



20 YEARS OF

Business & Human Rights
Resource Centre



After the final whistle

MIGRANT WORKERS SPEAK OUT ON
EXPLOITATION DURING QATAR WORLD CUP 2022

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Executive summary

Six months after the final whistle of the Qatar 2022 World Cup in Lusail Stadium, international media, football teams, sponsors and fans have left the emirate, taking with them the world’s brightest media spotlight – one FIFA claimed would drive improvements for the migrant workers that made the World Cup possible. Yet, as the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre’s (the Resource Centre) research demonstrates, while the world revelled in the spectacle of the tournament, workers toiling behind the scenes suffered human and labour rights abuses – the effects of which were felt acutely by migrant workers, mostly from across South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Africa. Today, remedy for migrant workers in Qatar is severely limited, reflective of failures by companies, FIFA, football associations and government to prevent abuse and to provide redress when it occurred. This blight on a beloved tournament must be remedied, and as this report demonstrates, must never be repeated.

“ Yes, I received partial wages. And I am getting QR1,100 less each month. Management promised me when tournament will be finished, we will pay you all. They have not paid for anything yet.”

Bangladeshi security guard, on his World Cup legacy of wage theft

This report takes as its starting point the daily experience of migrant workers employed in Qatar during the World Cup, whose voices are all too often silenced. It presents a picture of Doha in November and December 2022 through workers’ expectations, experiences and reflections alongside employers’ failures to protect them and remedy the abuse suffered. The Resource Centre has worked with partner organisations to interview a total of 78 returnees and workers still in Qatar. Interviewees are from six countries across South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan) and East Africa (Kenya and Uganda). Conversations could only be conducted anonymously and without naming workplaces, reflecting workers’ deep fear of punishment for speaking up. Interviewed between March and May 2023 on aspects of their recruitment, living and working conditions during the World Cup, their testimony stands in stark contrast to the luxurious treatment for FIFA officials, sponsors and football teams participating in the tournament.

“ We were given cards from FIFA that had numbers on it we could call. However, as soon as the FIFA World Cup ended, all those numbers went nowhere, and it seems that FIFA packed up shop as soon as the World Cup ended and didn’t care about those who were left behind.”

Pakistani security guard, reflecting on FIFA complaints channels

Most starkly, all interviewed workers experienced labour exploitation during the World Cup, including 20 workers employed by official Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup contractors and four workers for subcontractors of official contractors. Sixteen workers were employed or subcontracted by multinational companies. Payment of extortionate and illegal recruitment fees was rife, with 73 workers paying to obtain employment and almost two-thirds taking out loans to do so. Twenty-one workers took out loans to pay fees within a year to kick-off; several still faced months of repayments at the time of interviews – after they had completed short-term contracts – confirming [civil society predictions](#) workers would not be working long enough to clear debts.

“ I took loan of NPR130,000 from a relative at a 24% interest rate. It has been a year now, I settled it... Although there were no significant consequences, I had to borrow money from co-workers in Qatar to repay the loan.”

Nepali baker in a hospitality company on the burden of recruitment fees

Once in Qatar most suffered wage theft and lacked overtime pay – even the jobs themselves were different than promised. Despite Qatar’s claim in the years leading up to the tournament it had abolished the exploitative Kafala system, workers’ ability to change jobs or raise grievances transparently and without fear of reprisal remained heavily restricted. Significantly, while FIFA made much of what it said was a “[dedicated platform](#)” for reporting human rights abuse linked to the World Cup, only a small minority of interviewees were aware of its existence and none used it. Workers described some improvements such as retaining possession of their passports, and most reported feeling safe and healthy in the workplace. Nevertheless, the systematic failure of companies to engage directly with workers to understand and mitigate the risks they were facing, or create an atmosphere allowing complaints to be voiced, meant abuse was rampant. A particular issue was larger companies, including multinational brands or companies under partial or whole government-ownership, failing to conduct rigorous checks in their supply chains to stamp out abuse.

“ A human rights delegate visited our office and work site to speak with the workers and inspect the company. However, when they approached the camp boss, he reported that there were no issues, and the human rights team left without interviewing any of us.”

Nepali JCB Operator

The extent of the reported abuse lends further weight to those calling for Qatar to implement effective labour law reforms and for FIFA and the football associations to support remedy for workers. The breadth of employing industries and workers’ nationalities represented in the testimony reflects the extent to which the impact of the World Cup stretched beyond FIFA, its contractors or the football. FIFA and the Supreme Committee only belatedly extended their worker welfare responsibility further than the stadiums [as the tournament approached](#), by including other service providers. However, companies in all industries profited from the World Cup boom, beyond those receiving lucrative contracts for Qatar 2022. Despite the demonstrated labour rights risks associated with their tournament, FIFA and the national football associations have been largely silent on material remediation for migrant worker abuse. Approached by the Resource Centre upon qualifying in December 2021, most football associations were silent [on their human rights responsibilities and due diligence plans](#). The testimony throughout this report should serve as a wakeup call for all stakeholders who profited from Qatar 2022 to ensure workers who endured labour rights abuses can access remedy. Ahead of the tournament, football associations, FIFA, multinationals and local companies largely failed to engage with their own human rights responsibilities in relation to migrant worker abuses: the abuse suffered by migrant workers cannot be repeated for those who continue to work in Qatar, or for those heading to the US, Canada and Mexico to support the 2026 tournament.

Key findings

Of 78 workers interviewed from six countries across South Asia and East Africa, **all** reported at least one indicator of labour exploitation, demonstrating the systematic nature of abuse.

Companies are failing to provide **access to remedy** and non-retaliatory, transparent **grievance mechanisms**:

- ⊗ Only **11 of 78 workers** were aware of FIFA's much touted Human Rights Grievance Mechanism and none knew anyone who had used it;
- ⊗ **43 workers** raised a grievance about working conditions; **18** were retaliated against by employers, including terminations, detentions and deportations in the worst cases.

The risk of **unfair recruitment** for migrant workers is very high:

- ⊗ **73 of 78 workers** made payments of between USD184 and USD4,670 to obtain employment, 21 within one year to kick-off;
- ⊗ **48 workers** had taken loans to raise the cost;
- ⊗ **35 workers** described threats, intimidation and fear of employers and agencies to stop them speaking out.

Despite key reforms to the labour law, **workers are still not free to choose employment** and transfer sponsorship in practice:

- ⊗ Only **nine of 61 workers** employed longer than one year said they could change jobs at will;
- ⊗ **50 workers** said they were aware of the process that should allow them to do so; yet,
- ⊗ **41** cited barriers to doing so, including no objection certificates, resignation letters or bribes.

Violations of employment conditions are a major risk for migrants once in Qatar:

- ⊗ **45 workers'** contracts and job roles did not match what had been promised to them back home; **27 workers** found contracted wages lower than anticipated;
- ⊗ **Five workers** said their contracts were terminated early;
- ⊗ **58** described wage theft; **27** received partial wages averaging 25% less than anticipated;
- ⊗ **69** worked overtime, with **36** not receiving overtime pay as expected.

