

مشروع

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Strengthening Migrant Workers' Rights



Policy Paper
The reality of migrant workers in Jordan

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Executive Summary



I. Executive Summary

Migrant Labor is a critical component of Jordan's economy, providing essential support to key sectors including agriculture, construction, and domestic services. Despite their contributions, migrant workers face substantial challenges, particularly concerning legal rights and inadequate working conditions. Studies and statistics reveal that the number of migrant workers in Jordan ranges between ٦٠٠,٠٠٠ and ١ million , reflecting the country's substantial reliance on this workforce to fulfil Labor market demands in sectors requiring specialized skills or significant physical effort. However, migrant workers continue to endure substandard living and working conditions, highlighting the urgent need to improve their circumstances and strengthen their rights.

Key challenges facing migrant workers in Jordan include long working hours, low wages, and the absence of health and social protections. Wages in the informal work sectors, range from ٢٠٠ to ٣٠٠ Jordanian dinars per month , are insufficient to

cover basic living expenses, leaving workers in a precarious economic situation. Moreover, there is a significant wage disparity between migrant workers and their Jordanian counterparts in similar roles, with Jordanian workers earning, on average, ۲۰-۳۰% more.

The sponsorship (kafala) system in Jordan remains a significant obstacle for migrant workers, as it grants employers excessive control over their workers leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This system creates legal instability as workers struggle to renew work permits leading to irregular status and exposing them to the risk of deportation or further exploitation. Additionally, weak enforcement of existing laws and regulations compounds the problem. Migrant workers frequently encounter challenges accessing justice, including language barriers and high legal costs which limit their ability to assert their rights.

Furthermore, migrant workers endure inadequate and substandard housing conditions, including overcrowded and

unsanitary accommodations that fail to meet basic health and safety standards. Studies estimate approximately 4% of migrant workers live in such conditions which increases risk of disease, negatively affects their overall health. With migrant workers facing challenges accessing healthcare, as around 70% of migrant workers lack proper health insurance, they are forced to rely on free clinics or pay for treatment out of pocket.

The COVID19- pandemic underscored the urgency of protecting migrant workers, as the pandemic exposed gaps in social protections for migrant workers. They faced challenges including job loss, delayed wages, and difficulties accessing healthcare. Although government initiatives, such as universal vaccine distribution, mitigated some impacts, the pandemic continued to impact migrant workers in a variety of aspects. This emphasizes the importance of developing future emergency response plans to ensure their health and financial support during crises.

Given the severity of these challenges, this study aims to provide comprehensive recommendations to address and improve the situation and conditions of migrant workers in Jordan. Recommendations include amending laws and regulations to provide stronger protections to migrant workers, such as revising Labor laws to include all categories of workers and ensuring social and health protections. As well as strengthening oversight of working conditions by increasing the number of specialized inspectors, conducting regular field visits to workplaces, and imposing strict penalties on violators.

Additionally, the study proposes the development of training, capacity-building, and awareness programs for migrant workers. Training and capacity building programs will enhance migrant workers' skills and productivity, contributing to sustainable development. These programs should involve collaboration with civil society organizations and Labor unions to provide continuous training and ensure better integration

of migrant workers into the Labor market. Efforts should be accompanied by awareness campaigns to educate workers about their rights and facilitate access to justice through the establishment of advisory and legal support centres.

In conclusion, improving the conditions of migrant workers in Jordan is not only a fundamental humanitarian and human rights response but also strategic investment in the long-term sustainable and stability of the Jordanian economy and society. Providing fair and safe working environments, coupled with strengthened collaboration among government entities, Labor unions, and civil society organizations, can achieve the necessary balance between workers' rights and employers' needs. This will enhance Jordan's economic competitiveness and contribute to social justice and sustainable development.

Introduction



This policy paper addresses the reality of migrant Labor in Jordan, aiming to understand the living and working conditions of migrant workers to provide recommendations and proposals for decision-makers. Migrant Labor refers to individuals who emigrate from their country of origin to another for work. Migrant Labor encompasses a wide variety of workers, from highly skilled to unskilled labourers, across various sectors including agriculture, industry, services, and construction.

This paper is the result of collaboration between Al-Hayat Center - RASED and the Heinrich Böll Foundation - Palestine and Jordan. The findings are derived from a thorough review of Jordanian laws and regulations concerning the rights of migrant workers, as well as relevant literature and studies. Additionally, interviews were conducted with political party representatives and migrant workers to assess the alignment between Jordan's legislative framework and the actual conditions of migrant workers. A interviews were conducted with Jordanian political party representatives elected to the 20th House of Representatives, including those affiliated with

the Jordanian government. Furthermore twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with migrant workers across various sectors and regions with high concentrations of migrant Labor, to evaluate how their living and working conditions align with existing legislation. Interviews and meetings were also carried out with representatives from Labor unions and civil society organizations.

