standing challenges related to workers' protection and mobility, marking a decisive shift towards a more equitable and transparent labour system. Notably, the elimination in 2020 of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) and exit permit requirements. Qatar also started its South-South Cooperation, by hosting the Regional South-South Expo in Doha in 2014 and funding a project for the support of Social Security in the State of Palestine in 2017.

In May 2024, the MoL launched an enhanced, publicly accessible version of its electronic employment change platform, enabling migrant workers, including women, to submit and track employment transfer requests online. The upgraded platform streamlines procedures, improves transparency, and reduces administrative burdens by minimising errors and delays associated with paper-based processes. It represents another important step towards more efficient, worker-centred services and fair labour mobility in Qatar.

In 2024 Qatar has assumed the role of Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee of the ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative, contributing to the global dialogue on fair recruitment and ethical employment practices.

The ILO–Qatar partnership is firmly anchored in the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030), which emphasises the modernisation of the labour market, the strengthening of social protection systems, and the alignment of national labour policies with international conventions and best practices. Since 2018, the partnership has evolved through three strategic phases of technical cooperation, supported by a total budget of USD 39.9 million, reflecting Qatar's sustained investment in promoting decent work and inclusive labour market governance.

### **ILO Qatar Technical Cooperation Phases:**

- **(2018–2021):** The first phase focused on foundational labour reforms, covering five pillars of work (wage protection, labour inspection and occupational safety and health, an employment contract system to replace the kafala system, forced labour, and the promotion of workers' voice and access to justice).
- **(2021–2024):** The second phase of the ILO–Qatar technical cooperation programme (2021–2025) has centred on the implementation of the labour reforms by providing recommendations to the Ministry of Labour for their operationalization.
- **(2024–2028):** The third phase focuses on consolidating the considerable progress achieved in Phases 1 and 2, and specifically on ensuring that Qatar's workforce policies and labour market governance legislation, policies and systems are well aligned to the country's economic development goals and informed by international best practices. This is further enhanced through the technical cooperation programme's support to worker advocacy through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Global Trade Union Federations (GUFs).

## ► ILO's contributions to the Labour reforms

Between 2018 and 2021, Qatar achieved a series of unprecedented policy milestones that fundamentally reshaped its labour market. Among the most significant were the abolition of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) and exit permit requirements, two key elements of the *kafala* (sponsorship) system. These reforms, implemented in 2020, granted migrant workers the right to change jobs before the end of their contract without obtaining an NOC from their employer, and to leave the country without prior exit permits.

In February 2025, Qatar established the National Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) National Committee to guide the enhancement of OSH policies. Chaired by the Ministry of Labour, the Committee brings together key stakeholders from across government bodies, the private sector, and academic institutions, fostering a collaborative and evidence-based approach to policy development. In March 2025, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) established the Sectoral Skills Bodies (SSBs), to enhance dialogue between the Ministry of Labour and the private sector (and workers' representatives) on employment policies, skills development, and other labour market information.

In April 2025, the Ministry of Labour (MOL), in collaboration with a range of national and international partners, has introduced a toolkit on Responsible Business Conduct. MOL and the ILO led the development of the toolkit through extensive consultations with representatives from various governmental bodies and business development service providers. The first training on the toolkit was delivered on the sidelines of Qatar's Corporate Social Responsibility Summit in April 2025.



Figure 1 Celebration of World Day for Safety and Health at Work, April 2025

## ILO and Qatari Ministry of Labour Joint Work Programme

The development cooperation approach of the Qatar-ILO partnership is strategically aligned with both Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030) and the ILO Decent Work Agenda.

The Joint Work Programme between the ILO and the State of Qatar (2024-2028) is funded through a Direct Trust Fund (DTF), the total value of which is USD 19 million.

The Joint Work Programme covers three main pillars, **1) the technical cooperation programme (TCP)**, across its three pillars: workforce policies, labour market governance, and sharing of experiences at regional and global levels. **2)**

**The secondments component** of the Joint Work programme is dedicated to strengthening institutional expertise through secondments for Qatari officials to ILO Geneva. **3) The Support to the Activities of ITUC and GUFs in the context of the ILO Qatar Technical Cooperation Programme**



Figure 2 ILO phase three signature ceremony

## ► Qatar's Multilateral Engagement

### A. Qatar's Strategic Roles

Qatar's multilateral engagement is anchored in a robust strategic partnership with the United Nations, collaborating with 13 UN agencies, programmes and funds under a dedicated framework that directly supports both Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030) and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Qatar is playing a leading strategic role on the regional and global levels. This role involves **Humanitarian Diplomacy**, with high-level mediation in conflicts in Gaza, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa, backed by substantial financial commitments. Additionally, contributions towards strengthening youth employment, sustainable financing, and green transition are driven by flagship initiatives under the Education Above All (EAA) Foundation. EAA has reached over 22 million beneficiaries globally, including 3.3 million in youth economic empowerment programmes<sup>1</sup>.