Companies are failing to put migrant workers at the centre of routine **due diligence checks** regarding recruitment and working conditions:

- ⊗ Only **two workers** were asked about recruitment fee payments by employers; neither was reimbursed;
- ⊗ Only **14 workers** were asked about working conditions during checks by either their employer, workplace or an external organisation.

Towards progress:

- ✓ Only a **minority of workers (13)** had complaints regarding their living conditions;
- ✓ Only a **minority of workers (20)** were concerned about occupational health and safety. **Most (68)** having access to medicines or treatment as needed;
- ✓ Freedom of movement was largely unrestricted: **most workers (60)** were always in possession of their passports or identity documents, and only five workers described limits to movements or curfews.

Recommendations

In line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, **all companies** operating in Qatar should apply learnings from Qatar 2022 and:

- ➔ Put workers at the centre of their due diligence process by regularly conducting interviews with directly-employed and subcontracted workers throughout the employment cycle, including at induction and after deployment, and with assurances of non-retaliation to understand working conditions;
- ➔ Assume workers have paid recruitment fees (regardless of whether they have obtained the job through a recruitment agency) given the prevalence of the practice, and commit to reimburse and remedy payments. Best practice would be to do so even without documentation and cascade standards throughout the supply chain to cover subcontracted workers;
- ➔ Establish and clearly communicate an operational level grievance mechanism, and create an environment where all workers can voice concerns under a transparent process and confidently access redress;
- ➔ Engage constructively with all business partners, contracted service providers and recruitment agencies; outline expected labour standards to cover all subcontracted workers and undertake due diligence to ensure principles of fair recruitment and worker welfare are upheld and exploitative situations are investigated, remedied and improved;
- ➔ Regularly disclose information on key indicators of human rights risk, including: numbers and nationalities of workers who paid recruitment fees and amounts reimbursed; grievances received through operational level mechanisms, investigations and outcomes; number of job change requests and rejections; and expect the same of business partners.
- ➔ Actively communicate with workers in their own languages to ensure they are aware of the process to request sponsorship transfers in line with Qatar's labour law, without fear of reprisal or the need for additional administrative requirements or payments;

The **Government of Qatar** should:

- ➔ Implement reforms consistently and meaningfully to ensure businesses operating in Qatar respect workers' rights under the labour law;
- ➔ Recognise their own role in contracting private companies to provide services to government-owned venues, transport hubs and construction projects; ensure they cascade worker welfare standards through their supply chains; and conduct regular checks to ensure the rights of their subcontracted workforce are respected.

To redress the harms of Qatar and mitigate harms at future events, **FIFA** should:

- ➔ Urgently commit to [meet civil society asks](#) and contribute to a fund for a comprehensive remediation programme for migrant workers who suffered abuse in the preparations for the 2022 World Cup;
- ➔ Report transparently on human rights complaints filed under its World Cup Qatar 2022 Grievance Mechanism, and commit to investigate and remediate cases;
- ➔ Strengthen its human rights due diligence process in awarding future events and contracting service providers; and
- ➔ Commit to public reporting on FIFA's approach to human rights and how it intends to mitigate and remedy abuse.

Qatar & the FIFA World Cup

In the years leading up to the Qatar 2022 World Cup, [media and civil society](#) exposed the extent to which local companies and multinationals, including hospitality brands, construction giants and the service industry, were complicit in and profiting from migrant worker abuse. Unprecedented scrutiny on working conditions and recruitment saw gradual reforms to Qatar's labour law but inadequate implementation. Almost universally and across sectors, for example, companies' actions to address their responsibility to respect migrant worker rights in Qatar as [per international standards](#) have been woeful. Amid significant industry expansion in the region ahead of the tournament, companies systematically failed to undertake meaningful human rights due diligence or identify their potential human rights impacts. In May 2022, Amnesty International found FIFA should have known the World Cup would put workers across Qatar at risk, calling the abuse "[predictable and preventable](#)". Nonetheless, with the closing ceremony, the world's attention has moved on. As the footballing world looks to 2026 and Canada, the USA and Mexico, it must not neglect the migrant workers who toiled to ensure the success of Qatar 2022 and should support calls for remedy.

Construction & migration boom

In November and December 2022, Doha welcomed [1.4 million fans](#) to the Qatar 2022 World Cup. Thirty-two teams, corporate sponsors, governmental delegations and FIFA officials mingled to watch matches at eight state-of-the-art stadiums, retiring to luxury hotels. The tournament was praised as "[the best ever](#)" by FIFA CEO Gianni Infantino and is said to have earned FIFA a record-breaking total of [USD7.5 billion](#). Besides FIFA, the Qatar World Cup proved lucrative for both local and multinational companies in several sectors, particularly contractors, through the expansion and construction of transport, leisure and accommodation facilities, hotel brands seeking to cash-in on the emirate's [150 new hotels](#), and transport, security and catering providers.

Hosting the Qatar 2022 World Cup required one of the largest labour migration mobilisations of the twenty-first century. In the time it took for Qatar to [spend a reported USD220 billion](#) on infrastructure, the emirate's population [increased by over one million](#) between 2010 and 2022 as workers, largely from South Asia, South East Asia and East Africa, arrived in Doha to benefit from the employment opportunities on offer.

