

Final Report

Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) Kenya COVID-19 Situational Analysis Report – Overseas Labor Recruitment

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CHTEA	Counter Human Trafficking Trust-East Africa
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GFEMS	Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
HAART	Awareness Against Human Trafficking Kenya
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORC	NORC at the University of Chicago
OLR	Overseas Labor Recruitment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic has exposed migrant workers to additional adverse situations, making them even more vulnerable and exposed to health risks, abusive labor conditions, and social stigma. Existing labor systems in GCC countries, combined with poor living conditions, restricted access to health care, scarce legal protection, and limited information, have amplified the vulnerabilities of the migrant worker population. NORC conducted a situational analysis to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on Kenyan migrants, including the implications of these impacts on programs implemented by GFEMS subrecipients, and the extent to which programming can adapt to meet other emerging needs. The findings and recommendations presented are drawn from data collected in March and April 2021.

Methodology

The research team employed qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on Kenyan migrants in GCC countries. Qualitative data collection methods included semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with GFEMS subrecipients, two focus group discussions (FGDs) with recently returned migrants disaggregated by gender, and a desk review of relevant literature to inform the COVID-19 timeline as it relates to border closures, lockdowns, curfews, and repatriation trends among migrant workers.

Findings

The assessment team found that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the vulnerability of labor migrants. Loss of income, limited income-generating activities, border closures, and difficult repatriation dynamics had far-reaching effects on the economic and psychosocial well-being of returning migrants. Lockdown measures increased exposure to physical and sexual violence among migrants in the domestic and service sectors, while migrants across all sectors were exposed to several vulnerabilities as a result of abrupt contract terminations and wage cuts. During this time, migrants received little support from government, while GFEMS subrecipients implemented several adaptive strategies to manage increasing requests.

Recommendations

Economic uncertainty creates favorable conditions for unethical recruitment practices and greater exploitation of migrant workers. The recommendations presented in this report focus on improving migrant safety pre-departure and improving economic and psychosocial support for migrants upon their return. In addition to GFEMS subrecipient programming, this assessment found that there is an opportunity for government stakeholders and NGOs/agencies supporting migrants to implement coordination mechanisms to facilitate: 1) greater embassy assistance in GCC countries, 2) development of new policies that outline specific strategies for managing future global crises, 3) strengthened repatriation mechanisms, and 4) centralized resources for migrants. With respect to GFEMS subrecipient programming, findings from this assessment indicate that the following recommendations may help to address the challenges introduced or compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Expand in-person psychosocial support to include targeted programming for male migrants and more group counseling to enable migrants to feel validated in their experiences as they process trauma and feelings of shame
- Continue virtual psychosocial support to enable migrants returning to communities outside of service areas to receive needed support long-term
- Implement awareness-raising activities with returning migrant families to increase awareness of the challenges migrants often face while in GCC countries
- Expand coordination efforts between NGOs and UN agencies, leveraging the strengths of each organization to enable more effective communication between migrants and embassies

1. INTRODUCTION

NORC at the University of Chicago and the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) are currently undertaking several research activities to assess the prevalence of forced labor among Kenyan migrant workers to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. In addition to prevalence, research activities also seek to understand the effects of forced labor and migration on individuals and communities and the potential for GFEMS-funded programming to mitigate some of these effects. Given the complexity and dynamic nature of these issues, it is critical that these rigorous research activities are informed by the evolving local context.

The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic has exposed migrant workers to additional adverse situations, making them even more vulnerable and exposed to health risks, abusive labor conditions, and social stigma. Existing labor systems in GCC countries, combined with poor living conditions, restricted access to health care, scarce legal protection, and limited information, have amplified the vulnerabilities of the migrant worker population. As such, additional research is required to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on target populations, the implications of these impacts on programs implemented by GFEMS's subrecipients, and the extent to which programming can adapt to meet other emerging needs.

To supplement current research activities, NORC conducted a COVID-19 situational analysis to assess the immediate, short-term, and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations in program areas, as well as provide actionable recommendations for implementing partners to adapt existing programming to address the needs of vulnerable populations.

Recognizing that this research took place at a particularly challenging and important time, and given the team's understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 in Kenya, the research methodology was appropriately refined to ensure feasibility of data collection.

2. METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Research Methodology

To answer the research questions, the research team employed qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 on overseas labor recruitment (OLR) in Kenya. To mitigate potential bias in the data, the team triangulated findings across data sources. Qualitative data collection methods included semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with GFEMS subrecipients, two focus group discussions (FGDs) with returned migrants disaggregated by gender, and a desk review of relevant literature to inform the COVID-19 timeline as it relates to border closures, lockdowns, curfews, and repatriation effort. With feedback from GFEMS, NORC developed KII and FGD instruments with questions tailored to each stakeholder group.

All data collection was led by NORC staff, with support from Kantar, NORC's subcontractor in Kenya. Kantar is based in Nairobi and supports all of NORC's in-country, in-person data collection. Interviews were administered by NORC staff and were documented with detailed notes. KIIs were conducted in English, whereas FGDs were facilitated in Kiswahili, audio recorded, transcribed, and translated for analysis. Given the travel and social distancing challenges associated with COVID-19, all interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom. In-country focus groups were administered by Kantar staff members, who ensured that all participants were adhering to COVID-19 safety protocols, including social distancing, and required masks during discussion. A breakdown of KII respondents and FGD groups are in Annex A.

