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## **Pre-Departure Worker Awareness: A Key to Ensuring Rights and Responsibilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

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### **Introduction**

In the contemporary era of globalization, labor migration has become a foundational component of international economic interaction. Each year, millions of individuals from developing countries relocate in pursuit of employment opportunities that offer the promise of financial security and improved living standards. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), as one of the primary labor-receiving nations within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), accommodates a substantial segment of this migrant workforce, particularly from South and Southeast Asia. Within this dynamic context, the notion of pre-departure worker awareness has emerged as a pivotal element that shapes not only the individual worker's experience but also the long-term viability of the contractual and legal frameworks that govern labor migration.

Pre-departure awareness denotes the process through which prospective migrant workers acquire critical knowledge and practical understanding prior to departing their countries of origin. This knowledge spans various dimensions, including legal rights and obligations under host-country legislation, contractual stipulations, workplace culture, societal norms, communication practices, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and safety protocols. Fundamentally, it serves as a preventive strategy designed to reduce workers' vulnerabilities and to empower them to make informed and autonomous decisions throughout the migration process.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of this awareness cannot be overstated, particularly for low-skilled or semi-skilled workers who may have limited education or no prior experience working abroad. These individuals are often targeted by unscrupulous recruiters, traffickers, or employers who exploit informational asymmetries to commit abuses such as contract substitution, wage theft, passport confiscation, or excessive working hours. Pre-departure education serves as a first line of defense against such practices by enabling workers to identify irregularities, assert their rights, and seek help when necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO). (2021). Labour Migration in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries: Trends, Challenges and Policy Responses. Geneva: ILO.



From a human rights perspective, access to information is a foundational right that underpins the exercise of other rights. By fostering informed consent and personal agency, pre-departure awareness aligns with the broader goals of ethical recruitment and decent work, as advocated by the International Labour Organization (ILO). It also contributes to reducing the incidence of forced labor, debt bondage, and other forms of modern slavery that remain a persistent challenge in migration corridors.

A well-informed worker is not merely a passive recipient of employment but an active participant in a regulated labor ecosystem. Understanding one's rights and responsibilities enhances the clarity and stability of employment relationships. When workers are fully aware of what is expected of them—such as punctuality, professionalism, and compliance with national laws—they are more likely to meet those expectations, contributing to workplace harmony and productivity<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time, awareness of rights—including access to legal recourse, health care, rest periods, and wage entitlements—can deter exploitative behaviors by employers. Employers who know their workers are educated about labor law are less likely to engage in illegal or abusive practices. This knowledge dynamic not only enhances contractual stability but also reduces the likelihood of labor disputes, absconding, or early termination of contracts, all of which have economic and reputational consequences for employers and labor markets alike<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, a worker's awareness can influence interpersonal dynamics within the workplace. Cultural misunderstandings, feelings of alienation, or miscommunication between employers and foreign employees are often rooted in ignorance or lack of preparation. Pre-departure training that includes elements of intercultural communication, workplace etiquette, and grievance procedures helps preempt these issues and foster a more inclusive, rights-based work environment.

Tackling the challenges of migrant labor protection requires cooperation between sending and receiving countries. In many origin states—such as the Philippines, Nepal, and Bangladesh—pre-departure orientation seminars are mandatory, often delivered by government agencies, NGOs, or recruitment companies. These programs cover topics such as employment contracts, local labor laws, cultural adaptation, and health and safety standards<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has shown increasing commitment to complementing and reinforcing these efforts. Through bilateral labor agreements, the Kingdom has cooperated with sending countries to ensure ethical recruitment, standardized contracts, and the dissemination of accurate

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<sup>2</sup> Long, L. (2022). "Pre-departure Training and Labor Market Outcomes for Migrant Workers." *Journal of Migration Studies*, 18(1), 55–78.