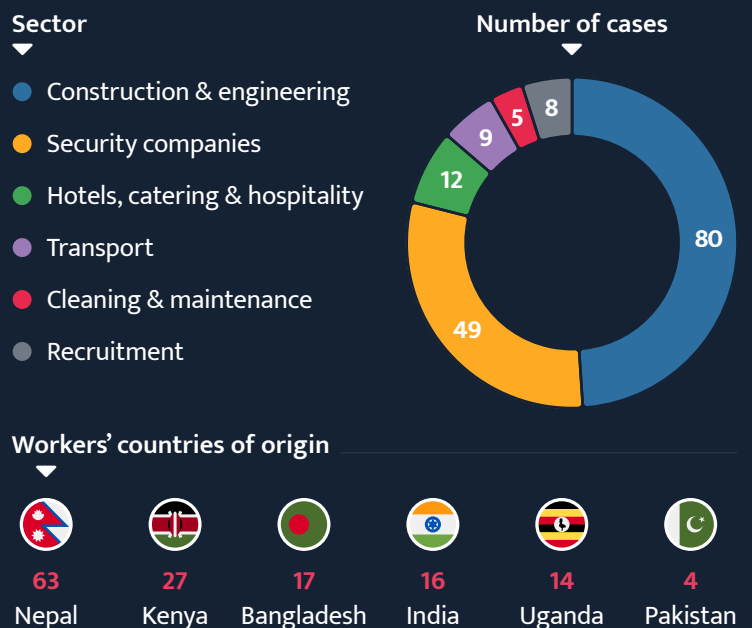
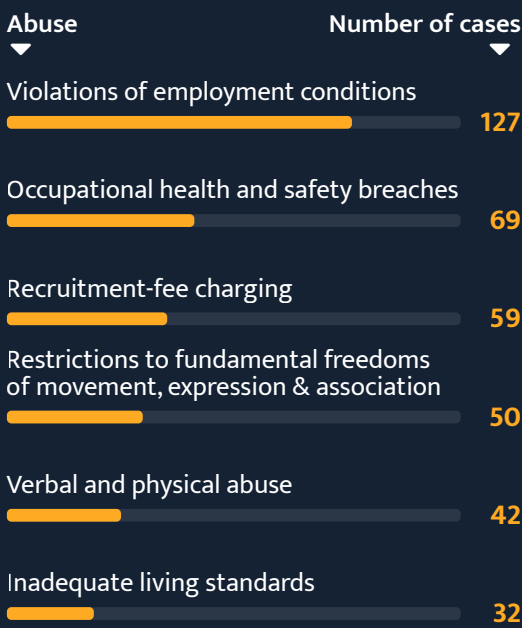
More recently, sectors such as security and hospitality increased their workforces to cater for the influx of visitors in the months before and during the tournament. Despite years of civil society campaigns and positive steps from the Government of Qatar, including the implementation of a [joint agreement](#) with the International Labour Organisation from 2018 and [reforms](#) to the labour law, in the year to kick-off these changes mostly failed to reach workers themselves. The [Resource Centre tracked 167 cases of alleged abuse](#) of migrant workers, just as [hotels were announcing imminent openings](#) and [recruitment drives](#) in workers' countries of origin reached fever pitch.

Documenting labour abuse

Dating from 2014, the Resource Centre’s [database](#) shows labour exploitation of construction or security workers allegedly occurred at each of the eight tournament stadiums. This means every match took place against a backdrop of abuse, including [recruitment fee-payment](#), [wage theft](#), [dangerous working conditions](#) and [forced labour](#).¹



In the year before kick-off, the Resource Centre tracked **167 cases of labour rights abuse in Qatar** reported by international and national media, NGOs and trade unions; **37 cases affected workers at World Cup stadiums and sites:**



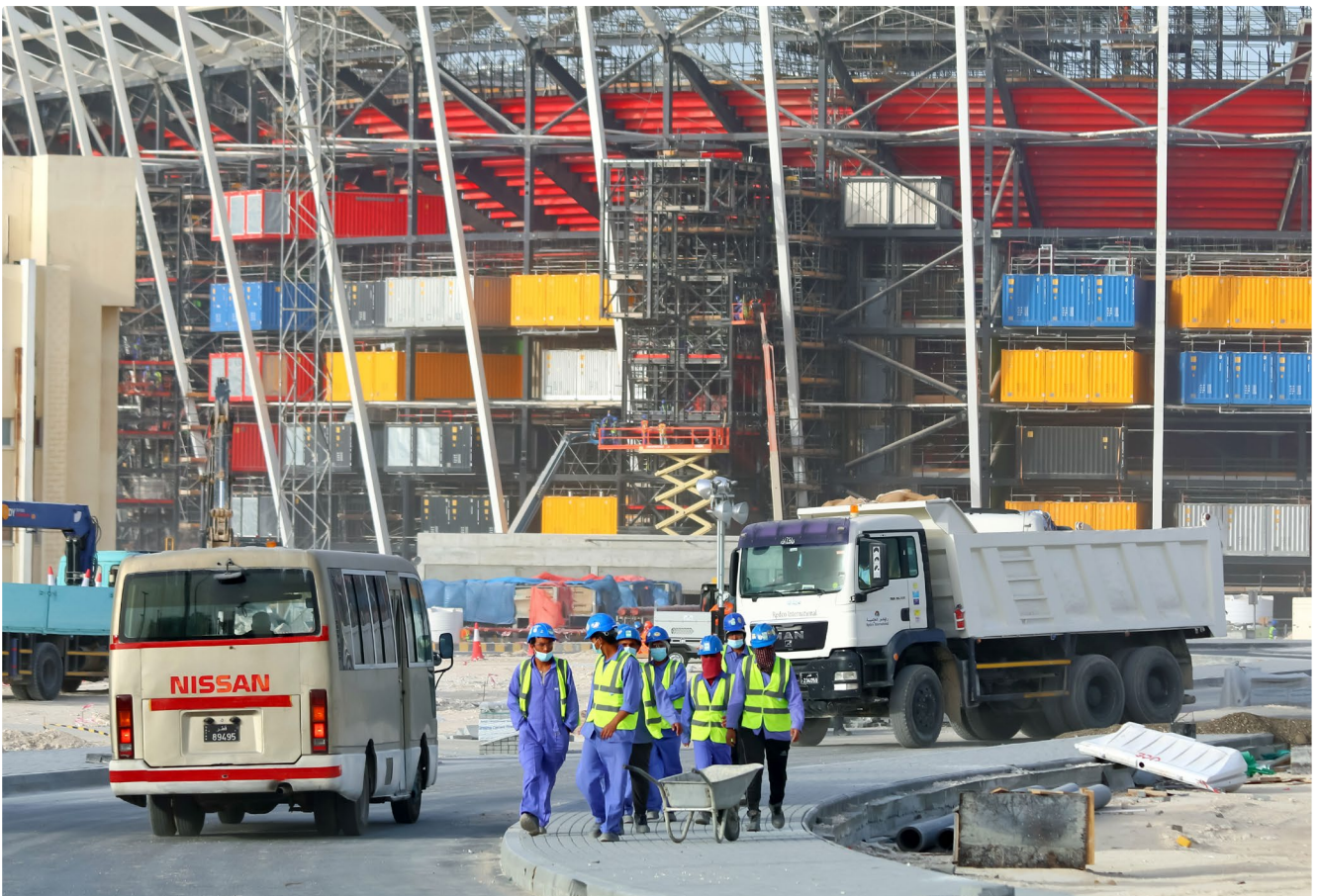
As late as October 2022, the security company at the French team’s hotel, USS, was [replaced following allegations of labour abuse](#). By November 2022, eight hotel brands hosting teams were associated with [alleged abuse](#) at their properties or through their supply and recruitment chains to the Gulf Two workers died in November and December **while on duty at World Cup venues**: an unnamed Filipino national employed by Salam Petroleum [died falling off a ramp](#) at the Saudi team hotel and John Njue Kibue, a guard employed by Al Srailya Security, [fell from a height](#) at Lusail Stadium. None of the companies implicated has been held accountable, though Salam Petroleum is the subject of an [ongoing lawsuit](#) in Qatar. Since the final whistle blew on 18 December the Resource Centre has continued to document abuse impacting migrant workers including from [workers engaged for the World Cup citing detentions and deportations, wage theft and destitution](#).