Desk Review

The desk review constitutes a critical data source for the situational analysis. In order to conduct this study and gather relevant information in an efficient and timely manner, we used a rapid systematic review of gray literature tied to our research questions. The rapid review method was most appropriate, as it provides more opportunity to gather time-bound perspectives that can be quickly implemented into existing activities (Temple University Libraries, 2021). Our team relied on credible newspaper articles, media reports, government and international organization COVID-19 response statements and policy briefs, white papers, and blogs from research institutions and reputed policy experts.

To structure our search and ensure reliability of information gathered, the research team developed an online search methodology and internal databases of relevant sources in consultation with GFEMS and our subject-matter experts. The team searched for terms related to border closures in Kenya and GCC countries, changes in labor migrant working conditions, changes in incidences of forced labor or abuse, and Government of Kenya-supported repatriation efforts. The team used Google Scholar, news searches, and briefs from well-known NGOs to identify credible sources. Parallel to this effort, the research team also gathered documents reflecting the larger context in Kenya as it relates to the overall developments and issues in each sector. Finally, the desk review included a review of GFEMS subrecipients' program documents to guide the recommendations proposed in the report.

Key Informant Interviews

The research team complemented the findings from the desk review with qualitative data collected through semi-structured KIIs with seven staff members of two GFEMS subrecipients. In consultation with GFEMS, NORC began the data collection process by defining a list of key stakeholders. At the beginning of the study, GFEMS sent correspondence to all subrecipients to request their participation in

situational analysis interviews. NORC then separately contacted prospective respondents and provided a desired timeframe for their availability. GFEMS subrecipients provided multiple interviewees, while potential interviewees from three other organizations working in the trafficking and labor migrant space were not responsive. We obtained insights from a local NGO, an international organization to understand the multifaceted impact of COVID-19 on returning and imminent migrants.

Focus Group Discussions

In addition to the above, the study included focus groups with participants of subrecipient programming. Building on relationships established during scoping activities, NORC and Kantar coordinated with GFEMS subrecipients to recruit participants for FGDs. NORC conducted two gender-disaggregated FGDs with men and women. Kantar staff recruited focus group participants through connections with GFEMS subrecipients. In order to participate, focus group participants had to reside in Nairobi and have returned from GCC countries in the prior six months. Male focus group participants worked in the construction sector, while female focus group participants worked in the hospitality and domestic service sectors. The research team did not gather demographic data related to education levels, region of origin, or destination country. However, some respondents voluntarily revealed their destination countries. Male focus group respondents reported returning from Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), while female focus group respondents reported returning from Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, UAE, and Qatar. Focus groups were held at the Cardinal Otunga Plaza Annex in Nairobi. There were nine participants in the focus group with women, and five participants in the focus group with men. All discussions were conducted in Kiswahili, recorded, transcribed, and translated.

Analysis

The team used an inductive, data-driven approach to analyze data from the stakeholder interviews and FGDs. Given the smaller sample of this study, the assessment team used a grounded theory approach in which notes from KII notes and focus group transcripts were analyzed through memos. Analytic memos use thematic analysis to identify outliers or turning points, and document contextual factors that provide more insight into observed trends (Given, 2008). All data were reviewed in their original form, with memos inserted directly into the document in the form of comments. To protect the confidentiality of respondents, only NORC researchers working on the situational analysis reviewed the data. All focus group transcripts were received via secure file transfer.

While reviewing focus group transcripts, the situational analysis assessment team initially focused on broad themes related to border closure, movement restrictions, and repatriation efforts. We used memos to identify the implications of themes across migrant populations, and we highlighted differences in gender, work sector, and intent to return to GCC countries. Memos also enabled us to identify relationships between and across broad themes and sub-themes, including stressors related to safety concerns, detention, and reintegration upon return. Themes related to repatriation efforts, changes in working conditions, economic uncertainty upon return to Kenya, and intent to return to GCC countries were preset, while themes related to family dynamics, psychosocial well-being, and support received from GFEMS subrecipients emerged from the data.

To analyze KII notes, the team adopted a similar strategy, highlighting broad themes in the margins of interview notes and documenting areas where different organizations highlighted challenges, adaptive strategies, and changes in their approach to supporting returning migrants. The team triangulated findings among focus groups, desk review, and KIIs to develop the findings explored in this report.

Limitations

Constraints related to COVID-19. Research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which prevented travel by the US-based NORC team and required virtual interviewing for KIIs. It is possible that stakeholders that declined may have been more willing to participate if approached in-person, as some respondents may have been unable or unwilling to participate in interviews from their homes.

Selection bias. Given the purposive nature of the KII sample, selection bias was minimal. However, the time and availability restrictions made it difficult to include government stakeholders. As such, these perspectives are not included in this report.

Response bias. Interviews relied on self-reports about perceptions that may be biased due to social desirability or to stakeholders and focus group discussants wanting to provide the answers they thought the research team wanted to hear. To mitigate this limitation, the research team outlined confidentiality and anonymity guarantees to all participants and ensured that interviews took place in a private setting. Additionally, only experienced moderators with training in trauma-informed research were engaged in the study. Focus group participants did not demonstrate any apprehension to discussing their experiences with abuse or trauma. However, the moderator provided reassurance throughout the conversation that any disclosures were entirely voluntarily and would be kept confidential.