In recent years, migrant Labor in Jordan has become a focal point of political, economic, and social planning and discussion. Migrant Labor plays a vital role in supporting Jordan's economy, contributing to multiple sectors such as agriculture, construction, and domestic services, making them an integral part of the country's economic structure. Despite the importance of migrant workers, they face significant challenges including legal rights, working conditions, social protection, and societal integration. This underscores the importance of improving migrant workers' situation and providing necessary protections.

Statistics indicate migrant workers comprise a significant portion of Jordan's workforce, primarily in labour-intensive sectors which are un-appealing to local workers. Egyptians, the largest group of migrant labourers in Jordan, are primarily employed in agriculture and construction, while Syrian workers are largely employed in construction sector. Domestic workers from Southeast Asia constitute a significant segment of migrant Labor in Jordan. , facing challenges such as long working hours, lack of rest days, and inadequate legal protections.

This paper, titled *Enhancing Migrant Workers' Rights in Jordan*, gains significance from the urgent need to understand the complex dynamics faced by migrant workers in the Kingdom. These workers often endure inhumane working conditions, including long hours, low wages that fail to cover basic living needs, and a lack of health and social insurance. Additionally, the existing sponsorship (kafala) system exacerbates their vulnerability, granting employers excessive control over them and exposing them to exploitation and abuse.

Improving the conditions of migrant workers is essential not only for safeguarding their human rights but also for increasing productivity and achieving long-term economic sustainability in Jordan. By stabilizing migrant workers and guaranteeing their rights, Jordan can strengthen key sectors, enhancing the country's economic competitiveness. Addressing the challenges faced by migrant workers also helps strike a balance between their rights and employers' needs, fostering a more equitable and sustainable work environment. Moreover, enhancing migrant workers' rights is not just an economic imperative but also a social necessity, as they are an integral part of the social fabric of Jordan. However, their limited integration into the local community can create social and cultural tensions. To mitigate this, it is crucial to implement awareness programs that promote mutual understanding between migrant workers and the Jordanian community, fostering trust and strengthening social cohesion.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the conditions of migrant workers in Jordan, examining the legal, economic, and social aspects of their presence. It will also

highlight the gaps in laws and regulations that lead to worker exploitation, offering recommendations to improve public policies. These recommendations include reforming the kafala system, simplifying work permit procedures, providing health insurance, and increasing legal awareness among migrant workers.

The paper will rely on up-to-date information and reliable statistics to present a comprehensive picture of migrant Labor conditions. It will also incorporate interviews with various stakeholders, including migrant worker representatives, human rights organizations, and government entities, to ensure that the recommendations are based on a deep understanding of the challenges facing this vital group.

Background of the problem



3. Background to the problem

Migrant Labor is a vital part of the Jordanian Labor market, significantly contributing to key economic sectors such as agriculture, construction, and domestic services, which rely heavily on physical effort and practical skills. Estimates suggest that the number of migrant workers in Jordan ranges between 600,000 and 1 million, reflecting the substantial reliance on this workforce to meet market demands. However, migrant Labor faces considerable challenges that affect their economic and social stability.

One of the most prominent challenges is the sponsorship (kafala) system in Jordan, which grants employers excessive control over workers, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This system restricts workers' freedom of movement and puts them in a weak position when negotiating employment terms or transitioning to other jobs. It also causes difficulties in renewing work permits, placing many workers in a legally precarious situation and making them susceptible to deportation or socio-economic exploitation.

In addition to legal challenges, migrant workers often endure inhuman working conditions. Despite their significant contribution to productivity in critical sectors, they are subjected to long working hours with low wages that do not meet the minimum living requirements. In many cases, wages are delayed or not paid regularly, exacerbating workers' financial difficulties and leaving them unable to cover their basic needs. Reports indicate that wages in the informal sectors range from 200 to 300 Jordanian dinars per month, which is insufficient to cover essential living costs.

Challenges also extend to living conditions, with many migrant workers lacking access to adequate housing. These workers often live in overcrowded and unsanitary accommodations, increasing the risk of disease and negatively affecting their overall health. The lack of health insurance and medical care makes workers even more vulnerable to health risks, with reports showing that %75 of migrant workers in Jordan are without health insurance. Consequently, they are forced to bear the cost of treatment themselves or rely on free clinics.