¹ Our database captures publicly reported allegations of labour abuse implicating businesses. These figures are just the tip of the iceberg as we know workers face restrictions to reporting exploitation. “Cases” refer to discrete instances where a company or recruitment agency is alleged to have abused a worker or group of workers, or, where workers are abused further down supply chains. For more information see our methodology [here](#).

Access to remedy

Despite the clear labour rights risks associated with their tournament, FIFA and the national football associations have been largely silent on material remediation for migrant worker abuse. FIFA only [belatedly agreed](#) to a discussion at its March 2023 congress regarding an [ask from international rights groups](#) to contribute to a comprehensive remediation programme. It has not yet agreed to implementation. When approached by the Resource Centre on qualifying, most football associations were silent [on their human rights responsibilities and due diligence plans](#). Only a minority have offered superficial commitments or statements since.

The experiences of workers interviewed for this report should serve as a wake-up call to football associations whose involvement in international events and membership of FIFA cannot absolve them from taking steps to ensure respect for human rights. Football associations should be transparent on the risks their participation posed and actual harms which affected workers at teams' contracted service providers during the tournament. Only then can associations ensure comprehensive and appropriate remedy and compensation for workers who made their stay in Doha possible.

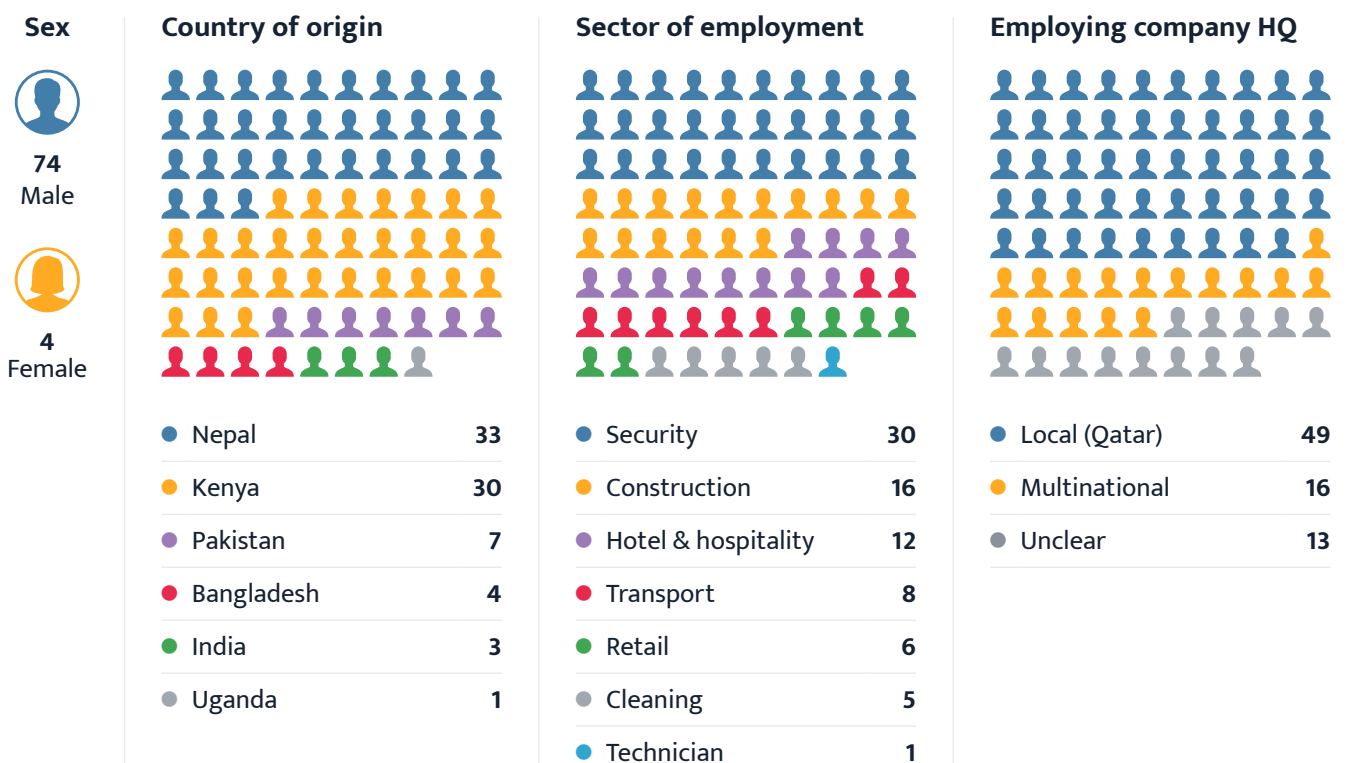


Testimony collection

This briefing is based on interview data (see survey [here](#)) collected from migrant workers employed in Qatar at least partially or entirely between October 2022 and January 2023. A total of **78 workers** from South Asia and East Africa were interviewed. They were employed by at least **53 companies** in various industries and occupations, including construction, hospitality, transport and security; 16 workers were employed by multinational companies. Interviews were conducted between March and May 2023 by partners: **Barun Ghimire, human rights lawyer; Equidem; Justice for Pakistan Project** and **Trace Kenya**.

Owing to the risk of reprisal against migrant workers who speak publicly about their experiences, no workers, recruitment agencies or workplaces are named in this report, although official Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup contractors² are represented in the testimony at least 20 times, with sub-contractors named four times. Seventeen workers told interviewers they were deployed to World Cup stadiums or training sites. The majority of interviewees worked at wholly or partially government-owned or managed locations. Further partners are not named for the security of researchers and interviewees.

Despite guarantees of anonymity, workers were hesitant to speak about their experiences. As interviewers were unable to assure female workers, in particular, of their safety, the sample is also heavily weighted towards the experience of male workers. The interviews focused on six areas: recruitment; employment terms and conditions; living conditions; health and safety; freedoms of movement and expression; and representation and remedy. A summary analysis of the indicators and categories of labour abuse experienced is provided in the next section.



² Verified through public reporting, or statements made by FIFA and/or the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy.

Doha during the World Cup: “These big events are not for us”

Most workers were excited about being part of an international mega-sporting event. Yet only 34 watched a match live, mostly via mobile phone, and several were unable to take leave from long shifts to even do that. One Nepali cleaner was told to expect three days’ salary deduction if he attended a match; another Nepali retail worker said his irregular status meant he could not leave his accommodation for fear of arrest and deportation. Workers reported remaining largely detached from the fans and teams they looked after. Asked whether they would return to Qatar, it was telling that 26 returnees would not. While it was painted as an event for all, most workers seemed acutely conscious of the distance between themselves and the celebrations, underlining the discrimination and disenfranchisement from mainstream society faced by migrant workers in Qatar.

“ I have been working in Qatar as security guard from 2019... these big events are not for us. We just work and once our work is done, we are not part of it.”