Limited literature on medium- and long-term impacts of COVID-19. The majority of available literature focused on the short-term impact of COVID-19 on various populations. Given that long-term effects of COVID-19 on labor migrants in GCC countries continue to emerge, there is limited peer-reviewed literature or long-term studies that focus specifically on these populations. As such, our desk review relies heavily on recent articles and opinion pieces.

3. FINDINGS

The assessment team found that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the vulnerability of labor migrants. Loss of income, limited income-generating activities, border closures, and difficult repatriation dynamics had far-reaching effects on the economic and psychosocial well-being of returning migrants.

Despite the high rate of migration between Kenya and the GCC countries every year, the OLR industry remains complex and often leaves migrants susceptible to human trafficking, forced labor, and modern slavery. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted vulnerable populations internationally, and migrant workers are among the most afflicted groups. The onset of the global pandemic is further compounding the already adverse situation of migrant workers, who are now facing significant wage cuts and longer working hours, with little negotiating power for their employment rights.

In particular, the *kafala* system employed by most GCC countries puts the large majority of migrant workers in these states at high risk related to their salaries and immigration status. This system ties the legal right of being in countries to jobs held by workers. Notably, some countries are introducing efforts to amend the *kafala* system to address concerns about workers' rights and allow for additional flexibility. In Saudi Arabia for example, labor reforms now enable workers to switch jobs without their employers' permission (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Increasing Risk of Abuse among Migrants in GCC Countries

As the bulk of migrant workers in the GCC undertake low-paid, menial jobs, they are amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic (Amnesty International, 2020). While some GCC governments have made financial and health-related provisions for migrant workers, restrictions on movement have made it difficult for workers to access these resources.

Highlighting the vulnerability of the migrant worker population, Manuela Tomei, Director of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, has described the situation as “a potential crisis within a crisis” (Agence France-Presse, 2020). Existing labor systems in destination countries, combined with poor living and working conditions, restricted access to information and health care services, and inadequate legal protection, have amplified the vulnerabilities of migrant workers.

Migrant women in domestic work and caregiving sectors are also disproportionately affected, as they have to fulfill additional house chores and care demands, while being subject to violence and abuse from their employers (Agence France-Presse, 2020). As a result of lockdowns in GCC states, workers are more susceptible to sexual and physical abuse due to the confined nature of their environment (Ahmed, 2021). In some countries, strict lockdown had implications not only on migrants' mobility but also on their work permits and long-term employment. Migrants who were kicked out of employer homes and taken to shelters and detention areas were also discriminated against and deprived of food, basic needs, and due

wages. In most cases, these migrants did not have access to their identity paperwork, complicating efforts to identify and repatriate migrants in detention centers and shelters.

Persistent employer abuse likely led to many workers fleeing their place of employment and taking on whatever menial jobs might have been available, putting their immigration status in jeopardy. Migrants who left employers to escape harassment and abuse were stuck in difficult situations and faced the fear of being captured due to incorrect documentation. Most female FGD participants stated that, even before the pandemic hit, they had escaped abusive households and lived in the GCC with the fear of being caught by the authorities and forcefully repatriated when the pandemic hit.

“At some point it became difficult, as foreigners, to even go out because we didn't have the necessary documentation. We had to rely on our Arab friends to go buy for us anything we needed from the shops. The police were patrolling the streets and if you didn't have the necessary papers you could be arrested. We had broken our contracts with our employers and movement became difficult.”

Multifaceted Reintegration Challenges in Kenya

- Returning migrant FGD, Women

After struggling in the GCC, the economic and social stigmatization from returning back to their native countries “empty-handed” or without a job is extremely prevalent among returnee migrant workers. During an interview with the Fuller Project, Paul Adhoch, the executive director of anti-trafficking Mombasa based NGO Trace Kenya noted that *“if [the workers] fall into depression, [they are] even more stigmatised because now [they are] a burden to the family”* (Donovan and Obiria, 2020). Key informant interviews highlight that the majority of migrants leave families who are solely dependent on them to support living expenses and education costs for children. Further, migrants often work diligently to shield family members from the realities of their experiences. For example, a migrant worker may work for nine months, but only be paid for one, and lead their family to believe that they are being paid consistently. Key informant interviewees note that migrants often hide these details from their families, adding to feelings of shame. This finding was consistent among male and female migrants. At the onset of the pandemic, the loss of wages had significant effects on families in Kenya as well, as the migrants were no longer able to send money home. According to Awareness against Human Trafficking Kenya (HAART) interviewees, migrants who received financial support from NGOs while awaiting repatriation often chose to send the majority of those funds back to their families in Kenya and kept little for themselves. In their view, it was more important to continue supporting living expenses of their families in Kenya.

GFEMS subrecipients note that a small fraction of migrants were successful in repatriating to Kenya once borders reopened. According to a September 2020 press release from the Ministry of Tourism, approximately 569 migrants were repatriated from Saudi Arabia, and 108 migrants were repatriated from Lebanon. While there are no data regarding how many migrants sought repatriation support, it is likely that many who attempted to were unable, given the estimated 50,000 to 100,000 migrants residing in GCC countries (Malit and Al Youha, 2016).

In addition to managing feelings of shame, migrants were returning to economies that are struggling with high levels of unemployment. While some organizations like Trace Kenya attempt to assist returning migrants with small amounts of funds, the majority of workers were unable to access these benefits, rendering them vulnerable to predatory migration agencies and indirectly putting them at risk for human trafficking (Donovan and Obiria, 2020).

