

Labour migration along the Uganda-Jordan corridor

Stories from journalism students



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Foreword

The work presented in this anthology is the result of a cross-border fellowship between four journalism programs in Uganda and Jordan. During several months, students from Yarmouk University and Middle East University in Jordan as well as their counterparts in Makerere University and Uganda Christian University in Uganda, worked jointly to improve their understanding of labour migration dynamics, gather testimonies from relevant sources and draft stories on a diversity of labour migration-related issues.

In October-November 2022, around 40 students from both countries attended training workshops in Kampala (Uganda) and Amman (Jordan). During this first encounter, many of them learned about the reality of labour migration between both countries and had the opportunity to interact across the corridor. The workshops were led by experienced journalists and experts from the International Labour Organization. These activities were aimed at piquing their interest for labour-related mobility along the Uganda-Jordan corridor and equipping them with the necessary tools and skills to report on these issues.

Following the workshops, a call for ideas was launched and 20 students were selected for a month-long fellowship. They benefited from our guidance and were spread out in cross-border duos or trios depending on their specific interest. While [Lule Eriah](#) and [Majed Al-Karadsheh](#) focused on the employer/employee relationship, [Biira Hellen](#) and [Karmel Al Madi](#) decided to focus on how migrant workers in Jordan spend their time off. During the duration of the fellowship, students communicated using instant messaging services and automated translation tools.

In this collective publication, we are pleased to present nine stories authored by ten aspiring journalists. They are written according to different types of reporting and try to capture a wide range of challenges related to labour migration experiences. Stories have been lightly edited for consistency and to avoid, as much as possible, repetition. The reader should bear in mind that these stories are the work of aspiring or freshly graduated journalism students and were drafted under tight deadlines with limited access to the field.

The Uganda-Jordan cross-border fellowship programme was initiated by the ILO FAIRWAY programme, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).¹ The FAIRWAY programme is an interregional programme covering selected countries of origin in East, West and North Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and Morocco); as well as countries of destination in the Arab States (Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon and Jordan) which seeks to address the interlinked structural, behavioural, and practical barriers to improved labour migration. To do so, FAIRWAY works to realize a number of objectives, including that discriminatory attitudes towards women and men migrant workers are diminished through accurate media report.²

We hope you enjoy learning about some of the realities depicted in this anthology as much as we took pleasure in guiding the students to produce them.

Charles AUTHEMAN
John-Baptist IMOKOLA
Khaled QUDAH

Mentors of the *Uganda-Jordan cross-border fellowship programme*

¹ The views expressed in this anthology are the opinions of the authors and not the ILO or the SDC.

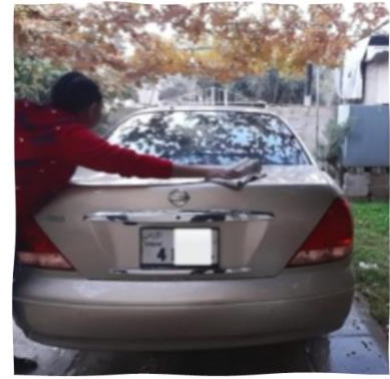
² Further information about the FAIRWAY Programme activities, including an Arabic glossary of terms relating to migration, newsrooms visits and journalist training, as well as content analysis of media coverage of labour migration to better understand deficits in accurate and balanced reporting, can be found [here](#).

Ugandan domestic workers in Jordan perform arduous tasks outside the employment contract

By Majed Al-Karadsheh

Some Jordanian employers of domestic workers believe that the tasks of migrant domestic workers are not limited to household chores but extend and expand to carrying out other tasks such as cleaning their cars or cultivating the garden surrounding their homes, going as far as sending them to the homes of relatives and acquaintances to work for them.