<sup>3</sup> Ruhs, M. (2016). *The Price of Rights: Regulating International Labor Migration*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>4</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2020). *Pre-departure Orientation Programs for Migrant Workers: Global Good Practices*. Geneva

information to prospective workers. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) has also launched initiatives in line with Vision 2030 that aim to enhance labor mobility, protect migrant rights, and align national labor regulations with international standards<sup>5</sup>.

This dual responsibility reflects a shift from a unilateral, state-centric model of migration management to a shared governance framework, where both origin and destination countries work together to promote safe, orderly, and regular migration. Importantly, such cooperation must not be limited to formal agreements; it should include the design and monitoring of training materials, the vetting of recruitment agencies, and the implementation of accountability mechanisms for labor rights violations.

The present study seeks to analyze the critical role of pre-departure awareness in shaping the labor experiences of migrant workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Recognizing the complex interplay between legal frameworks, institutional capacity, and individual agency, the research adopts an analytical approach that draws upon regulatory texts, international conventions, case studies, and policy evaluations.

Specifically, this research aims to:

- 1) Clarify the conceptual and operational meaning of pre-departure awareness in the migration context.
- 2) Investigate the legal and institutional landscape of labor protection in Saudi Arabia.
- 3) Examine the role of origin and destination countries in the design and implementation of awareness programs.
- 4) Assess the effectiveness and limitations of current awareness mechanisms.
- 5) Propose evidence-based recommendations to strengthen the governance of labor migration through enhanced information access and worker education.

Through this inquiry, the article seeks to contribute to scholarly discourse on labor rights and to support policy development that promotes ethical, rights-based labor migration to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### **The Importance of Worker Awareness Prior to Migration**

Worker awareness prior to migration constitutes a foundational pillar in the structure of modern labor governance, especially in labor-receiving countries such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As international labor mobility intensifies, the concept of pre-departure awareness has acquired critical importance in safeguarding the dignity, rights, and productivity of migrant labor forces.

Worker awareness is broadly understood as the degree to which migrant workers possess essential knowledge about their rights, responsibilities, and the legal, cultural, and institutional frameworks

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (KSA). (2023). Annual Labour Market Report. Riyadh.

of the destination country prior to their deployment. According to the International Labour Organization, pre-departure orientation is an essential intervention that prepares workers to navigate the migration cycle safely and with dignity by equipping them with accurate and actionable information<sup>6</sup>. This includes legal awareness, familiarity with employment contracts, dispute resolution procedures, and adaptation to cultural expectations in the workplace. Scholars have emphasized that such preparation is directly correlated with the successful integration of migrant workers and the reduction of rights violations<sup>7</sup>.

In this context, worker awareness functions not merely as an informational tool but as a preventive and protective mechanism against potential vulnerabilities that migrant workers may face abroad. By empowering workers with such awareness, sending and receiving countries work together to minimize risks of exploitation, trafficking, and contractual misunderstandings. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, within the framework of Vision 2030, has implemented several initiatives aimed at enhancing migrant worker awareness as part of its broader labor reform strategy<sup>8</sup>. These measures are not only consistent with international labor standards but also reflect the Kingdom's ongoing commitment to ethical labor practices. Empirical studies from the Gulf region suggest that countries investing in structured pre-departure orientation programs experience fewer labor disputes and higher job satisfaction rates among foreign workers<sup>9</sup>.

The practical implications of awareness are particularly visible in the contrast between informed and uninformed workers. Informed workers are able to interpret the contents of employment contracts, identify deceptive recruitment tactics, and pursue remedies when rights are violated. They are also more likely to fulfill their legal obligations, including renewing residency documents and adhering to safety codes, thereby ensuring long-term contractual compliance. Conversely, workers lacking such awareness are often subjected to contract substitution, excessive recruitment fees, and legal infractions stemming from ignorance rather than intent. This disparity creates structural inefficiencies in the labor market and increases the probability of labor disputes, early contract terminations, and reputational damage for employers. A 2021 World Bank report underlined that legal illiteracy among migrant workers remains one of the primary causes of workplace exploitation<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), "Pre-Departure Orientation Programs for Migrant Workers," Geneva, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Wickramasekara, Piyasiri. "Protection of Migrant Workers in the Gulf: Rhetoric and Reality." ILO, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (Saudi Arabia), "Labour Reform Initiatives under Vision 2030," Riyadh, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Khan, Ayesha. "Labour Reforms and Migrant Workers in the Gulf: Assessing the Effectiveness of Pre-Departure Programs." *Journal of Middle Eastern Labor Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2022, pp. 201–219.