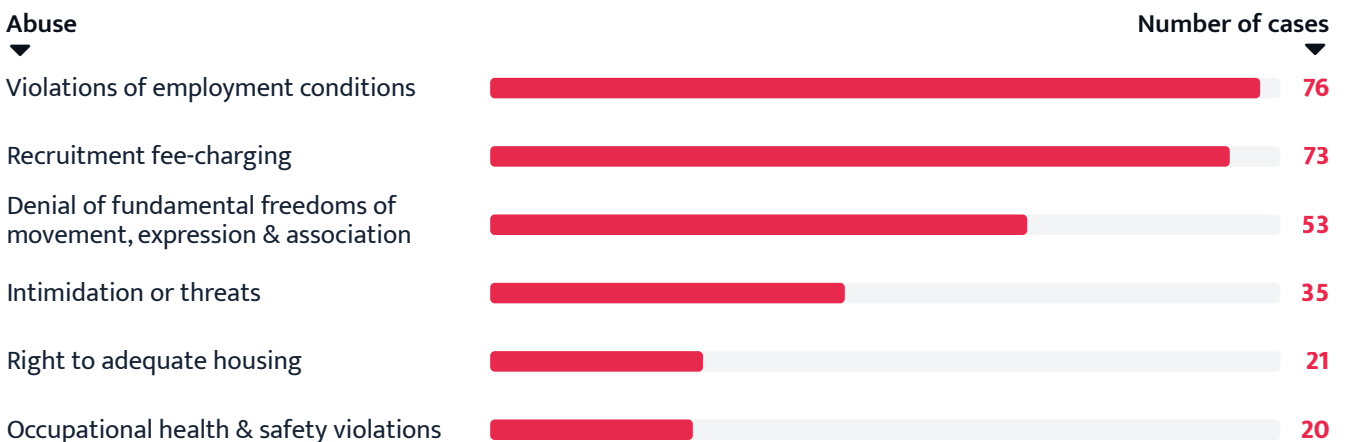
Nepali security guard

“ I did not watch, it was out of reach for someone like me. Too expensive and it’s not just about money, even those who wanted could not get tickets to watch the game.”

Nepali construction worker

Overview

Abuse



Charging recruitment fees

The charging of recruitment fees is a [key driver of abuse](#), resulting in coercive situations for workers who take on debt to facilitate travel or obtain employment. International standards are unequivocal: no worker should pay for a job and the costs of recruitment should be borne by the employer (otherwise known as the [Employer Pays Principle](#)). The [ILO is clear recruitment fees include both](#) formalised costs (payments to agencies or to cover airfares, uniforms) and informal costs (bribes). Recruitment fee-charging is illegal in Qatar, but workers paying fees in countries of origin remains widespread.

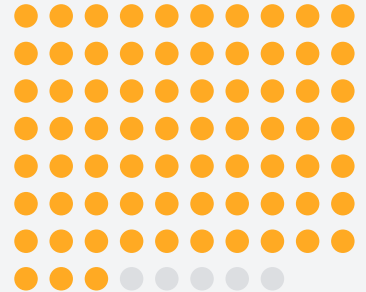
“ [Agency staff in Kathmandu] made a video of around 30+ workers where they made us say we did not pay for the work and paid only NPR10,000. I asked why this was done, they told me I can leave if I had an issue with this. They told us not to tell about it as they had evidence against us and we’d be called liars and we can’t prove it.”

Porter in a major Doha transport hub

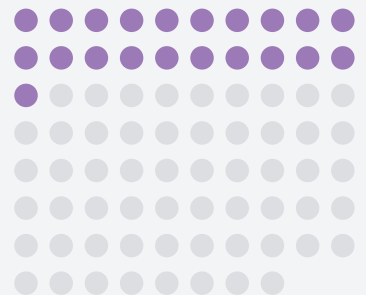
Alarming, the overwhelming majority of workers interviewed for this report paid to gain employment in Qatar, while employer action to uncover or reimburse workers was absent. Seventy-three of the 78 workers paid a fee to get their job, with 21 payments demanded within the year before kick-off, thus contradicting claims recruitment fees were an issue which had been resolved prior to the World Cup. Payments ranged between USD184 and USD4,670, amounts many times higher than workers’ monthly salaries. Workers also paid fees higher than the legal minimum set by their home governments and were forced to sign or record witness statements to the contrary. Many paid between four and 30 times the limit but lacked any evidence; no worker had receipts for the amount truly paid, with at least 11 workers holding false receipts and most payments being made in cash.

The psychological and financial impacts of recruitment fees on migrant workers, their families and friends were evident. Forty-eight workers were forced to take out loans to fund their fee, with approximately half (25) borrowing from family members or friends. One worker obtained a bank loan and borrowed from his brothers, who had taken out loans themselves. Another worker was forced to sell his sister’s jewellery. Several loans were granted at extremely high interest rates, with one worker borrowing from co-workers to pay back the 24% loan taken from a relative. At least six workers only avoided taking out a loan because they could use savings from working overseas previously.

73/78 workers paid fees to obtain employment



21/78 workers paid fees within one year to kick-off



Payments

ranged between **USD184** and **USD4,670**



48/78 workers had taken loans to be able to raise the cost; **25** workers borrowed from family and friends



“ Yes, I had to take a loan at 36% interest rate from a local money lender... The interest rate was too high. I am the eldest son of my family. I have a lot of responsibilities on my shoulder. I have to do whatever I can to take care of my family. I worked very hard the six months I came here. I was scared to spend even a single rial out of pocket.”

Nepali pipe fitter

Several contrasted high repayments with low salaries. One Bangladeshi security guard said: “It was a bad experience for me. Every month I paid BDT20,000 for loan. And I also have family (parents, wife and a daughter) to maintain per month costs of around BDT10,000. My salary was just BDT32,000. So, you understand what the impact was.” Most workers said they would never take out another loan.

Troublingly, workers who paid recruitment fees to be hired on a short-term basis for the World Cup often said the repayment period was at least half their contract duration, confirming [civil society predictions](#) workers would not be working long enough to clear debts. Two Kenyan workers, contracted from June 2022, were still facing three and five months of repayments – three months after their contracts ended in January 2023. One Nepali construction worker, contracted from April 2022, was still making repayments 13 months later and another contracted from February 2022 was still indebted. A Kenyan security guard, employed from October 2022 and terminated at the end of the tournament, described the burden, saying: “It’s a really painful feeling. I had a lot of plans in future to help my family. Even explaining to them what has happened they were very disappointed.” One Indian receptionist was frank: “[I] did not earn enough [to repay my loan]. I was working for only one month.”