Adele*³, 26 years old, a Ugandan domestic worker in the city of Madaba, central Jordan, says that her daily work routine begins when the sun shines through the windows of her room. She wakes up to prepare breakfast and then starts early in the morning with chores such as washing utensils and dishes, rearranging, and cleaning the rooms of the house, so that the house radiates cleanliness and order. Some work related to social events, or the movement and activity of the family is added to her schedule some days of the week and, every two weeks she goes to the house of the employer's daughter to help her clean up her "big, messy house". When she is done, she returns to the employer's house, exhausted.



Adele while carrying out agricultural tasks and cleaning vehicles

Adele added during an interview that every weekend she cleans her employer's car until she sees it shine, then returns home to do other usual tasks and waits for the employer's young grandchildren to return home to take care of them.

She explained that what made her continue her work throughout the previous period was the good treatment by the owner of the house, who made her feel like a member of his family. She notes that she was tired of being abroad and wanted to return to her country to re-unite with her daughter, whom she left young.

Adele said, "When I see children walking and playing around me and talking to me, my memory takes me back to my daughter, whom I left young. Now I can only see her on the phone, but I want to work despite all the circumstances for the sake of my children and my family".

Between the olive and the almond tree

Adele expanded her response and began to link places and people in her native Uganda with Jordan and said: "One day last November, which coincides with the olive harvest season, in the garden of the house in which I work, I stood in front of the olive tree. I am unfamiliar with olive trees and wanted to meditate. The big tree is full of fruits, and I recall the dream for which I came to Jordan in 2016 is to collect money to build the project that I have always strived to achieve. I am close to this dream after I was able to collect the necessary money to open the project in my small African country. Like the owner of the house who today picks the fruits of his tree, when I collect the olives with my hands, I smile because I feel full confidence that the dream that I worked hard and struggled for like olive grains will soon come true as soon as I return to Uganda this year, in 2023".

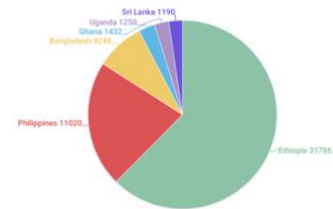
³ Names with an asterisk (*) have been changed to protect the identity of the sources.

But her joy with the olive fruits, which represented harvesting and the fruits of her effort was shaken when she turned to the opposite side to see the almond tree that she had planted six years ago when she came to the house. Adele was amazed at the speed of time passing, as the tree has become a large almond tree that gives fruits to others. It reminds her of her daughter who she left in her first years of life and who grew like an almond tree far from her to sit today on the school benches.

70,000 Domestic Workers in Jordan

According to figures from the Ministry of Labour, the number of domestic workers in Jordan is 70,000, 50,000 of whom are legally registered. The number of registered domestic workers from Ethiopia is 28,539, followed by the Philippines (10,164), Bangladesh (4,246), Ghana (1,316), Uganda (1,238), and Sri Lanka (1,204). They are recruited through specialized agencies, licensed by the Jordanian authorities to work.

The number of domestic workers in Jordan of different nationalities 2022



Source: - Jordanian Ministry of Labor

Guidelines and protections do not prevent abuses

According to the regulations in force in Jordan, the work of the recruitment agencies in Jordan is not limited to bringing domestic workers from their countries, as they also provide guidance to workers and employers on various topics. They also follow up on any complaints filed by domestic workers against their employers.

Firas Al-Hunaiti, director of one of the domestic workers recruitment agencies, said that one of the most important instructions he provides to workers upon their arrival in Jordan is commitment and respect for the customs and traditions prevailing in the Jordanian society. In addition, he sensitizes workers on several matters, notably that work should only be done at the employer's home, and that workers should avoid tasks that pose a threat to their lives. He also stresses that recruited workers are instructed to communicate with the agency in the event of violations by employers, with the agency providing legal support and protection.

Al-Hunaiti indicates that the employer is bound to secure the domestic worker's personal needs and providing health care, so that migrant domestic workers can save their monthly salary.