<sup>10</sup> The World Bank. "Labor Migration in the Gulf: Governance and Regulation," Washington, D.C., 2021.

At the individual level, worker awareness functions as a shield against abuse and an instrument for empowerment. Informed workers can detect and resist illegal practices, report abusive behavior, and demand adherence to agreed contractual terms. The Saudi Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has actively promoted such awareness through multilingual digital platforms and formal orientation programs, thereby facilitating access to vital information<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, by understanding the host country's legal and cultural landscape, workers are better equipped to adapt socially and psychologically, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and improved mental well-being. Research in labor psychology has consistently affirmed the relationship between prior knowledge of workplace expectations and positive mental health outcomes for migrants<sup>12</sup>.

From an employer's perspective, worker awareness contributes to clearer communication, contractual stability, and workforce reliability. Workers who understand their obligations are more consistent in performance, less prone to conflicts, and more likely to engage constructively with workplace structures. These dynamics foster increased productivity, improve workplace morale, and reduce the administrative and legal costs associated with labor disputes. Moreover, well-informed workers are often catalysts for improved occupational safety, as they are more likely to comply with regulations and encourage collective adherence among peers. A comparative study between the Philippines and Nepal found that migrants from countries with robust pre-departure programs reported higher retention rates and fewer workplace incidents<sup>13</sup>.

On a macro level, the promotion of worker awareness enhances the international reputation of the host country. For Saudi Arabia, visible investments in labor protection and worker education demonstrate compliance with global human rights frameworks and international labor agreements. Such efforts not only solidify bilateral relations with labor-sending countries but also reinforce the Kingdom's position as a regional leader in labor governance. In this regard, pre-departure awareness emerges not merely as a labor policy but as a strategic asset in shaping a just, sustainable, and globally respected labor system.

### **Workers' Rights under the Saudi Labor Law**

The Saudi Labor Law establishes a comprehensive framework of rights designed to ensure dignity, protection, and fair treatment for all workers in the Kingdom. These rights are grounded in Islamic values and international labor standards, and they reflect the Kingdom's ongoing commitment to building a balanced and just labor market as part of Vision 2030.

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<sup>11</sup> Saudi Press Agency (SPA), "MHRSD Launches Multilingual Portal to Educate Migrant Workers," 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Bhugra, Dinesh, and Matthew A. Becker. "Migration, Cultural Bereavement and Cultural Identity." *World Psychiatry*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2005, pp. 18–24.

<sup>13</sup> Jureidini, Ray. "Nepali and Filipino Migrant Workers: A Comparison of Pre-Departure Preparation." *Asian Migration Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2021, pp. 67–84.

Among the most fundamental rights is the right to fair and timely wages. The Kingdom has instituted the Wage Protection System (WPS), an electronic monitoring platform that tracks salary payments to ensure that workers receive their compensation in accordance with the terms of their contracts<sup>14</sup>. This system enhances transparency and accountability and reduces cases of wage withholding and unjust deductions, which have historically been among the most common grievances of migrant workers. The WPS serves as a model of digital innovation in labor governance and is regarded as one of the Kingdom's most effective tools in safeguarding worker rights<sup>15</sup>.

In addition to wage protections, the Saudi Labor Law outlines workers' rights to humane working hours and sufficient rest. The standard working time is limited to eight hours per day or forty-eight hours per week, with one rest day—usually Friday—mandated each week. Workers are also entitled to annual paid leave of no less than twenty-one days, which may increase to thirty days after five years of continuous service<sup>16</sup>. These provisions are intended to promote a healthy work-life balance, reduce burnout, and foster greater productivity. Moreover, during official holidays and special occasions, workers are entitled to additional paid leave as stipulated by law.