Despite efforts to improve the conditions of migrant workers, weak enforcement of laws and regulations remains a significant challenge. Many employers disregard the rights of migrant workers, exploiting the lack of sufficient oversight and the absence of effective complaint mechanisms. Additionally, workers face barriers in accessing the judicial system due to language difficulties and high costs, deterring them from seeking legal recourse even in cases of abuse.

This complex reality underscores the importance of understanding the challenges faced by migrant workers in Jordan and developing effective policies to address them. Improving the conditions of migrant workers is not merely a human rights issue but also an economic necessity, as it can enhance economic sustainability and boost productivity in sectors heavily dependent on this workforce.

Current Status of Migrant Workers in Jordan



Current Status of Migrant Workers in Jordan

Migrant Labor is a vital part of the Jordanian Labor market, making significant contributions to key economic sectors and fulfilling Labor demands in areas that require both physical effort and specialized skills. With an estimated between 600,000 and 1 million migrant workers, both registered and unregistered, it is clear that Jordan relies heavily on this workforce to meet the of its economy.

Number of migrant workers and their nationalities:

The most prominent nationalities among migrant workers in Jordan are Egyptians and Syrians, followed by with workers from Southeast Asia, such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia.

Table 1: Nationalities of Migrant Workers in Jordan

Nationality	Number of workers	Percentage (%)
Egypt	100,000	%40
Syria	60,000	%24
Bangladesh	50,000	%20
India	30,000	%12
Other countries	10,000	%4

- Egyptian workers represent the largest population of migrant workers, with most of them employed in agriculture and construction. Employers prefer hiring Egyptians in physically

demanding field as Egyptians are known for their inherited agricultural and craft skills.

- Syrian workers have significantly increased in number since 2011 due to the Syrian crisis. Known for their flexibility and ability to adapt to various work environments, many of them work in the construction and service sectors,
- Asian labourers, particularly women, comprise a substantial portion of the migrant workforce in domestic services. Within domestic service, these migrant workers are employed as nannies or cleaners in households.

Sectors heavily reliant on migrant Labor:

There are several sectors in Jordan, that are essential to the economy, that heavily rely on migrant Labor.

Table 2: Distribution of Migrant Labor by Sector

Sector	(%) Percentage	Number of migrant workers
Construction	%30	50,000
Agriculture	%20	33,000
Services	%25	41,500
Industry	%15	25,000
Other	%10	16,500

- Agricultural sector: Migrant workers, particularly Egyptians, form the backbone of agricultural production. Egyptians account

for approximately %70 of the sector's workforce, performing tasks like planting and harvesting crops. These migrants face harsh working conditions, including prolonged exposure to the sun and the absence of health protection facilities.

- **Construction sector:** The construction industry heavily relies on Syrian and Egyptian workers employed in large-scale building and infrastructure projects. These jobs require significant physical effort, and migrant labourers often work in harsh environments with high risks, including as falls and industrial accidents.
 - **Domestic services:** Many Jordanian families depend on female workers from Southeast Asia for domestic tasks like child-care, cooking, and cleaning. However, these workers face challenges such as limited legal protection, the absence of fixed working hours, and the lack of rest days, often leading to continuous work.
- Wages and Pay Disparities for Migrant Workers:**
In the informal sectors, wages for migrant workers range between 200 and 300 Jordanian dinars per month, barely enough to cover basic living expenses. There is a notable disparity between the wages of migrant workers and local workers. Jordanian workers

earn between 350 and 500 dinars per month in the same sectors.

- Wage challenges: Many migrant workers face issues with irregular or delayed salary payments, making them vulnerable to financial crises and exacerbating difficulties in meeting their basic needs.

**Reasons for
Reliance on Migrant
Labor in Certain
Sectors**



Reliance on Migrant Labor in Certain Sectors:

Migrant labor remains essential in many of Jordan's economic sectors, despite the significant rise in unemployment rates among Jordanians. This continued reliance can be explained through a comprehensive analysis of market needs and associated economic factors.

Table (3): Reasons for the dependence of sectors on migrant labor

Reason	Sector	Clarification
Shortage of local labor	Construction	Lack of Jordanian labor in this sector
Specialized Skills	Agriculture	Migrant workers have high agricultural skills
Low wages	Services	Migrant workers accept lower wages
Hard work	Industry	Migrant workers work in difficult conditions

Analysis of the Need for Migrant Labor Despite High Unemployment Rates

- Skill and specialization gaps among Jordanians: A primary reason many sectors rely on migrant labor is the lack of necessary skills within the Jordanian workforce. For example, sectors like agriculture and construction require specific manual and technical skills that Jordanians may lack due to inadequate training. In contrast, Egyptian workers possess traditional expertise in

agriculture and construction, making them more suited to meet these sectors' needs.