Employment terms

Freedom to choose employment

The Resource Centre looked at the experience of the 69 interviewed workers who were employed on contracts of one year or longer. Very few (9) said they were able to change jobs as they wished, as per the 2020 reform to the labour law which was supposed to sweep away the Kafala system tying workers to their employment sponsor. Most (50) said they were somewhat aware of the Ministry of Labour sponsorship transfer process, but 41 also gave a range of reasons why either they or colleagues had not been able to in practice. These included: needing to complete contracts or a set service length (one Kenyan security guard said this was five years); the process being too complex; that the Ministry of Labour is “not concerned” with workers’ requests; and that government officials charged bribes. Concerningly, several workers referred to the now-abolished no-objection certificate not being provided by companies to permit them to leave, suggesting little has changed in practice. One Nepali mason who had successfully changed employer said nonetheless “...NOC and resignation letter was necessary in order to get work at the new company.” Several workers spoke about being subject to the whim of managers or HR departments. Others said it was simply a matter of being too busy at their current job to investigate or begin the process of finding alternative employment.

“ I have heard that some friends attempted to change employers, but as far as I know, the sponsor’s permission is required and the employee must complete their two-year contract before being able to change employers.”

Nepali salesperson

“ The company must be willing to let you go, in order for you to change the job... the company would rather send us home than let us change the job. It is not an easy process for workers, unless they are either supported by another employer or have long experience and are well informed. You need luck or another employer’s backing but this does not normally happen. If your company wants you gone that’s only when they provide letter to change the job.”

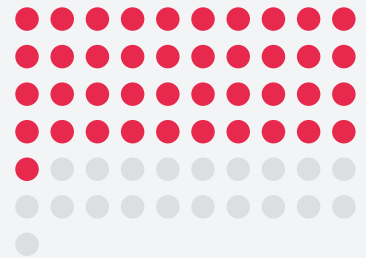
Nepali security guard

“ It is not possible for someone who have so much going on, there is no time to explore... as we are busy for around 14 hour each day and we have one day off. I did not even try to figure out the details.”

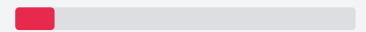
Nepali cleaner

Of 61 workers employed for longer than a year:

41/61 described barriers to changing jobs



Nine said they could change jobs at will, though **50** were aware of the sponsorship transfer system

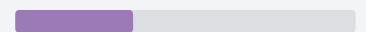


On contracts and wages:

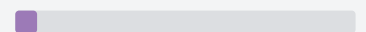
45 said they did not match what had been promised to them back home



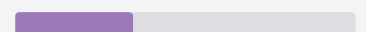
27 workers were contracted on wages lower than promised



Five said their contracts were terminated early



58 described wage theft; **27** received partial wages



69 worked overtime, with **36** not receiving overtime pay as expected



Wage violations

Wage theft is a longstanding feature of conditions in the Gulf, despite the [implementation of Wage Protection Systems](#) (Qatar’s in 2015). Fifty-eight of the interviewed workers experienced wage theft. Workers received partial or delayed wages in 27 cases, receiving 25% less on average of their basic wage than they should have. Nineteen workers described wage delays of between two weeks and, in the worst cases, six months. Some subcontracted workers were told late payments were the fault of companies who paid sub-contractors late. One Pakistani security guard, contracted from September 2022, had been employed for seven months by the time he told interviewers: *“I received only two months’ wages. The reason they described was ‘we don’t have any funds at this moment to pay. When we will get, we transfer to your account.’”*

“ Our shift was eight hours on paper but actually it was 14 hours. And there is no overtime for daily basis. Only if you did 30 days in [a] month, then they paid only 4 days overtime... Month of October we did 26 days but November and December full month. And we did more than 60 hours a week.”

Pakistani security guard

“ I visited [the National Human Rights Committee] and registered a file against the employer. The National Human Rights Committee in Qatar contacted the employer via phone requesting payment for the overtime, but the employer refused. Instead, the employer agreed to send me back home and provided an air-return ticket.”

Nepali salesperson

Fourteen workers described wage deductions, with companies deploying myriad justifications for doing so: two people’s salaries were deducted after taking sick leave, another two as punishment for missing work materials, and one worker’s visa was funded through deductions. A further five workers received no explanation at all for deductions. Of 69 workers who said they had undertaken and expected overtime pay during their employment, 36 had not received any. The increased precarity of subcontracted work was also highlighted by a Nepali salesman: *“There were six of us in the group from Nepal and Bangladesh, and we all received the same salary from the company. However, those who were directly recruited by [company] received overtime pay and Fridays off.”*



Contracts

On employment terms and conditions, 45 workers said terms did not match what had been promised. Workers' wages were most affected, with 27 contracted on lower than anticipated rates. Eight workers described differences in shift lengths or holiday allowance, while six described unexpected overtime. There were also clear examples of contract substitution. Four workers were appointed to jobs different from what was detailed in signed contracts. For example, one Pakistani bellman had *“applied for a room attendant position, but [my] offer letter stated that [I] would be working as a bellboy, and I performed the duties of a bellboy throughout [my] employment.”*

“ *Last three months we are working more than 15 hours. Our contract says eight hours. It's not applicable because of the event everybody is working. There was an obsession with everyone to make this event a grand success.”*

Indian IT support worker

The average hours worked per week across all interviewees were at least 63, with most workers reporting a regular leave of one day per week. At worst, two workers said they had just one day off in a month and eight workers said they had no rest days. As the tournament neared, it was clear that shifts increased while rest days were limited. One Nepali porter said *“I normally worked 12 hours a day. However, we had to get to work and it took us 2 hours of travel which was unaccounted for as working hours.”*

“ *I had to work from morning until evening. As per the contract, I was supposed to work eight hours a day and six days a week, but for the first three months, I had to work around 10 hours a day. Later on, my working hours increased up to 14 hours a day. After the World Cup, my employer asked me to work for 17 hours a day without any overtime pay. I refused to work under such conditions and with the help of National Human Rights Committee in Qatar, I returned to my home country.”*

Nepali retail salesman



Access to Justice

FIFA’s Human Rights Grievance Mechanism

Ahead of the World Cup, FIFA established a [Human Rights Grievance Mechanism](#) in the form of a “dedicated platform for human rights concerns related to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.” The [platform was available](#) for anyone to report human rights concerns online and specified “Reports may be submitted in any language, either in writing or by recording a voice message, and it is possible to upload supporting evidence such as videos, photos, confidential documents, etc.”

“No. There are many things we don’t know as workers. There are other things we know that are not implemented, for example free visa and ticket is not implemented.”

Nepali carpenter

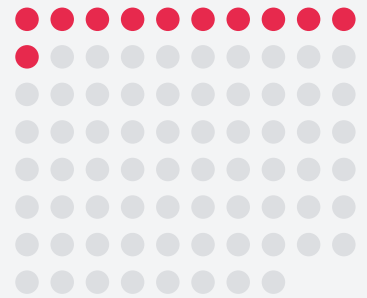
Only 11 of the 78 workers said they had heard of the FIFA Grievance Mechanism and none had used it – despite all experiencing labour violations. It was clear most workers did not know what it was or how it could be used. Workers also expressed doubt about its effectiveness, with one Nepali worker commenting: “I think these are just for a show – more to show the world that they exist rather than to resolve anything. If you have been in Qatar as a worker you’d know, this kind of mechanism doesn’t really work.” Another Nepali security guard explained: “No, even if this is in existence, I doubt this works. I know when FIFA visited, they would make camp look better than other time and put on a show. We know how it is in Qatar, it’s best to be in good term with company, it’s for our own good.” Only one worker – a Pakistani room attendant – confirmed they received training on the FIFA Grievance Mechanism specifically.³

“We were given cards from FIFA that had numbers on it we could call. However, as soon as the FIFA World Cup ended, all those numbers went nowhere, and it seems that FIFA packed up shop as soon as the World Cup ended and didn’t care about those who were left behind.”