Among other instructions that Al-Hunaiti gives is the recommendation for domestic workers not to leave the house without the knowledge of the employers. This is to avoid being exploited by abusers who engage in work related to human trafficking, pointing out that domestic workers have been exposed to many cases of fraud. He says "They were deceived and told that they could earn a lot of money faster. We warn them not to believe the false offers and to inform the employer, embassy, or agency in case of similar problems".

During our discussion, Al-Hunaiti underlined that a large percentage of Ugandan domestic workers hold university degrees, in addition to their excellent proficiency in English, which facilitates their work and their clear understanding of their legal rights.

Through his own experience, Al-Hunaiti explained that domestic workers have different personal experiences. Some of them come to work hard for a specific goal, for example continue their studies or to start a project in their country of origin. Others are forced to migrate and work under pressure from their families to be breadwinners.

Al-Hunaiti concluded that he always warns employers against forcing domestic workers into forced labour, justifying that this would become a "time bomb" in the household, which would push the worker to harm themselves, those around, or sometimes commit suicide.

Domestic workers in the judgment of the Jordanian law

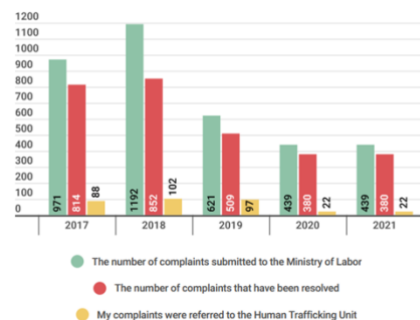
Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights in Jordan (Tamkeen) works to support the rights of Jordanian and migrant workers by providing legal services, educating workers about their rights, and raising awareness about the various violations committed against Jordanian and migrant workers. Tamkeen has handled more than 8,000 complaints of various violations to access justice.

Shadi Al-Natour, a lawyer at Tamkeen confirms that the work of domestic workers in their professional capacity, is only in the home of the employer according to the domestic workers regulation 90 of 2009.

Al-Natour mentioned that the violations faced by domestic workers in Jordan include non-payment of wages, excessive overtime work, not taking weekly leave, lack of access to means of communication, lack of food and drink, restriction of movement, confiscating of identity documents and ill-treatment. In the event of a notification of a violation of the rights of the domestic workers, a complaint file is raised with Tamkeen and sent to the Counter Trafficking Unit to receive the complaint, listen to the testimonies of each of the litigating parties (the domestic worker and the employer), write them down and send them to the Public Prosecutor and submit to a competent court to hear the matter and reach a judgement.

Al-Natour also referred to the laws regulating the rights and duties of domestic workers, such as the Jordanian Labour Law and the Domestic Workers Regulation. The Ministry of Labour indicates that when a domestic worker submits one or more complaints about the employer, the domestic worker is questioned separately, and one official complaint is recorded. If there are indications of human trafficking or forced labour, the complaint is formally transferred to the Counter Trafficking Unit. If the complaint does not refer to human trafficking or forced labour, the employer is summoned to abide by the rights of the domestic workers and made aware that it is not permissible to treat domestic workers badly.

Source: - The annual report of the Ministry of Labor



According to the annual report of the Jordanian Ministry of Labour, it confirmed that the decrease in the percentage of complaints for the year 2020 is a result of an amendment to Domestic Workers Regulation number 90 of 2009. The amendments stipulated rights and duties for the employer, the domestic workers, and the agencies. In addition to the issuance of a decision by the Jordanian Ministry of Labour, it must determine the recruitment costs and wages for domestic workers according to each nationality. The Domestic Workers Directorate in Jordan provides guidance and awareness to the owners of recruitment agencies about the amendments, which contributed to reducing the percentage of complaints.

The Ministry of Labour announced that a platform will be launched at the beginning of 2023, which will serve domestic workers according to their languages and in an electronic form. This would make it easier for domestic workers to submit any complaint at any time. The complaint will afterwards be dealt with by the Inspection Directorate of the Domestic Workers Directorate.