- **Physically demanding jobs and harsh conditions:** Some jobs, such as those in agriculture and construction, are physically strenuous and performed in tough environments, making them undesirable for many Jordanians. These sectors often require long hours of work under extreme conditions, such as working in direct sunlight in the fields or in dangerous construction sites. Conversely, migrant workers are more willing to take on these challenges, even in the absence of health protections or insurance.
- **Low wages:** Migrant workers are often willing to work for lower wages compared to local workers, making their employment more appealing to business owners. For instance, many Jordanians demand salaries that align with the rising cost of living, while migrant workers accept lower wages helping companies reduce costs and increase profitability. This is a strong incentive for employers to continue relying on migrant Labor.

The Role of Migrant Labor in Boosting Investment and Reducing Production Costs

- Enhancing productivity: Migrant Labor plays a crucial role in increasing productivity in sectors such as agriculture and industry. For instance, in the agricultural sector, farmers heavily depend on Egyptian workers to plant and harvest crops efficiently, ensuring a consistent supply of agricultural products in the markets. Without this Labor force, production processes could be disrupted, negatively affecting the supply and increasing the prices of products.
- Reducing production costs: Hiring migrant workers at lower wages contributes to reducing production costs, which is vital for sectors struggling with low profit margins. Lower costs enable businesses to offer products and services at competitive prices, increasing their market expansion potential both locally and regionally. For example, the garment industry significantly relies on female migrant workers who work long hours for lower wages, making Jordanian products more competitive in global markets.
- Supporting foreign investment: The availability of affordable

Labor encourages foreign companies to invest in Jordan, particularly in labour-intensive sectors. The increased productivity and reduced costs create a favourable investment climate, attracting companies to a country that can offer skilled and reliable Labor at relatively low prices, thereby enhancing opportunities for economic growth.

Despite the economic and social challenges associated with reliance on migrant Labor, it remains essential to meet the Labor market demands and support investment in Jordan. This highlights the need for a strategic balance between improving the skills of the local workforce and regulating the recruitment of migrant Labor to ensure both economic and social stability.

**Working Conditions and
Daily Challenges Faced by
Migrant Workers in Jordan**



Working Conditions and Daily Challenges Faced by Migrant Workers in Jordan

Migrant workers in Jordan face significant legislative and political challenges, despite laws seeking to protect migrant worker rights. The current legal framework includes Labor laws which impose general standards on working hours, wages, and conditions. However, enforcement is often inadequate, leading to ongoing violations of migrant workers' rights.

The kafala system is one of the most controversial aspects of the legislative environment for migrant workers. This system gives employers substantial control over migrant workers, restricting their freedom to change jobs or leave the country without the employer's consent, leaving migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse while weakening their ability to negotiate for better working conditions. Human rights activists and civil society organizations have criticized the kafala system, calling for radical reforms or its replacement with a system that provides workers with greater independence and freedom.

Additionally, migrant workers face difficulties in accessing justice

due to language barriers and the high costs of legal proceedings. Despite the existence of government institutions aimed at protecting workers' rights, such as the Ministry of Labor, there is a lack of effective mechanisms to address workers' complaints promptly and efficiently. In many cases, violations go unaddressed, leaving workers unprotected.

Labor unions in Jordan play a limited role in defending migrant workers' rights. Although legislation allows the establishment of Labor unions, migrant workers are often underrepresented in these unions due to discrimination, lack of interest in migrant workers' issues, and restrictions on forming their own unions. The lack of union representation makes it difficult to defend their rights or negotiate better working conditions.

On a political level, the positions of Jordanian political parties vary on migrant Labor regulation. Some parties advocate for organizing migrant Labor and improving their rights, considering this necessary for ensuring a fair and sustainable work environment. In contrast, other parties emphasize the need to reduce reliance on migrant Labor in favor of providing employment opportunities

for Jordanians, stressing the importance of retraining the local workforce to meet market needs.

Civil society organizations play a vital role in raising awareness of migrant workers' issues and defending their rights. These organizations provide legal and psychological support to workers, organize awareness and education campaigns about workers' rights, and work to foster collaboration between migrant workers and employers to promote mutual understanding and create a more positive work environment. However, CSO impact remains limited due to funding and sustainability challenges which restrict their activities.