Pakistani security guard

On FIFA’s grievance mechanism:

11/78 workers had heard of the FIFA Human Rights Grievance Mechanism



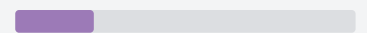
Every worker reported violations, but none had used the Grievance Mechanism or knew anyone who had

On filing grievances:

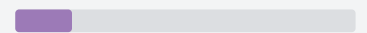
43 workers had registered complaints internally or externally which resulted in improvements 55% of the time



18 workers experienced retaliation from employers, including terminations, detentions and deportations

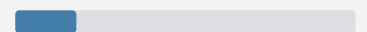


13 were afraid to speak up



On filing grievances:

14 mentioned knowing about a worker committee



³ The Resource Centre has asked FIFA to disclose information regarding the effectiveness of the mechanism and respond to this report’s findings; any response will be available [here](#).

Intimidation, threats & reprisal

Workers face multiple barriers to justice or redress mechanisms in Qatar; including a lack of awareness of the options available, proceedings conducted in Arabic, and the impossibility of taking leave or affording travel to the labour court. However, it was the climate of intimidation, threats and reprisal from employers which was the most striking theme to come out of the testimony. Simply the possibility for employers to [file criminal absconding charges](#) against workers who cannot defend themselves from detention, deportation or wage confiscation had a chilling effect.

“ I had to pay NPR95,000 to the agency. When I ask them for receipt, they provide me receipt for NPR12,000 only. I asked them to give me the receipts of my total amount, but they said that they could not provide this. They said if government knows about it they will cancel the visa so I was afraid and I did not disclose it.”

Electrician, Nepal

“ If I disclose, company management would terminate me, then how will I pay my loan?”

Bangladeshi security guard

“ They told us not to tell about it as they had evidence against us and we’d be called liars and we can’t prove it.”

Porter from Nepal

Among the interviews, this last – a fear of speaking up – was evident among those asked whether they had spoken to anyone regarding their experiences. Workers repeatedly cited fear or intimidation as a barrier to them speaking to management, particularly in relation to disclosing recruitment fee-payment or reporting violations of employment terms. Nonetheless, most workers did complain, at least once and informally, to supervisors or management, resulting in improvements approximately half (55%) the time. Improvements were notably more likely to be resolved if they related to living conditions rather than wage complaints, overtime or shift lengths. Moreover, only five workers said they filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Committee or Ministry of Labour, revealing access to remedy remains out of reach for most in practice.

“ I need to feel safe, I am working abroad and sometime sharing too much can be problems, I know few cases where workers got in trouble for talking too much.”

Nepali security guard supervisor

“ We would be turned away and you know how they treated us when we demanded our salaries, our locks were opened, they would slam our doors at night, they served us bad food and then at one point stopped feeding us altogether”

Pakistani security guard

“ When the labour department call to company manager, they know about case file and call them in office and fired them within 2 days. They fired four persons who encouraged to file a case.”

Nepali bus driver

“ We first time did not disclose due to fear of deportation. When one of [the] international social welfare organisations interviewed us about our company and [the] facilities it provided – then only, we disclosed.”

Bangladeshi security guard

No worker mentioned **recruitment fee payments** to their employer, while 35 described several reasons for staying silent:

- ➔ Twelve workers were worried about losing their job opportunity or getting into “trouble”;
- ➔ Six workers described explicit threats of termination, detention and deportation from employers or recruitment agencies;
- ➔ Seven workers were deterred from disclosing information after being told it was confidential by agencies.

Forty-three workers said they or colleagues had registered complaints regarding **violations of employment conditions** internally or externally:

- ➔ Lack of overtime pay for long shifts was the most frequent complaint, cited by nine workers, followed by salary complaints (seven workers);
- ➔ Eighteen workers gave examples of employer retaliation including termination, deportation, lack of deployment and withheld salary;
- ➔ Thirteen workers said they had not reported issues due to the perceived threat of retaliation.

Representation & remedy

Only 14 workers said they were aware of a [worker committee](#) available to communicate with management, with 52 stating there was definitely no committee available to them. Positively, four subcontracted workers did mention committees established by companies they were outsourced to, but it was unclear whether they could access it or if it was effective. Only one worker mentioned elected representatives; others were not aware of how representatives were chosen, and most representatives were long-term employees rather than short-term workers.

One Bangladeshi security guard described how complaints resulted in company management changing committee leaders: *“If the representatives raised any issues as worker’s rights, example: our food is not tasty or worker’s need new uniforms after completing one year or need to change roommate, then they change the representatives instead of solving the issues.”* The UN Guiding Principles are clear that employers are responsible for implementing operational level grievance mechanisms which are clearly communicated, transparent and participatory – yet no worker described anything more than the most superficial processes, such as being told to speak to supervisors.



Monitoring working conditions

The [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) and, increasingly, local and regional legislation around the world are clear companies have a responsibility to mitigate human rights impacts anywhere in their operations or supply chains by undertaking human rights due diligence. It is therefore incumbent on companies to engage directly with both directly-employed and subcontracted workers to ensure labour standards are cascaded downwards – particularly in contexts known for labour rights risk such as Qatar or industries highly dependent on outsourced workers. At least 62 interviewed workers were employed by construction sub-contractors or deployed to stadiums, malls, transport hubs or leisure venues, many of which are wholly or partially government-owned. Despite this, only the minority of workers experienced welfare checks either by management or from external bodies. Companies further up the supply chain were evidently not exercising oversight on how subcontracted staff were treated.

“ I have worked in Qatar for long time...no one has asked us anything about recruitment cost or how much we paid to get there... You can't find a single person who has not paid the fee for recruitment, most don't talk about it. Only recently, people talk about this kind of thing. Workers are told that they have to tell they came on free visa and ticket (in recent years) if anyone asked and they might get into unnecessary trouble if they talked.”

Nepali carpenter

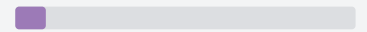
On recruitment fees – a particularly high-risk issue for companies operating in Qatar – only two workers were asked by employers whether they had paid to work. One Kenyan parking attendant said his employer did ask if he paid for his visa (he had) but was told his employer had already covered costs directly with the agency, and so the worker would not be reimbursed for any additional costs incurred. Another Kenyan customer care worker said their company told everyone in a welcome meeting that they had already paid the recruitment agencies, even though workers had also paid fees, and again no worker was reimbursed.