Qatar's funding commitments from 2022–2023 demonstrate a strategic and earmarked approach, with 68% of its multilateral funding directed to specific agencies and causes. This financial support underpins Qatar's growing role in **Global Leadership**.

In 2023, Qatar hosted the Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5), which resulted in the adoption of the Doha Programme of Action for 46 countries. Qatar also co-chaired the SDG Summit in 2023 to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda.

The inauguration of UN House Doha that same year solidified its position as a regional hub for 13 UN agencies, programme and funds, including those implementing critical ILO technical programs.

The first engagement of the Qatari Government with the ILO was through the South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Project (2017-2018), with a budget of \$1 million. The project successfully established the first Palestinian Social Security Corporation, created pro-worker investment policies, and benefited over 200,000 private-sector workers. In response to the ongoing Gaza crisis, Qatar is exploring labour-intensive reconstruction models and a potential partnership with the ILO to focus on post-conflict job creation.

### B. Qatar's Key Development Institutions: Strategic Overview

Qatar's strategic engagement is advanced through its key development institutions—the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Education Above All (EAA), Qatar Charity, and the Qatar Development Bank (QDB). Some of the key strategic areas of interest for these institutions include crisis response, education-to-work transitions, youth entrepreneurship, grassroots livelihoods, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which create powerful synergies with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. This collaboration was underscored when the ILO and QFFD signed a core contribution agreement in May 2025, marking Qatar as the first Arab partner to provide such flexible funding to the ILO.

## Qatar's Strategic Leadership on Regional and Global Levels

Building on its established role in multilateral diplomacy, Qatar has further solidified its position as a global hub for dialogue on social justice and development by hosting two landmark international events in the latter half of 2025.

1. **South4Care Initiative Launch (September 2025):** Qatar hosted the high-level launch of the ILO's South4Care platform and its inaugural Learning Hub in Doha. This major initiative, stemming from the International Labour Conference (ILC) 2024 resolution on Decent Work in the care economy, is designed as a knowledge-sharing and capacity-building hub for Global South countries. By facilitating South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), South4Care aims to advance policies that recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work and create decent jobs in the care sector. Qatar's hosting role underscores its commitment to supporting innovative ILO programmes and positions it at the forefront of a critical global policy discussion on gender equality and the future of work.
2. **Second World Summit for Social Development (November 2025):** Qatar convened the Second World Summit for Social Development, three decades after the original Copenhagen Summit. The resulting Doha Political Declaration

represents a renewed global commitment to the core themes of social development: poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all, and social integration. The Declaration serves as a significant roadmap for accelerating action on the social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, addressing new challenges like digital transformation and climate change, and strengthening the multilateral system for social justice and decent work. The declaration also highlights the importance of South-South Cooperation. Hosting this pivotal UN Summit reaffirms Qatar's diplomatic leadership and its dedication to placing social development at the heart of the international agenda.

3. **Doha Forum (December 2025):** under the theme: Justice in Action: Beyond Promises to Progress, Qatar will host its annual forum, attracting policy leaders to discuss critical challenges and to build innovative and action-driven networks.

These events demonstrate Qatar's unique capacity to bring together world leaders, UN agencies, social partners, and civil society to forge consensus and drive action on the most pressing social issues of our time.

## ► Forward-Looking Priorities

The Government of Qatar is advancing its Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030), aiming to build an inclusive and competitive economy, with labour mobility identified as a key driver for attracting and retaining talent and fostering economic diversification. Building on the strong foundation of its existing partnerships, The ILO in Qatar is contributing to the National Development Strategy with several initiatives, on labour market policies, strengthening capacities, for sustainable and impactful changes. The ILO, through the technical cooperation programme, will continue with its contributions on strengthening workforce policies, employment policies, occupational health and safety, social dialogue, and other critical aspects for the Qatari labour market, to ensure competitiveness and growth.



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