Overall, the legislative and political landscape for migrant workers in Jordan has significant gaps that require comprehensive reforms. This calls for strengthening law enforcement, improving complaint mechanisms and access to justice, and ensuring effective union representation for migrant workers. A comprehensive national dialogue involving all stakeholders, including migrant workers, employers, unions, and the government, is essential to balance workers' rights and market needs.

Jordan's National Priorities Related to Labor



Jordan's National Priorities Related to Labor

- **Aligning Labor market needs with migrant Labor:** Jordan faces structural challenges in balancing the Labor market, due to the heavy reliance on migrant Labor to fill gaps in key sectors. This reliance is crucial to ensure the continuity of production and services in various industries, such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. The Jordanian Labor market is further strained by high youth unemployment, placing increase pressure on government policies to generate local job opportunities while stimulating the needs of economic sectors that rely heavily on migrant Labor.

- **Field studies and Labor market needs:** Recent studies indicate that the agricultural, construction, and industrial sectors heavily depend on migrant Labor. According to a 2024 report by the International Labour Organization, %70 of the workforce in the agricultural sector consists of migrant workers. This percentage highlights the importance of this group in achieving national food security and ensuring continuous agricultural production.

This hypothesis is also supported by data from the Jordanian

Ministry of Labor, which shows that migrant Labor significantly contributes to the GDP. According to the ministry's report, migrant Labor constitutes %60 of the construction sector workforce, due to a lack of qualified and willing local Labor to work in harsh conditions. A construction union official stated in a 2024 interview: "Local Labor refuses to work in sectors that require intense physical effort, making migrant Labor indispensable."

- Labor unions' perspective: Labor unions play a pivotal role in improving migrant workers' conditions and defending their rights. In an interview with the head of the Labor Unions Federation, said "We support the presence of migrant Labor, but only if working conditions improve to align with international standards." The unions seek to amend Labor laws to provide greater protection for this group, ensuring fair wages, health insurance, and decent housing.

The unions also call for increased oversight of workplaces to ensure employer compliance with the law. A 2023 study by the Jordanian Labor Organization confirmed that improving working conditions leads to higher productivity and fewer Labor disputes.

Union officials suggest collaboration between the government and employers can create a healthy and secure work environment for all workers, regardless of nationality.

- Political parties' views: Jordanian political parties have diverse perspectives on migrant Labor and Labor market regulation. Some parties support organizing migrant Labor and developing policies to protect their rights and enhance their economic role. A prominent political party member stated in an face to face interviews: "We support migrant Labor but demand strict policies that guarantee their rights and limit exploitation." On the other hand, some parties prioritize local Labor. However, these parties acknowledge the importance of migrant Labor in certain sectors. During a 2023 political meeting, it was noted that reducing reliance on migrant Labor requires retraining and qualifying the local workforce to work in sectors heavily dependent on migrant workers.

- The role of civil society organizations: Civil society organizations play a critical role in protecting migrant workers' rights. In an interview with the director of a civil society

organization focused on Labor rights, she stated: "We provide legal and psychological support to migrant workers and work on raising their awareness of their rights." These organizations organize awareness campaigns to educate workers about their rights and offer support in cases of abuse.

A report from a local organization in 2023 indicated that migrant workers face major challenges, including wage inequality and poor working conditions. Civil society groups propose implementing vocational training programs for migrant workers, which can improve their skills and contribute to better living and working conditions. Moreover, these organizations work to build bridges between migrant workers and employers to promote mutual understanding and create a more positive work environment.

Findings



Findings

The analysis of the current situation for migrant workers in Jordan reveals several critical challenges that necessitate immediate reforms at both legislative and social levels. Here are the key findings from the study:

1. Lack of inclusivity in Jordanian Labor law:

- o The Jordanian Labor Law does not cover all categories of migrant workers, including domestic workers and agricultural labourers, who need expanded legal provisions either within the Labor law or related legislation. This lack of coverage leaves these workers without essential legal protections, such as paid leave or work compensation. The absence of comprehensive legal provisions exposes them to harsh working conditions without any legal recourse.