Healthcare access is another critical pillar of worker protection. Employers are required to provide health insurance coverage for all workers, either through enrollment in public health systems or through private insurance schemes<sup>17</sup>. The General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI) plays a significant role in administering benefits related to occupational injuries, pensions, and disability support. This integration of healthcare with social insurance reflects the Kingdom's holistic approach to labor welfare, ensuring that workers are not only safe at work but also supported in cases of illness or accidents.

Furthermore, the Saudi Labor Law guarantees workers the right to end-of-service benefits as a form of financial security upon the conclusion of employment. This benefit is calculated based on the duration of service and final salary, providing a lump-sum payment that recognizes the worker's contribution to the enterprise. Such a provision is consistent with the Islamic principle of fair compensation and is widely seen as a key motivator for long-term employment and loyalty<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (Saudi Arabia), "Wage Protection System Overview," 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Shammari, Noura. "Digital Reform and Labor Rights in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study of the Wage Protection System." *Arabian Journal of Labor Policy*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2023, pp. 45–67.

<sup>16</sup> Saudi Labor Law, Articles 98–109

<sup>17</sup> Council of Cooperative Health Insurance (CCHI), "Mandatory Health Coverage for Private Sector Workers," Riyadh, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Harbi, Saeed. "End-of-Service Benefits in the GCC: Legal Frameworks and Economic Implications." *Gulf Labour Review*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2021, pp. 88–103.

To enforce these rights, the Kingdom has established robust institutional mechanisms. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) is the principal authority responsible for implementing labor laws, conducting inspections, mediating disputes, and raising awareness through education and outreach. The Ministry also operates multiple platforms for workers to file complaints and seek resolution, such as the Mudad platform, the (19911) call center, and in-person offices across the country<sup>19</sup>

Workers can lodge grievances through these channels without fear of retaliation, as the Saudi legal system protects complainants and promotes transparency in resolution processes. Labor courts have been equipped with specialized judges and streamlined procedures to ensure timely and fair adjudication of disputes. Penalties for employers who violate labor regulations may include monetary fines, license suspensions, and even criminal charges in cases of severe abuse or repeated offenses<sup>20</sup>.

### **Duties and Obligations of Workers under Saudi Labor Law**

Worker awareness is not confined solely to rights and entitlements—it must also encompass a clear understanding of duties and responsibilities. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has emphasized this balance within its labor legislation, recognizing that the success of labor relations hinges upon mutual understanding and cooperation. Workers, particularly those migrating for employment, must uphold not only the terms of their contracts but also the laws and cultural expectations of the host society.

Among the most fundamental obligations of a worker is adherence to the employment contract. Saudi labor law regards the employment contract as a cornerstone of the relationship between employer and employee. It is essential that workers read and understand the terms of this contract thoroughly prior to signing, particularly regarding job descriptions, salary, working conditions, and termination clauses<sup>21</sup>. A well-informed worker is less likely to face disputes or fall victim to contractual misunderstandings. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) has issued several guidelines stressing the importance of legal literacy for migrant workers, and many pre-departure training programs are designed with this in mind<sup>22</sup>.

Once employed, the worker is bound to fulfill the specific duties outlined in the contract. Performing tasks beyond the agreed job scope without formal consent may constitute a breach of contract. Article 60 of the Saudi Labor Law stipulates that an employer may not require a worker to undertake tasks unrelated to their original assignment unless necessity dictates and for a limited

<sup>19</sup> MHRSD, "Labor Dispute Resolution Mechanisms," 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Saudi Labor Law, Article 239; MHRSD Regulations and Penalties Manual, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> MHRSD, "Worker Rights and Responsibilities Awareness Toolkit," 2023.

<sup>22</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), "Pre-Departure Orientation Programs for Migrant Workers," 2022



duration<sup>23</sup>. Respecting job boundaries not only safeguards the worker but also promotes efficiency and clarity in the workplace.