HAART conducted a needs assessment to identify immediate needs and provided psychosocial support and economic empowerment opportunities because many returnees expressed the desire to start their own businesses with the aim of becoming self-sufficient. Case workers from HAART also worked in close collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to facilitate repatriation and stayed in constant communication with stranded migrants.

“You find people going into depression and alcoholism because they have no one to turn to. The agencies that sent them abroad I'm not concerned at all. Maybe the government should intervene on find ways of offering this vital support.”

- Returning migrant FGD, Men

Migrants are finding it hard to cope with the stress from financial insecurity and uncertainty around their future and need emotional support and counseling to help them during this difficult time. They are also facing immense stigma after returning and are burdened with a sense of shame associated with returning to Kenya with no money despite having lived abroad and earned comparatively higher wages. The majority of male and female FGD participants highlighted the need for psychosocial counseling and support to manage severe trauma and psychological distress as a result of harsh working conditions, COVID-19 setbacks, and (in some cases) being victims of trafficking. Interestingly, male FGD participants expressed hesitation to come out and request help or support to cope with their trauma. Interviewees from HAART also highlighted this trend and added that, in coping with the stress of economic uncertainty and challenging reintegration, many returned male migrants cope with alcohol and become violent toward their families. Women on the other hand are more likely to seek help instead of retreating or internalizing their trauma.

The majority of male and female FGD participants highlighted that, upon their return to Kenya, there was limited government support. The agents who previously helped them find work were not around to provide guidance. About half of female FGD participants stated that they received some limited support from Counter Human Trafficking Trust-East Africa (CHTEA), including small capital support to start businesses and counselling support. Male FGD participants did not report receiving this type of support.

Challenging Provision of Support for Migrants

Challenging reintegration dynamics have also complicated relationships between NGOs supporting labor migrants and returning migrants. IOM and HAART were successful in coordinating support for the return of some migrants and managing expenses for some migrants stuck in GCC countries, but they were limited in their ability to accommodate all the requests they received. Key informants from HAART note that, without robust support from government, the repatriation process was more complicated, and they were unable to accommodate the volume of migrants needing support. Key informants from HAART note that the migrants they work with are accustomed to receiving timely, responsive support as they navigated challenges in GCC countries. However, migrants did not understand that HAART as an organization did not have funds for repatriation. As a result, some migrants were not responsive to follow-ups and check-ins from HAART staff upon their return, as they felt they had been let down. This required HAART to rebuild trust with returning migrants through persistent follow-up and clearly explaining the factors that contributed to the elongation of the repatriation process before they participated in any counseling or other support activities.

Key informants from HAART also note that COVID-19-related restrictions made it difficult to offer the same level of personalized support. Prior to the pandemic, migrants who sought support from NGOs were

received by multiple caseworkers at the airport to offer a welcoming return. During the pandemic, only one case worker could receive a returning migrant, and only if they had the necessary PPE and adhered to distancing measures. While this served to protect caseworkers and returning migrants, it did not provide returning migrants with the same level of immediate support. Further, case workers normally conduct home visits with migrants to monitor progress after they have settled in. During the pandemic, home visits were minimized, and therapy sessions were conducted virtually. Virtual support also enabled case workers to reach migrants who returned to more rural areas of the country. Although most migrants were receptive to the virtual format, many faced issues with internet connectivity and signal reliability.

Four KIIs from IOM also highlighted several adaptive strategies for supporting migrants during the pandemic. IOM advocated for the provision of counseling services for migrants in quarantine facilities. As migrants went home, they continued to receive counseling services online. During repatriation and other efforts, IOM had many staff stationed within ministries to manage the volume of repatriation requests coming in and to improve coordination with government stakeholders.

Economic Factors Driving Return to GCC Countries

Labor migration has been flagged as an additional measure that could boost Kenya's economy after the downturn due to the pandemic. According to the Association of Skilled Migrant Agencies of Kenya, the remittances provided by laborers overseas could be a useful source of income for their families (Nanjala, 2020).

More recently, the rising demand for the migrant workers overseas has led to a rise in recruitment agencies applying for licenses to send workers to GCC countries. Simon Chelugui, the Labour Cabinet Secretary, said "We vetted and registered 302 private employment agencies to recruit Kenyans to the labor market abroad, owing to an increase in demand for labor abroad" (Emi, 2021). According to the Central Bank of Kenya, Kenyans living and working abroad in 2020 sent home an estimated \$3.1 billion dollars (340.8 billion shillings; Mwita, 2021). The Central Bank of Kenya's diaspora remittance survey also shows downward trends in total remittances from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, and Bahrain between February and May 2020, with some recovery beginning in the following months.

"It is hard to say I can never go back, I might at some point. You find yourself weighing and comparing what you're earning from the business you started and what you could have and while in employment in the GCC."

Despite the benefits to the economy, financial security, and income earning potential, most FGD participants expressed that they would not want to return to the GCC for work if other opportunities were available in Kenya. They highlighted poor treatment by employers and limits on their freedom as driving factors. However, they did acknowledge that, due to lack of alternative income-earning opportunities in Kenya, they would eventually have to resort to returning to the GCC to make ends meet and support their families. This is corroborated by interviewees from HAART who believe that migrants will be compelled to return to GCC countries in search of more lucrative opportunities, despite having experienced abuse and trauma. In fact, needs assessments findings indicated that some clients prioritized funding toward getting another passport over basic needs to help them make travel arrangements to return to work in GCC countries.