Homecoming

At the end of the employment contract, the domestic worker returns to her country of origin at the expense of the employer. Carrying her bags and leaving the house where she lived and spent moments of mixed feelings (between the olive and almond trees) and sharing with the employer's family memories and experiences that will remain in her memory forever.



Majed Al-Karadsheh, studies digital media at Middle East University. Majed has a particular interest in Search Engine Optimization (SEO), data journalism, video production and editing.

Orientation programs for domestic workers lead to diverse employment experiences

By Lule Eriah

The news of Uganda lifting the ban on its citizens working as migrant workers in Jordan and Saudi Arabia in 2022, created expectations to uplift many families' challenging financial situation, including that of Hajji Ismail Guma, in Mukono District in the Central part of Uganda.

He can now ably send his daughters, Aisha (20 years old) and Haddijah (26 years old) to work in Jordan as domestic workers to help add bread on the table by earning around US\$230- US\$280 monthly. This despite the family still living in the darkening horror where they lost their first-born, Amiira Guma in the fall of 2015 in unknown circumstances.

Through a recruitment agency in the capital city of Kampala, both sisters have undergone a series of orientation programs for a full month that will help them fit in at their designated workplaces as well as create a good bond with their employers.

"Despite both of us being school dropouts, this is a very big opportunity for us to do something for our lives early enough," Haddijah said. "Through these programs, we have learnt a lot about the strong ethical conduct as workers and believe we shall satisfy our employers to the fullest."

In his presentation at the International Labour Organization training workshop in Kampala, Hillary Talemwa, in charge of external employment at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in Uganda, noted that recruitment agencies together with the government designed a curriculum for youth seeking employment in Arab countries. The curriculum entails components in human resource, financial literacy, legal knowledge of contracts and how to seek help in case one is in trouble, among others.

"We as the government help to design this curriculum to help our youth seeking employment to know what to do in different kinds of situations and hold strong ethical values at work," he said. "We invite different stakeholders, like banks, the ministry, police, lawyers to teach them a little of the many challenges they will face and how to resolve them."

Adele* has been working in Jordan for 6 years earning 260 Jordanian dinars (US\$366). The orientation program she received from the Ugandan agency for two weeks was to draw for her a clear picture of the foreign culture she knew nothing about.

"I learnt a little of everything about the Jordanian culture, and the program further stressed my nature of work as it emphasized a strong work ethic at my workplace," she said. "I further learnt about my rights, financial discipline as well as little about my contract terms. This has helped me build a good rapport with my employers," she added.

Approximately 60% of the youth seeking for employment in Arab countries come from remote villages with low literacy levels and little or no knowledge on how to operate basic home appliances.

Jane Nalubowa, 44 years old, has been in the business for close to 10 years in one of Kampala's recruitment agencies. To her, orientation programs give a preview of a totally new culture for the workers. This also helps them reflect on the best ways they would bond with their to-be employers after deployment.

"Many people despise these programs, but they are always a manual of do's and don'ts for many domestic workers due to the high illiteracy rates of many seeking employment", she said. "It is from these programs that many get a bigger picture of the new environment they are yet to join and start reflecting on how best they can bond with their employers in all aspects."

State of market in Jordan for migrant domestic workers

According to [The New Humanitarian Blog](#), Uganda had banned its citizens from taking jobs as domestic workers in the Middle East in January 2016 after reports of mistreatment surfaced on the internet. It partially lifted the ban in March 2022 and will now allow workers to be recruited in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

In an article published on 17th December 2022 in the [New Vision](#), a majority government-owned newspaper, the Jordanian authorities led by the Minister and secretary General of The Ministry of Labour Farouk Al Hadidi told Ambassador Abbey Walusimbi that the bilateral labour agreement between Uganda and Jordan was renewed for more five years until November 2026.

“We are happy to note that the Jordanian market is now legally open for Ugandan migrant workers, and we have committed to do everything possible to ensure that our local recruitment companies follow the requirements of Jordan to the dot,” said Walusimbi.