Respect for the laws and culture of the Kingdom is another key component of worker obligations. Migrant workers are expected to comply fully with Saudi laws—including labor, residency, and public conduct regulations. Violations may result in legal consequences such as fines, detention, or deportation. To aid in legal compliance, the Saudi government has developed multilingual awareness campaigns targeting common areas of misunderstanding among foreign workers<sup>24</sup>. Awareness of these regulations ensures lawful conduct and enhances the worker's integration into Saudi society.

Beyond formal law, cultural norms play a significant role in shaping expectations for behavior. Workers are urged to avoid any actions that conflict with the values and traditions of the Kingdom. This includes maintaining appropriate dress codes, observing religious sensitivities, and avoiding behavior that may be considered offensive in public or private contexts. Demonstrating cultural respect not only avoids legal issues but also builds goodwill and trust between migrant workers and the communities in which they live and work.

Should disputes arise, Saudi Arabia offers structured mechanisms for legal recourse. Workers can approach their respective embassies or consulates for support and legal advice. These diplomatic missions, in coordination with the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, often serve as intermediaries in conflict resolution, especially in cases involving labor violations<sup>25</sup>.

In addition to consular support, the Saudi government has established formal channels for lodging complaints. Workers may use platforms such as the "Mudad" electronic system, call the 19911 hotline, or visit labor offices to report grievances. The MHRSD oversees these mechanisms to ensure fairness and transparency. Articles 221–222 of the Saudi Labor Law outline the procedural framework for filing complaints and pursuing legal remedies<sup>26</sup>. These provisions are critical in upholding justice and ensuring workers are not left without recourse.

### **The Role of Sending and Receiving Countries in Worker Awareness**

Worker awareness is not solely the responsibility of the individual employee—it is also a product of institutional collaboration between the sending and receiving countries. Both parties play a pivotal role in ensuring that workers are properly informed of their rights, responsibilities, and the

<sup>23</sup> Saudi Labor Law, Article 60.

<sup>24</sup> Saudi Press Agency (SPA), "New Guidelines for Expatriate Workers in the Kingdom," 2022

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Saudi Arabia), "Guidelines for Cooperation with Foreign Missions," 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Saudi Labor Law, Articles 221–222; MHRSD Grievance Procedures Manual, 2023.

environment they are about to enter. This cooperation has become increasingly essential in a globalized labor market, where migrant workers are exposed to varying legal systems, cultural expectations, and employment practices. Saudi Arabia, as a major destination country for foreign workers, has demonstrated considerable commitment to fostering awareness, while many labor-sending countries have established mechanisms to prepare workers before their departure.

Labor-sending countries often begin this process by setting up specialized training and awareness centers. These institutions are typically managed by ministries of labor or manpower and are tasked with providing pre-departure orientation (PDO) programs. These programs include briefings on labor laws in the host country, living conditions, cultural norms, and dispute resolution channels. The International Labour Organization has emphasized the necessity of PDOs, noting that they reduce vulnerability to abuse and improve labor outcomes for migrant workers<sup>27</sup>. For instance, the Philippines' Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) integrates such orientation into its certification programs for overseas workers<sup>28</sup>.

Another best practice involves issuing legal guidebooks to each worker prior to travel. These booklets summarize the core legal protections in the destination country, explain employment contract clauses, and provide emergency contact information. Studies have shown that workers who possess such material are more likely to seek help when needed and are better at avoiding contractual violations<sup>29</sup>. Nepal and Bangladesh have both institutionalized the distribution of these legal handbooks, often with support from international development agencies such as the IOM<sup>30</sup>.

