

Process

Challenges

Step 1 Companies decision to recruit
Construction company decides on the number and skills of the workers

Step 2 Companies – Ministry of Labour

- Construction Company :
 - issues “demand letters” specifying the terms and conditions of employment for workers
 - may give power of attorney to the recruitment agency to fulfil the visa processing requirements on behalf of the company.
- The “demand letters” require certification by relevant labour governing bodies:
 - The government provide permission to issue visas to construction companies at a nominal cost

Step 3 Companies – Local agents or brokers (optional)

- The Company may decide to hire a local Qatari agent or broker, which will act as an intermediary between the Company as employer and the agencies in the countries of origin of workers.

OR

- The Ministry of Labour may grant approval to an employer or his representative to directly recruit workers from abroad.

In any event, in accordance with the law, the party that is recruiting the workers is prohibited from collecting any sum from recruited workers.

Step 4 Countries of Origin Agencies (mandatory)

- In order to find suitable candidates and carry out the hiring process in the workers’ country of origin, companies are required by law to use the services of an accredited qualified person or company.
- Each of the countries of origin has a list of recruitment agencies allowed to recruit workers from abroad, for foreign companies. The companies can only use these listed agencies.
- The agents in the countries of origin generally act through layers of sub-agents across the country.

Step 5 Workers’ pre-departure – departure – arrival fees

Pre-departure:

- To be selected and interviewed, workers from rural areas have to find the sub-agent (generally head of the village) who is connected to the recruitment agencies in the city, which is generally subject to a fee.
- Candidates have to pass a test to verify their skills to qualify for a specific type of job, which is also subject to a fee.
- Once candidates are selected, the countries of origin agents prepare and process the necessary documents:
 - Passport
 - Insurance
 - Visa

These steps are all subject to payment of costs and fees.

Departure:

- Transit travel, from the workers’ rural village to the city, is subject to additional fees.
- Airfare (not always paid by the companies)

Arrival:

In accordance with Qatari law, to be employed and be granted a work permit the migrant worker has to fulfil the following conditions:

- Obtain a residency permit
- Be medically fit

The document processing for the residency permit and medical tests are subject to a fee.

In Qatar, the Ministry of Labour has quotas and therefore decides to which nationalities the visas are granted.

From a companies’ perspective the fewer nationalities it has to deal with the better. Ideally, the team of workers along with the head of the team would be from the same nationality, which implies better communication and therefore efficiency in delivering the works.

Demanding visas for fewer nationalities from the Ministry is a lengthy and difficult process.

The visa “demand letter”, has become a valuable commodity and has therefore been the subject of illicit sales by company representatives to agents or brokers that would, in turn, sell them to other companies.

These intermediaries are often involved in the sale of “demand letters” to the highest bidder, generating illegal profit at the ultimate expense of the workers, which end up paying the actual recruitment fees themselves.

Practices like this may occur with or without the knowledge of the employing company, and can occur regardless of whether a company pays directly the registered recruitment agency in the worker’s country of origin.

Agents from the countries of origin and the network of sub-agents add up layers of complexity to manage the recruitment process while increasing the costs.

Sub-agents are essential for locating and recruiting rural workers in remote areas. In many cases, these sub-agents are local heads of villages or family members of those being recruited. All these sub-agents can at any time charge the candidates with fees.

The practice of “double charging” is very common: Recruiters and sub-agents charge workers even when employing companies are paying the recruitment fees.

Abusive fees & corruption

Candidates risk to be charged excessive fees at every step of the recruitment process even when the company pays the agents for all recruitment fees

Deception

Candidates also risk being deceived by corrupt agents that offer different contractual terms that the ones promised at the time of recruitment in the worker’s countries of origin.

Recruitment fees put workers into extreme debt

which many migrants are able to pay only after taking out loans with high interest rates – leading to extreme indebtedness and contribute to other forms of

Debt Bondage

Forced Labour

Human Trafficking