- Returning migrant FGD, Men

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we provide a synthesis of recommendations for improving support of labor migrants. We then provide overarching conclusions and cross-cutting recommendations for GFEMS to consider as they engage stakeholders.

Economic uncertainty creates a favorable environment for unethical recruitment practices and greater exploitation of migrant workers who are eager to leave unfavorable economic conditions in Kenya. The following recommendations focus on improving migrant safety pre-departure and improving support for migrants upon their return.

General Recommendations

Greater embassy assistance in GCC countries. The pandemic revealed that, in emergency situations, migrants have few resources to navigate uncertainties and increased abusive practices. Findings also suggest that many migrants are unaware of where and how to access available resources once they are in GCC countries. It is critical that the Government of Kenya provides migrants with clearer paths for accessing consular support. Further, there should be reporting mechanisms within the Kenyan embassy to enable migrants to report abuse, document forfeiture, and contract breaching. These reports should also document the recruitment agencies and employers associated with each case to ensure that recruitment agencies are aware of which employers engage in abusive practices.

Develop new policies that outline strategies for managing future global crises. While NGOs were effective in identifying migrants in need of support for repatriation and reintegration, these efforts were largely adaptive. For future emergencies, it is critical that all stakeholders have clear guidelines for implementing repatriation efforts, including clear definitions of each entity's responsibilities. This may also include a migrant welfare fund, where migrants and other groups can contribute funds to support migrants in need of repatriation and financial support upon return.

Strengthen repatriation mechanism and coordination between key stakeholders. While abusive practices related to document forfeiture have been in place for a long time, the pandemic revealed just how precarious this can be for many migrants. The loss of identity cards made it extremely difficult for repatriation efforts to effectively support individuals who needed to return home. In many cases, delays in repatriation were primarily caused by efforts to validate identities and ensure that the individuals requesting support were indeed Kenyan citizens. To mitigate this in the future, recruitment agencies and embassies should be required to have copies of passports and other documents that can quickly confirm identity. In all cases, repatriation efforts should be led by the national government with some support from local stakeholders.

Strengthen monitoring of informal recruitment systems. Given economic uncertainty, many migrants are eager to return to GCC countries, and more new migrants are actively seeking opportunities within GCC countries. Many potential and returning migrants are aware of the common abuses within GCC countries and conclude that the risks are more favorable than navigating economic uncertainties within

Kenya. With Short Message Service (SMS)-based recruitment on the rise, it will be critical to monitor recruitment systems that prey on migrants who are eager to leave.

Create centralized resources for migrants. In addition to better monitoring of informal recruitment agencies, implementing partners should work together to create centralized resources for potential migrants. This would enable migrants to make informed decisions about migration, including reliable recruitment agencies, guidelines for reviewing contracts, and guidance on how to identify misinformation. This may include working with community-level organizations and leaders to point migrants to such reputable resources and NGOs that support prospective and returning migrants.

Program Recommendations

Expand psychosocial support for returning migrants. Focus groups and stakeholders highlight that migrants return with significant emotional trauma and feelings of shame about their experiences abroad or their inability to continue supporting their families. The abrupt nature of the pandemic, combined with many survivors' experiences with detention centers and worsening working conditions, exacerbated this trauma and made it more difficult for survivors to reintegrate. Psychosocial support can help validate these experiences and help migrants navigate fears about reconnecting with their families. Psychosocial support should make distinctive efforts to target men, who continue to experience difficulty processing their experiences. Enabling men to access psychosocial support may reduce instances of domestic violence perpetrated by returning male migrants. Psychosocial support should include support for group counseling. Many migrants blame themselves for the deceitful and exploitative labor conditions they experienced, which makes it more difficult to talk openly about what took place. Group counseling would enable migrants to feel less alone and to understand that the conditions under which they worked are reflective of broader exploitation, not their own lack of understanding.

Continue and expand virtual support. Restrictions on in-person gatherings necessitated virtual models of service provision. While some migrants experienced connectivity challenges with virtual support, findings suggest that this model of support is helpful for migrants who want to ease into more intensive psychosocial counseling, and those who are located outside of service areas. To mitigate some of the challenges associated with virtual counseling, programs should consider providing returned migrants with phone and data credits.

Involve family members in the reintegration process. As migrants returned, many of them felt significant shame about their inability to continue supporting their families as the pandemic worsened economic conditions in Kenya. As programs facilitate economic reintegration, it would also be beneficial to include family members in social reintegration efforts. In doing so, adult family members can be more aware about the challenges migrants face while abroad and can help reduce stigma about returning from such circumstances.

Expand coordination efforts between NGOs supporting imminent and returning migrants. Coordination efforts between HAART and IOM in repatriating migrants leveraged the strengths of each organization, enabling more effective communication between migrants and embassies and support for migrants in detention centers. Because the pandemic introduced a volume of repatriation requests never previously experienced, effective coordination is critical to responding to requests. This coordination also helped to identify gaps in Government of Kenya support. Continued coordination would allow programs to arrive at common understandings of how to support Government of Kenya efforts and to develop

standard approaches and clearer guidelines about the roles and responsibilities of each program in supporting reintegration and repatriation.