On working conditions, 61 said they had never been approached by anyone either in the company or externally to discuss and verify their working arrangements. Among those who responded positively, seven said their employers had spoken to them, but this was often sporadic or took the form of presentations to the full workforce.

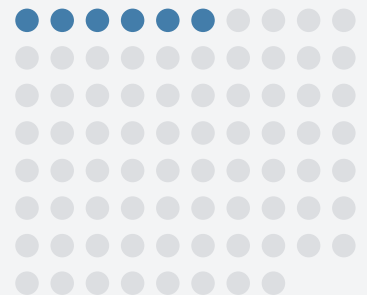
61/78 workers had never been approached by anyone in the company or externally



Seven workers said employers had spoken to them at least once



Six described visits by the Supreme Committee, FIFA representatives or officials from the Ministry of Labour



No one felt able to speak up as part of an inspection

Only two workers were asked about recruitment fee-payments; neither was reimbursed

No one described in-depth, private interviews to gain an accurate picture of how workers were treated. Further, six workers described workplace visits from the Supreme Committee, FIFA representatives or officials from the Ministry of Labour, but no one had felt able to speak up as part of the inspection.

In one rare case, a Nepali porter said his supervisor at the transportation hub he was deployed to “would ask us about the working conditions but our company was indifferent to us.”

“ We were called into a meeting and asked if we paid. All the people who reached Qatar within the week that I travelled were in this meeting. This was like a welcome meeting and a briefing on what was expected of us. During the meeting is when the issue of paying to agent came up. Almost everyone, even other nationalities, also mentioned paying to agencies back at home... They informed us that they had paid the agency back at home.”

Kenyan customer care worker

In one example, a JCB Operator described superficial audits by “a human rights delegate” who spoke with the camp boss but did not speak with a single worker. In another case the only external inspections were from health and safety officials on food quality and hygiene in restaurant kitchens. One Nepali cook had paid recruitment fees, had not been provided with food for 26 days straight, was not being paid overtime and his wages were delayed. However, when he “registered the complaints at the labour court asking to change employer – nothing happened. The manager said that the labour court officer is his friend” and workers were not permitted to transfer sponsorship.

“ A human rights delegate visited our office and work site to speak with the workers and inspect the company. However, when they approached the camp boss, he reported that there were no issues, and the human rights team left without interviewing any of us.”

Nepali JCB Operator

Unfortunately, the testimony in this report clearly demonstrates that neither Qatar’s legal reforms, nor FIFA’s welfare standards and lauded auditing process, prevented serious abuse occurring. For standards to meaningfully improve outcomes for workers, businesses, and especially global companies need to overhaul their due diligence process in Qatar completely. Without companies taking active steps to engage directly with workers and put them at the centre of their due diligence processes, these abuses will remain undetected and unremedied.



Towards progress

Living conditions

Asked about their accommodation, most workers said it had been provided by employers, with only five workers finding their own, living with family or housed in government run facilities. Most workers (50) were positive or indifferent about their living conditions, while a minority (13) had complaints about their accommodation. Of those with negative experiences, most highlighted issues regarding space or cleanliness. Of those sharing rooms, 12 workers said they were housed in rooms with six or more workers, while workers in smaller rooms were clear this was preferable. Three workers said they were housed in rooms for 12, and one in a room for 15. Only five workers described colleagues being restricted to specific areas or curfews (excepting dormitories which were sex-segregated), while several said “everyone was free to go anywhere at any time.”

“ Things have changed a lot regarding lots of things relating to the workers. Something that felt impossible in 2010 now is normal. I remember my document being held by [my] employer in my initial work here. This time I had it with me.”

Nepali construction worker

Passport confiscation by employers – an indicator of forced labour under the ILO and once a scourge of the systems in Qatar– was banned under the labour law reforms, and workers have reported a marked improvement. However, 14 of the 78 workers said their employer had withheld their passports and a further 12 said theirs had been held when they had initially arrived, but had since been returned to them. Enforcement of the change to the labour law was remarked on positively by several workers.

Health & safety

In a sign of some improvement, only a quarter of the interviewees (20) expressed concern regarding their safety at work. Most commonly, workers either said companies did not provide personal protective and safety equipment, or that their outside work involved insufficient protections. Ten workers said medical care was not facilitated by their employer, with some saying they had to organise this for themselves. One Nepali porter described a manager being obstructive when he suffered a back injury, saying he: “had to wait till morning for the shuttle to get to the clinic. Resting, going to clinic would make my manager angry.” Qatar had become synonymous with poor health and safety prior to the World Cup; while this testimony indicates some improvements it is clear companies have some way to go to ensure all workers have the knowledge and access to medical care they need, and ensure their status as non-nationals does not hamper access.

“ I fell ill one day, and it was covered by the employer for the first time. However, the employer later informed us that employees would not be covered for any medical expenses in the future. Furthermore, the employer told us not to claim any health treatment expenses.”

Nepali salesperson

“ The safety equipment is not provided completely, sometimes the kits are just to show for audit purposes and are not sufficient enough to work for all. Some of the working tools are old already and have not been replaced yet.”

Nepali construction worker

Conclusion

While FIFA, international journalists, the fans and national football associations have moved on, for the migrant workers who toiled to make Qatar 2022 such a financial success, the tournament has a much darker legacy. For thousands of migrant workers, their World Cup legacy includes huge debt burdens from recruitment fee loans, unpaid – hard earned – wages or having returned home without recourse to justice for the abuses endured. As seen through the testimony of the 78 workers interviewed for this report, improvements across industries were minimal, with limited progress in just a few areas.

While some minor improvements could be documented, for example regarding passport retention and health and safety, every worker interviewed reported at least one indicator of labour exploitation. In evidence of the stalled progress towards better practice, an overwhelming majority had paid recruitment fees back home to obtain their World Cup jobs, despite Qatar banning the practice. Likewise, workers are still not free to choose employment or transfer sponsorships and face barriers to doing so in practice. Most of the interviewed workers arrived to different job roles or employment conditions than was promised. Most reported wage violations despite the government-established Wage Protection System.

Despite well-documented labour abuse, businesses large and small, global and local, are taking only minimal steps to identify, mitigate and remedy migrant worker abuse. Across all sectors, companies are failing to undertake meaningful, worker-centric due diligence, and therefore systematically failing to fulfil their responsibility to respect human rights. FIFA, sitting as it does on multi-billion-dollar profits from the tournament, must take responsibility for remedying abuses linked to Qatar 2022. Likewise, multinationals and companies under partial or whole government ownership are subject to their own and international standards – they must conduct thorough checks to ensure they are not profiting at the expense of migrant workers.





Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

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Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is an international NGO which tracks the human rights impacts of over 10,000 companies in over 180 countries, making information available on our 10-language website.

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