Embassies and labor attachés from the sending countries also contribute to the educational process. Positioned in host countries like Saudi Arabia, these offices provide legal advice, assist with documentation, and intervene in labor disputes. Their presence reassures workers and strengthens diplomatic cooperation on labor matters. According to a study conducted by Rahman (2019), Bangladeshi labor missions in the Gulf States have become crucial touchpoints for workers facing challenges abroad<sup>31</sup>

On the receiving side, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken a proactive approach in elevating labor awareness. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) regularly organizes multilingual awareness campaigns aimed at incoming workers. These campaigns utilize media channels, airport signage, and induction sessions to disseminate key information about labor

<sup>27</sup>ILO, "Pre-Departure Orientation Programs for Migrant Workers: Best Practices," Geneva, 2022, pp. 5–6.

<sup>28</sup> TESDA, "Guidelines for Overseas Training and Certification," Manila, 2021, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup>Martin, Philip, "Merchants of Labor: Recruiters and International Labor Migration," Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 134–136.

<sup>30</sup>International Organization for Migration, "Enhancing Protection of Migrant Workers," Kathmandu, 2020, pp. 21–22.

<sup>31</sup> Rahman, Mizanur, "State, Identity and the Politics of Migrant Labor Representation: The Case of Bangladesh," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2019, pp. 74–75.

rights, legal responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms<sup>32</sup>. In 2021 alone, over 300,000 workers benefited from such initiatives, particularly through materials translated into their native languages<sup>33</sup>.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia distributes printed and digital booklets at points of entry and during recruitment processes. These materials are often provided in cooperation with recruitment agencies and embassies. The content includes explanations of the Saudi Labor Law, tips for cultural adaptation, and contacts for complaints and emergencies and this is observed that the availability of these resources at early stages of employment significantly reduces conflict between workers and employers<sup>34</sup>

Reception and orientation centers also contribute significantly to this process. Upon arrival, many workers are directed to centers where they are briefed on workplace expectations, local laws, and access to health and legal services. These sessions are especially beneficial to low-literacy or first-time migrant workers. Some of these programs are managed in partnership with NGOs and international organizations. For instance, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking in Saudi Arabia has collaborated with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to incorporate awareness training into anti-trafficking initiatives<sup>35</sup>.

These combined efforts reflect a growing consensus that migration should not be approached passively but rather as a process requiring structured preparation and support. The shared responsibility between sending and receiving countries serves to create a safer, more equitable labor migration framework. As evidenced in numerous studies, workers who are equipped with knowledge and institutional backing are more resilient and productive, contributing not only to their host economies but also to development in their home countries<sup>36</sup>.

### **Challenges and Solutions in Promoting Labor Awareness**

Despite the progress made in promoting labor awareness, significant challenges persist that hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. One of the most prominent issues is the limited legal awareness among many workers prior to their departure. Workers from rural or underprivileged backgrounds often have minimal access to legal education or training, leaving them unaware of

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<sup>32</sup> MHRSD, "Annual Report on Labor Market Initiatives," Riyadh, 2021, pp. 39–41

<sup>33</sup> Saudi Press Agency (SPA), "Labor Awareness Campaigns Reach Thousands of Migrants," March 2022

<sup>34</sup> Al-Dosari, Hassan, "Legal Literacy and Conflict Prevention among Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia," *Journal of Middle Eastern Law*, Vol. 12, 2020, pp. 88–90

<sup>35</sup> UNODC and NCCHT, "Joint Training on Anti-Trafficking Measures and Worker Awareness," Riyadh, 2023, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Wickramasekara, Piyasiri, "Rights-Based Governance of Labour Migration," ILO Working Paper No. 42, Geneva, 2015, pp. 23–25.

their rights and the contractual obligations that await them in the host country. As Koser (2013) notes, low levels of education correlate directly with vulnerability to misinformation and labor exploitation<sup>37</sup>

A second major challenge is the language and cultural barrier between migrant workers and the host society. Many foreign workers arriving in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia speak neither Arabic nor English proficiently, making it difficult for them to comprehend labor laws, employment contracts, and grievance procedures. Research by the ILO (2020) indicates that language gaps not only obstruct legal comprehension but also impede the integration process and increase the risk of workplace misunderstandings<sup>38</sup>.