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ANNEX A

Table A: Subrecipients Interviewed

No.	Stakeholder Type	Organization	Number of staff interviewed
1	OLR NGO	HAART	3
2	OLR	IOM	4

Table B: Focus Group Discussions

Date Of Interview	31/03/2021
Type Of Participant	Male
Respondent Residence Location	Nairobi
Number Of Respondents	5
Group Type	Male Migrants
Venue	Cardinal Otunga Plaza Annex
Moderator Name	Habil Oloo
Name Of Note Taker	Jackline Nduta

Date Of Interview	30/03/2021
Type Of Participant	Female
Respondent Residence Location	Nairobi
Number Of Respondents	9
Group Type	Female Migrants
Venue	Cardinal Otunga Plaza Annex
Moderator Name	Habil Oloo
Name Of Note Taker	Jackline Nduta

ANNEX B: Interview Instruments

KII Instruments

Key Informant Interview Protocol for NGOs, CSOs and Local Associations

Introductory Question

1. Please describe your role within your organization, specifically as it relates to overseas labor recruitment and Kenyan migration to GCC countries.
 - a. How long have you been in this role and what are your responsibilities?

Overall COVID-19 Impact Questions

My first set of questions are structured to understand the general migrant worker landscape amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in the GCC, specifically as it relates to migrants from Kenya.

1. What were some of the emerging concerns for migrants still living in GCC countries during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. *[if not addressed]* What were the primary concerns at the beginning of the pandemic? What are the concerns now?
2. How have migrant workers been affected by the pandemic in terms of :
 - a. Employment status
 - b. Working conditions
 - c. Payment of wages
 - d. Availability of sufficient work hours
3. At the beginning of the pandemic, were migrant workers facing any form of discrimination or stigmatization because they are perceived to be carriers of COVID-19?
 - a. Did this change as the pandemic progressed? In what ways?
4. What demographic groups (women/older workers/domestic or construction workers) within the migrant worker population in GCC countries are particularly impacted by COVID-19?
5. Are you aware of any government benefits in GCC countries that were available to migrant workers? What were they?

Repatriation Activities and Policies for Returnee Migrants

Thank you for your response. The next set of questions is related to policies or actions implemented to safely and effectively repatriate migrant workers from GCC countries to Kenya.

1. Does your organization have a role in facilitating repatriation of returnee migrants? In what capacity?
 - a. *[if yes]* What type of support did your organization offer at the beginning of the pandemic? What type of support do you offer now? *[probe: health access, travel arrangements etc.]*
2. What are your views on the repatriation efforts of the Kenyan government/GCC governments/international donors?

- a. How have repatriation efforts changed as the pandemic has progressed?

Impact on Returnee Migrant Workers from GCC Countries

Thank you for your response. My next set of questions is related to impact of the pandemic from the perspective of returnee migrant workers making their way back to Kenya.

1. How have returnee migrant workers been affected by the pandemic?
2. Which occupational sectors do a majority of returnee migrants belong to?
[Probe: construction, domestic work, fisheries]
3. Did some migrants have more difficulty returning than others? *{probe: migrants who incurred travel debt, migrants experiencing forced labor, migrants in the domestic work and construction sectors}*
4. How has the pandemic affected economic outcomes for migrant workers?
 - a. How are returned managing the loss of their wages & savings? *[probe: taking on debt, finding in-country work, seeking other opportunities abroad]*
 - b. How has this affected families who heavily depend on international remittances from migrant workers?

Reintegration Activities and Policies for Returnee Migrants

Thank you for your response. My next set of questions is related to policies or actions implemented to safely and effectively repatriate migrant workers from GCC countries to Kenya.

1. During the pandemic, what factors affected proper reintegration of returnee migrants?
2. What measures are being taken to ensure safe and successful reintegration of returnee migrants?
3. What are some challenges faced in reintegrating returnee migrants?

Role of the Government

4. At the start of the pandemic, how did the Government support returnee migrants?
 - a. To your knowledge, did the Government establish online or other informational resources for migrants wanting to learn more about returning?
 - b. Were there any mechanisms for tracking returning migrants?
 - c. Did the government implement any economic initiatives to support returning migrants? What does it entail?
 - d. Did the government implement any health initiatives for returning migrants? (Testing, quarantine facilities)
 - e. What measures is the government taking to ensure returnee migrants' health and well-being after they have reached Kenya?
 - f. What measures is the government taking to ensure safe and successful social reintegration of returnee migrants?

Role of NGOs/CSOs/Local Associations

1. How did your organization adapt programming to address emerging issues faced by migrants and potential migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have Government entities been working with NGOs, CSOs and local associations to help reintegrate returnee migrant workers in Kenya?

3. What is the role of your organization in supporting safe and successful economic reintegration of returnee migrants?
 - a. Is your organization collaborating with the government, recruitment agencies, and other key stakeholders to create new and alternative employment opportunities for returnee migrant workers who have lost their jobs?
 - b. Is your organization directly working with returnee migrants and connecting them to recruitment agencies, training and re-skilling programs, and professional development opportunities?
 - c. What support is being provided to ensure the economic well-being of migrant families, particularly those who solely relied on remittances?
4. At the start of the pandemic, did your organization help migrants and their families get access to health care services beyond the quarantine period?
 - a. Is your organization facilitating any COVID-related health access now?
5. What is the role of your organization in supporting safe and successful social reintegration of returnee migrants?
 - a. What action has your organization taken to address discrimination and stigmatization faced by returnee migrants?
6. Have any Government or NGO programs been put in place to help curb an increased risk of forced labor for returnee migrants and potential migrants?