- o *“Many agricultural and domestic workers suffer from a lack of legal protection, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and harsh conditions.” - Statement from an Egyptian agricultural worker during an interview (2024).*

- o *“We need to broaden the scope of legislation to include everyone, especially those most at risk of abuse.” - Statement from a human rights lawyer working on migrant Labor cases (2024).*

2. Current legislation is insufficient to protect migrant workers' rights:

o Despite the existence of laws regulating migrant Labor, ineffective enforcement and weak oversight allow for continued violations. The kafala system remains one of the biggest challenges, restricting migrant workers' freedom to change jobs or leave the country, making them vulnerable to employer exploitation and abuse.

o *“Even though laws exist, the lack of enforcement and oversight leaves workers unprotected.”* – Statement from a Labor union representative (2024).

o *“The kafala system puts workers in a weak position, especially when they are forced to stay with the same employer without the option to leave.”* – Statement from a Filipino domestic worker (2024).

3. Restrictions on freedom of movement and job change (kafala system):

o The kafala system binds migrant workers to their registered employer and prevents them from changing employers without the employer's consent. This system creates a dependency dynamic where the workers are heavily reliant on their employers, granting employers significant control. This power is often exploited with

employers threatening deportation or reporting workers as absconded if they challenge or refuse the imposed conditions. This restriction limits workers' ability to improve their situation or work in a safe and healthy environment.

"I was threatened with deportation if I did not accept the new work conditions."
- A Bangladeshi worker describing employer exploitation (2024).

"The kafala system makes us prisoners of the employer, creating an environment rife with abuse and humiliation." - Statement from a construction worker (2024).

4. Lack of effective complaint and grievance mechanisms:

Migrant workers face difficulties in accessing effective complaint mechanisms due to a lack of awareness and complex procedures. If mechanisms are available, they remain difficult for workers with limited or no knowledge of Arabic or legal understanding. This lack of an accessible systems allows employers to escape accountability and makes it difficult for workers to claim their rights or seek compensation.

"It is hard to file a complaint or follow up on our case because we do not understand the legal procedures or the Arabic language." - Statement from a Nepali construction worker (2024). *"When I tried to file a complaint, I faced many challenges and did not receive enough support."* - Statement from a Filipino domestic worker (2024).

5. Weak penalties for Labor violations:

- o Although there are laws that prohibit certain violations, the penalties imposed for these offenses are often insufficient to act as a deterrent, resulting in many employers disregarding workplace laws and continuing to abuse and exploitation of migrant workers.
- o *“Even if employers who violate workers’ rights are caught, the penalties are not harsh enough.”* – Statement from a human rights activist (2024).
- o *“The absence of strict penalties allows employers to continue violations without fear of consequences.”* – Statement from an agricultural worker (2024).

6. Insufficient social protection:

Migrant workers face significant challenges in accessing health insurance and essential social services in Jordan. If injured or ill, workers bear significant financial burdens without receiving any support. This lack of social protection makes them vulnerable to health and economic crises without any safety net.

“If we get sick, we have to pay out of our pockets, even though our wages barely cover our needs.” – Statement from a Syrian construction worker (2024).

“We do not have health insurance or social services, which makes us more exposed to risks.” – Statement from an Egyptian agricultural worker (2024).

7. Insufficient awareness of workers' rights:

A lack of awareness campaigns leaves migrant workers at risk of exploitation, as many are unaware of their legal rights or how to defend them. Without this knowledge, workers are more likely to accept illegal working conditions, such as long hours without overtime pay or having their passports confiscated. Insufficient awareness makes it difficult for workers to benefit from the rights guaranteed to them by law.

o “We were never informed of our rights when we came to Jordan, and I did not know I could refuse unpaid overtime.” – Statement from a Bangladeshi worker (2024).

o “We need awareness campaigns to educate us about our rights and the laws that protect us.” – Statement from a Filipino domestic worker (2024).

8. Significant wage gaps and harsh working conditions:

Data shows that migrant workers are paid less than Jordanian workers in the same sectors and often work under inhumane conditions. Their wages in informal sectors range from 200 to 300 dinars per month, which is insufficient to cover basic living expenses. Additionally, many workers experience delays or irregular payment of wages, exacerbating their economic

vulnerability.

“My salary is not enough to cover my basic needs, and there are always delays in payment.” – Statement from a construction worker (2024).

9. Difficulties accessing justice:

Migrant workers face significant challenges when interacting with the Jordanian judicial system due to language and cultural barriers, as well as a lack of financial resources. Many are also unaware of the legal support available to them, making it difficult to file complaints or follow up on their cases effectively.

“I need a translator to understand court procedures, but one is often unavailable.” – Statement from a Filipino worker (2024).

“I don’t have the money to hire a lawyer, which makes me powerless to defend myself in legal cases.” – Statement from a Bangladeshi worker (2024).