Another complication arises from the proliferation of illegal recruitment agents and unregulated brokers. These intermediaries often deceive workers with false promises, exaggerated salaries, and misleading contract terms. A study conducted by the Migrant Forum in Asia reveals that a significant number of grievances lodged by workers can be traced back to fraudulent recruitment practices before departure<sup>39</sup>. These agents, operating outside the formal system, frequently bypass legal safeguards, exposing migrants to human trafficking and forced labor conditions<sup>40</sup>.

To overcome these challenges, a multi-tiered approach is essential. First, empowering the role of embassies and labor attachés can greatly enhance worker awareness. Embassies serve as frontline institutions for safeguarding migrant rights. Their efforts should be supported through increased funding, personnel training, and partnerships with local civil society organizations. Countries like the Philippines and Indonesia have demonstrated effective embassy-based labor protection models that could be adapted by other nations<sup>41</sup>.

Second, the obligation to deliver pre-departure orientation should be institutionalized and enforced through recruitment agencies. Governments, both sending and receiving, must mandate certified agencies to conduct awareness sessions as a licensing condition. These sessions should include not only legal content but also practical simulations and multilingual guides. In Saudi Arabia, efforts by the Ministry of Human Resources to accredit recruitment agencies provide a strong foundation to implement this requirement<sup>42</sup>

Third, digital transformation offers promising solutions for enhancing awareness. Mobile applications, interactive websites, and video tutorials—available in multiple languages—can make

<sup>37</sup> Koser, Khalid. "International Migration: A Very Short Introduction." Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 44–45.

<sup>38</sup> ILO, "Language and Labour: Bridging Communication Gaps in Labour Migration," Geneva, 2020, pp. 8–9.

<sup>39</sup> Migrant Forum in Asia, "Recruitment Violations in the Asia-Gulf Migration Corridor," Manila, 2021, p. 17

<sup>40</sup> IOM, "Countering Trafficking in Migrant Recruitment: A Global Perspective," Geneva, 2019, pp. 27–29.

<sup>41</sup> Battistella, Graziano, "Philippine Labor Migration: Policies and Practices," Scalabrini Migration Center, 2018, pp. 55–57.

<sup>42</sup> MHRSD, "Recruitment Agency Accreditation Standards," Riyadh, 2022, p. 13.



critical information accessible at any time. The use of AI chatbots and SMS services has already proven effective in labor migration projects in South Asia. Saudi Arabia can scale similar technologies to reach incoming workers, particularly those from remote or technologically underserved regions<sup>43</sup>.

By addressing the root causes of misinformation and barriers to understanding, these solutions can foster a more informed labor force. A legally literate worker is not only more protected but also more productive, cooperative, and integrated into the host society. Thus, overcoming the challenges to labor awareness is not a marginal issue—it is a cornerstone of ethical and sustainable labor migration.

### **Conclusion**

This research has demonstrated that pre-departure worker awareness constitutes a foundational element in promoting fair and lawful labor migration to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Understanding labor rights and obligations prior to departure not only empowers workers to protect themselves from exploitation but also enhances their integration into the host country's labor market. The Kingdom has taken commendable steps to institutionalize awareness mechanisms through legislation, multilingual campaigns, orientation centers, and strategic collaborations with labor-sending countries. These efforts reflect Saudi Arabia's commitment to upholding international labor standards and improving the overall quality of contractual relationships.

Nevertheless, the responsibility for promoting awareness is a shared one. Labor-sending countries must reinforce their infrastructure for legal education and pre-departure training, while the Kingdom continues to innovate and expand its outreach to incoming workers. Addressing challenges such as language barriers and misinformation requires targeted, culturally sensitive solutions that leverage both human and technological resources. Ultimately, investing in awareness is not a peripheral concern but a strategic imperative—one that fosters dignity, productivity, and mutual respect in cross-border employment relations.

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<sup>43</sup> UNDP, "Digital Innovations in Labor Migration Management," New Delhi, 2023, pp. 34–36.

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