Impact on Pre-Departure and Potential Migrant Workers to GCC Countries

Thank you for your response. My next set of questions is related to policies or actions implemented to support potential/first-time migrant workers who planned to move to GCC countries but are unable to do so now because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. How have potential migrant workers to GCC countries been affected by the pandemic?
2. How have recruitment agencies adjusted their operations during the pandemic?
 - a. To your knowledge, are agencies still actively recruiting workers to migrate to GCC countries?
3. How are pre-departure migrant workers coping with the inability to travel, loss of employment, and delays?
4. What measures are being taken to support potential migrants?
 - a. Is your organization working with the Government, international donors and/or other NGOs to create alternative employment opportunities for pre-departure migrant workers whose contracts have been terminated?
 - b. Is your organization working with formal and informal recruiting agents to ensure job security for migrant workers whose contracts and visas have not yet been terminated?
 - c. Is your organization working with GCC country governments or NGOs to ensure job security for migrant workers whose contracts and visas have not yet been terminated?
 - d. Is your organization working directly with potential migrants to provide them with necessary economic, emotional and legal support?

Looking Ahead

Thank you for your response. My next set of questions is related to the likely short-term, medium-term and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on overseas labor migration from Kenya to the GCC countries.

1. Do you think returned migrants will go back to their destination countries to resume work after the pandemic? Why do you say this?
2. Do you believe new migrants will continue to seek opportunities in GCC countries? Why do you say this?
3. How are worker preferences for safe migration likely to change?
4. Thinking of the last 10 months, how would you describe the impact of the pandemic on employment-based migration? [*Probe: employment opportunities, policy changes, modified labor laws, new sponsorship systems, more stringent pre-migration health checkups, migrant health rights*]
5. To what extent are the effects of COVID-19 on overseas labor recruitment likely to become permanent?
 - a. Do you think this might vary depending on the sector (i.e. construction, hospitality, and domestic services), GCC country and/or gender of the migrant worker?

Recommendations

Thank you for your response, we are nearing the end of the interview. My final set of questions is related to any recommendations you might have to strengthen repatriation and reintegration efforts for migrant workers.

1. What are your views on activities being undertaken by the government, international donors and NGOs to support returnee and pre-departure migrants?
2. What information would be most useful to help you adapt policies and programs around migrant worker issues?
3. How can implementing partners, international donors and other key stakeholders better respond to returnee migrant and potential migrant vulnerabilities arising amidst the pandemic?
4. What other kinds of programs should GFEMS and other implementing partners be running during this time? Do you have any suggestions on how GFEMS should adapt priorities?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me, I have learned a lot from our conversation and your inputs will be extremely valuable for our research.

GCC KENYA– Situational Analysis Focus Group Discussion Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this Focus Group Discussion. We are grateful that you are giving us your time. First, let me introduce the team: [*facilitator, note taker, and others should introduce themselves*].

NORC at the University of Chicago is conducting a research study on labor conditions among Kenyan migrants in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Right now we are conducting research on how the pandemic has affected Kenyan migrants in GCC countries. We will be asking questions about labor conditions overseas, your return to Kenya, and how the pandemic affected you.

Before we begin, you should know that there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this discussion. The benefit of this activity will rather support reliable research on exploitative labor practices in GCC so that projects can better serve workers like yourselves in the future.

This focus group discussion will take about 90 minutes. We have [*food, drink, restrooms, etc.*] for you in order to make your participation more comfortable.

We would like to audio record these discussions and take notes. The recordings and the notes will not be shared with anyone outside the research team and your names will not be recorded in any way. We hope this makes you feel comfortable to express your ideas freely.

Your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary and so if you do not feel comfortable, then you are welcome to excuse yourself at any time without any questions or consequences. We are taking extra precautions to adhere to current public health guidelines so as to minimize our COVID-19 related risks. These include: face masks, hand sanitizer, and sitting the required distance apart. Again, if at any time you do not feel comfortable, you are welcome to excuse yourself without any questions or consequences.

- Do you have any questions? [*Check with each respondent*]
- Do you agree to participate? [*Get verbal consent from each respondent*]
- Will you allow us to record this discussion? [*Check with each respondent*]

[*Start recorder*] Before we begin, I would like to go through some basic ground rules:

- First and most important, please be respectful of your fellow participants. This means not interrupting or talking over each other and respecting each other's opinions or ideas, even when you disagree. This also means keeping everything said here today strictly confidential.
- Second, we chose this focus group format because we want to hear a variety of views and perspectives. Please help me to create space for all people to speak and participate. You are also encouraged to react to and build upon what each other say. This should be an interactive discussion, not a group interview.
- That said, we have a lot to cover today so it is important that the conversation remain focused on the specific questions and topics of discussion. Please try to keep on point and avoid unrelated tangents.

DYAD ICE BREAKER (10 minutes)

Turn to the person next to you and take a few minutes to share with each other one of your favorite childhood memories. *[Wait until volume in room is high]* Does anyone want to share their partner's favorite memory?