10. Passport confiscation:

The practice of passport confiscation is common among employers to ensure that workers remain under their control. This illegal action severely restricts workers’ freedom of movement, making it difficult for them to change jobs or leave the country, and puts them in a situation of forced dependency.

“Having my passport taken made me feel like a prisoner, and I cannot even return home if I wanted to.” – Statement from a Nepali worker (2024).

o *“Employers threaten to confiscate our passports if we do not accept their work conditions.” - Statement from a Filipino domestic worker (2024).*

11. Insufficient Labor inspections:

The lack of sufficient Labor inspectors and inadequate training hinders the monitoring of workplaces employing migrant workers.

As a result, employers continue to violate Labor rights without fear of punishment, as inspections and enforcement remain ineffective.

“Inspectors rarely visit our work sites, and even when they do, they don’t ask about our real working conditions.” - Statement from a Syrian construction worker (2024).

“The lack of regular inspections allows violations to continue unchecked.” - Statement from an Egyptian agricultural worker (2024).

12. Exposure to discrimination and abuse:

Some migrant workers experience discrimination based on nationality, color, or gender, which may include verbal and physical abuse. The lack of strict anti-discrimination laws makes it challenging for workers to work in a safe and respectful environment, affecting their morale and mental health.

“I am discriminated against at work just because I am not Jordanian, and I often hear offensive remarks.” - Statement from a Filipino domestic worker

(2024).

“We face daily threats and humiliation, and there is no law that truly protects our dignity.” - Statement from a Bangladeshi industrial worker (2024).

13. Weak oversight of recruitment agencies:

The problems migrant workers face often begin at the recruitment stage in their home countries, where some unlicensed or unregulated agencies impose excessive fees or make unrealistic promises. This results in workers arriving in Jordan burdened with debt or unrealistic expectations about work conditions.

“I paid huge sums to the agency before coming to Jordan, but the conditions were entirely different from what was promised.” - Statement from a Nepali construction worker (2024).

14. Lack of adequate health and social protection:

o Analysis shows that %75 of migrant workers lack health insurance, making them more vulnerable to health risks. They often have to pay for healthcare out of pocket or rely on free clinics, which may not adequately meet their medical needs. Poor housing conditions, such as overcrowded and unsanitary accommodations, further exacerbate their social and health challenges.

“If we get sick, we have to pay ourselves, even if our wages are barely enough.” – Statement from a Syrian construction worker (2024).

15. Gaps in judicial processes for migrant workers:

Courts and legal procedures lack the necessary facilities to accommodate migrant workers and address their cases. This includes the absence of translation services and procedures that are not user-friendly for workers who cannot afford legal costs, limiting their ability to access justice.

“When I tried to file a complaint, there was no translator, and I had to wait weeks to communicate with a lawyer.” – Statement from a Filipino service sector worker (2024).

“The legal process is slow and complicated, and I don’t have the money to cover the expenses needed to defend my rights.” – Statement from a Bangladeshi industrial worker (2024).

16. Inadequate efforts to combat forced Labor and human trafficking:

Cases of forced Labor and human trafficking persist in Jordan, primarily affecting migrant workers. Weak oversight and insufficient governmental efforts to combat these issues leave workers vulnerable to coercive environments and exploitative

work conditions.

17. Lack of psychological and social support:

Migrant workers live isolated from their families and friends, facing immense psychological pressure without appropriate social or psychological support. This negatively impacts their mental well-being, especially in the absence of support networks.

18. Wage and compensation disparities:

Migrant workers often earn less than their Jordanian counterparts, even when performing the same work. This economic discrimination affects their ability to provide for their basic needs and highlights significant wage inequality.

“Even if we do the same job, our wages are much lower than those of Jordanian workers.” – Statement from a Syrian construction worker (2024).

19. Lack of training programs to develop skills:

The sectors in which migrant workers are employed often lack training programs that could help improve their skills, limiting their career prospects and reducing opportunities for financial advancement.

20. Lack of translation services in the legal system:

Migrant workers face language barriers when filing complaints or navigating the court system, making it difficult to defend their rights or understand legal procedures.

21. Ineffective Labor union representation:

Migrant workers lack adequate Labor union representation, limiting their ability to advocate for their rights or negotiate with employers. Existing unions in Jordan focus more on supporting Jordanian workers, often sidelining migrant Labor issues. This lack of representation increases their vulnerability to exploitation.

“We have no union to represent us, so we are left unprotected in dealing with employers.” - Statement from an Egyptian agricultural worker (2024).

“Unions only care about Jordanian workers, and we migrants don’t get any support.” - Statement from a Syrian construction worker (2024).