A. BACKGROUND/PRE-PANDEMIC

1. When did you first migrate overseas? What made you decide to go?
 - a. Did you have any hesitation about migrating? Why is this?
2. How did you find your job? Did you receive any assistance?
 - a. In which sector(s) were you hoping to find work? *[domestic servitude, construction, hospitality]*
3. What were your living conditions like? Was this similar to what you expected?
4. What were your day to day responsibilities?
 - a. Is this what you expected based on your contract?
 - b. *[if different]* how was it different?
 - c. *[if different]* did you discuss these differences with your employer or recruitment agency? What was the outcome of these discussions?
5. What were your work conditions like? *[probe: hours worked, living conditions]*
 - a. How does this compare to what you expected?
 - b. *[if different]* was there anyone you could talk to about this?
6. Did you know of any other migrants from Kenya?
 - a. What sector(s) did they work in?
 - b. Did you have any contact with them? How often was this?
7. What were some of the challenges you experienced while you were abroad? *[Moderator: this is pre-pandemic]*
 - a. How did you manage these?
8. While you were abroad, were you aware of any organizations or individuals that supported labor migrants?
 - a. How did you come to be aware of them?
 - b. What type of support did they provide?
 - c. Did you ever contact any of them in search of support? Please explain.

B. EARLY PANDEMIC

The first part of this discussion is going to be focused on the start of the pandemic, around March or April, and then your return to Kenya.

1. When did you first learn of the pandemic?
 - a. Were there any movement restrictions or curfews in the country you were in? When did they take place?
 - b. *[if restrictions indicated]* Did these restrictions affect your work responsibilities in any way?
2. Did the start of the pandemic result in any differences in your day to day responsibilities? How so?
 - a. What about your work hours? In what ways?
 - b. Were there any differences in your wages?
3. Did your employer implement any health safety precautions? *[probe: distancing, provision of masks/gloves]*
 - a. Did your employer make any changes to your living conditions?

- b. Did you have any concerns for your health? Please explain.
 - c. Did you ever hear of other employers implementing new health safety precautions?
4. Did you, or anyone you know of have their contract terminated? What happened after that?
5. At what point did you decide to come back to Kenya?
 - a. What factors contributed to your decision?
 - b. Did you have any apprehension about coming back? Why?
 - c. In all, how long did it take to finalize your return?
6. Did you receive any support with returning? [*probe: expenses, negotiation with employer*]
 - a. Were there any resources (online, support groups, NGOs) that helped you understand how to navigate your return?
 - b. Were there any resources or communication from the Kenyan government to facilitate your return?
7. Were there any conditions for your return? [*probe: debt incurred, repayment of placement services, etc.*]
 - a. Who determined these conditions? Did you negotiate any conditions?
8. What challenges did you experience in trying to return?

C. REPATRIATION

1. How did your family and community members respond to your return?
 - a. Did you have somewhere to stay upon your return? Where?
 - b. Did you or your family members have any concerns about you contracting the virus? How did this affect you?
 - c. How did other community members respond to your return?
2. Did you have any contact with the recruitment agency when you returned? Please describe.
 - a. Did you have any contact with government agencies when you returned? How?
3. Did you connect with any local NGOs supporting returned migrants?
 - a. What kind of support did they provide? Why was this important to you?
 - b. Was there any support you wanted to receive, but were unable? What was this?
4. Have you been able to find employment here in Kenya?
 - a. [*if yes*] in what sector? How do your earnings compare to what you were making while abroad?
 - b. [*if no*] How has the pandemic affected your ability to find other employment?
 - c. During your search for new employment, have you encountered negative attitudes towards returned migrants?
 - d. How are former migrants who cannot find employment managing their expenses?
5. Have you accessed any social services or health facilities since you returned?
 - a. Which service(s) did you access?

D. CLOSING (5 minutes)

1. As you look back, what do you think was the greatest challenge migrants experienced as a result of the pandemic?
2. How do you think organizations can better support migrants who have returned to Kenya, or those still abroad?
3. Do you have any desire to go back to work in the Gulf? Why or why not?
 - a. [*if yes*] When do you plan to return? Are you receiving any assistance for your return?
 - b. [*if yes*] are you looking for work in the same sector? Why or why not?
4. Beyond what has been discussed, is there anything else you think we should know about how the pandemic affected migrant workers?

ANNEX C: Analytical Framework

	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2
Changes in employment dynamics	<i>Contract termination</i>	<i>Changes in hours/work performed</i>
Detention	<i>Circumstances leading to detention</i>	<i>Conditions of detention centers (basic needs, ability to communicate with others outside of detention centers)</i>
Economic uncertainty	<i>Strategies for managing economic uncertainty before returning to Kenya</i>	<i>Strategies for managing economic uncertainty upon return to Kenya</i>
Gendered dynamics	<i>Propensity to seek external support</i>	<i>Strategies for coping with trauma and/or income losses</i>
Health safety	<i>Concerns about contracting COVID in host country</i>	<i>Concerns about contracting COVID-19 upon return</i>
Physical safety	<i>Violence from employers</i>	<i>Violence from law enforcement or detention center staff</i>
Psychosocial health	<i>Impacts of COVID restrictions on psychosocial health</i>	<i>Impacts of working conditions on psychosocial health</i>
Reintegration dynamics	<i>Economic (changes in family quality of life due to loss of income)</i>	<i>Social support (ability to receive emotional support from family members or others (not NGOs) during reintegration)</i>
Repatriation logistics	<i>Managing repatriation costs</i>	<i>Managing other repatriation logistics (documents, travel to airports, etc.)</i>
Repatriation support	<i>Psychosocial support during repatriation efforts</i>	<i>Material and financial support during repatriation efforts</i>
Return to GCC countries	<i>Economic factors affecting desire to return</i>	<i>Other factors affecting desire to return</i>
Support upon returning to Kenya (psychosocial, economic)	<i>Perceptions of support received</i>	<i>Additional support desired</i>