22. Limited impact of civil society efforts:

Civil society organizations play a pivotal role in providing legal and psychological support to migrant workers and organizing awareness campaigns to raise awareness of their rights. However, their impact remains limited due to challenges related to funding, restrictions on their work, and inadequate collaboration with

government entities.

“We try to provide legal and psychological support to migrant workers, but our resources are limited.” – Statement from the director of a civil society organization focused on Labor rights (2024).

“We need more cooperation with the government to expand our reach and offer better support to workers.” – Statement from a human rights activist (2024).

**Recommendations to
Strengthen Migrant
Workers Rights**



Recommendations to Strengthen Migrant Workers Rights

Based on the challenges faced by migrant Labor in Jordan and the findings of the study, a set of recommendations can be presented to improve the conditions of migrant workers and enhance their rights. These measures aim to ensure a decent and sustainable work environment and promote economic and social stability in the country:

1. Expand labor law inclusivity:
 - o Amend the Jordanian Labor Law to cover all categories of migrant workers, including domestic and agricultural workers, preventing exploitation and ensuring they receive full legal protection related to paid leave, work compensation, and a safe work environment.
2. Improve law enforcement and oversight:
 - o Strengthen government oversight by increasing the number and capacity of field inspectors by training them to monitor working conditions across sectors, particularly those heavily dependent on migrant Labor.
 - o Establish independent monitoring units to ensure compliance with Labor standards and activate accountability mechanisms with penalties for employers who violate workers' rights.

3. Reform the kafala system:

- o Amend the kafala system to allow migrant workers to change employers without needing the employer's consent and provide safeguards to prevent employers from abusing their power.
- o Implement strict laws prohibiting the confiscation of passports and enforce severe penalties on those who violate these regulations.

4. Enhance complaint mechanisms:

- o Develop an efficient, multilingual complaint system that includes free legal support for migrant workers to facilitate the submission and follow-up of complaints.
- o Establish legal support centres in areas with high concentrations of migrant workers, offering translation services and facilitating access to justice.

5. Impose strict and deterrent penalties:

- o Enforce stricter penalties for employers who violate laws related to migrant workers' rights, ensuring that these penalties are sufficient to deter future violations.
- o Conduct regular inspection campaigns to ensure employers adhere to fair Labor standards and assess the effectiveness of current laws.

6. Provide comprehensive social and health protection:
 - o Expand health insurance coverage to include all migrant workers and ensure the provision of accessible and appropriate healthcare services.
 - o Improve housing conditions for migrant workers by setting specific standards for safe and sanitary housing and ensuring employers comply with these standards.
7. Launch awareness and education programs:
 - o Organize awareness campaigns to educate migrant workers about their legal rights and available protection mechanisms, focusing on groups most vulnerable to abuse.
 - o Offer training programs to migrant workers to improve their skills and increase their opportunities in the Labor market, ensuring the development of their professional capacities.
8. Facilitate access to justice:
 - o Simplify judicial procedures for migrant workers by providing translation and legal guidance services, ensuring that processes are quick and effective.
 - o Establish legal aid offices to assist migrant workers in filing cases and complaints against violations.
9. Regulate recruitment agencies:

- o Strengthen oversight of recruitment agencies to ensure they adhere to fair employment standards and prevent them from imposing illegal fees on migrant workers.
 - o Create a national registry of recruitment agencies to ensure transparency in hiring practices and enforce strict standards to protect workers' rights.
10. Empower civil society organizations and Labor unions:
- Support Labor unions to include migrant workers in their programs and activities, providing effective representation to advocate for their rights.
 - Foster collaboration between the government and civil society organizations to organize awareness campaigns and offer legal and social support to migrant workers.
11. Establish protective policies during crises:
- Develop crisis response strategies, like those needed during the COVID19- pandemic, that include financial and health support for migrant workers, ensuring they receive vaccines and medical care without fear of deportation.
12. Develop training and capacity-building programs:
- Launch vocational training initiatives to enhance migrant workers' skills and equip them with the necessary abilities to

improve their job prospects, involving employers in supporting these programs.

13. Reduce the wage gap:

- Implement fair wage policies to ensure equal pay for migrant and local workers performing the same job and improve mechanisms for regular and timely salary payments.

14. Promote social integration and psychological support:

- Provide psychological and social support services for migrant workers, especially considering the psychological pressures they face while being away from their families.

- Encourage community interaction between migrant workers and the Jordanian society through initiatives aimed at fostering mutual understanding and respect.

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