The Jordanian government said that they are ready to form a Joint Technical Committee to address any administrative issues that may arise out of the Bilateral Labour agreement.

Josephine* worked in Jordan for two consecutive times for four years through different recruitment agencies. To her, it is a matter of luck and God’s blessing, given that for her two episodes, she couldn’t manage to bond with her employer.

According to Josephine, she had her orientation program that stretched for two months instead of the one week she was told. They were held in a warehouse where they were charged US\$21 for their uniforms. This had already created anxiety of what will happen next at her place of deployment.

“In Jordan, we were still kept in a warehouse structure with no beddings and one toilet with over 60 other recruits from different countries,” she said. “By the time you are deployed, you are already fatigued and have infections”.

Josephine can’t forget the way they were deployed. When a client came, they would be lined up and inspected to assess who will work.

“They preferred the slim ones, those who looked beautiful with a good body shaping or over-sized were left if your pickup employer is female,” she added. “Given my body weight, I was about 80kg, it went beyond body shaming in our custody in Jordan.” She recalls being left in the warehouse for six months before deployment.

Dr. Margret Nafuna, a psychotherapeutic counselor in Uganda notes that with such conditions, many migrant workers even fail to perform once they arrive in the workplace given the trauma some pass through before being deployed.

“It is in human nature, you lose interest in whatever task you have been assigned given the kind of orientation you had, a clear reason why some fail to bond with their employers and end up at logger heads with them,” she said.

A chat with a number of different domestic workers revealed that many Ugandan recruitment agencies don’t have control over the employees they supply since they also play the middleman role in the whole process. A fact that didn’t have evidence but has been long observed by the workers themselves.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has as well established a program that would help track migrant workers overseas in case of trouble as Nation Television (NTV) reports⁴.

But that wasn’t the case for Sandra Muwanguzi, 27-year-old, who worked in the country for two years from 2013. According to her, the orientation program she received from both Ugandan agencies and Jordanian agencies was heart-warming. She managed to create a good rapport with her employers who made her feel at home.

“My employers welcomed me, they were flexible, and I was eager to learn all the time,” she said. “When I was leaving, they bought my plane ticket and even gave me some surplus money”.

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_cn0fd-imo

Sandra, who was taking care of her young back in Uganda, is now more determined to do more than taking care of them but create a life changing avenue for them. Through her agency, they have managed to establish contact with her former employer who has accepted to take her back.

It is a personal initiative that Sandra took to establish a good relationship with her employer. Others live in conditions that even end up taking their lives as BBC Africa eye's documentary "["I wanted to die": The 'hell' of kafala jobs in the Middle East⁵](#)" depicts.

Given the presence of orientation programs in Ugandan and Jordanian recruitment agencies, many cases are still coming up on social media of domestic workers in Jordan begging for help from their home governments. This poses a question of how effective these programs are.



Lule Eriah, the first born of six siblings, comes from Wakiso District, close to the capital city Kampala in the central part of Uganda. Lule is a passionate multi-media journalist with Uganda Christian University (UCU) Standard Newspaper, a digital online university paper. He also serves as the Communication Assistant of UCU Alumni Association. He has written and published a number of articles with the Standard and national newspapers. He has mobilized over 10,000 alumni on different occasions to remain in contact with their alma mater.

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CPCZAU47YQ&t=1>

In addition to domestic workers, other professions might benefit from the renewed bilateral labour agreement

By Yasiri Jr. Kasango

Hakimu Intinda graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Mechanical Engineering from Kyambogo University in 2018. He tried looking for a job in his country but failed.

"I approached five companies, but I was asked for a five-year experience, yet I had never worked anywhere," said Intinda.

He said that he learned about job opportunities abroad through a friend: "My childhood friend, Hamidu Waiswa told me that there are good-paying jobs in the Middle East. He didn't tell me the types of jobs available in the Middle East."

Intinda's quest for a job abroad was boosted by an advertisement on Bukedde TV. The advertisement called for young, energetic Ugandan boys and girls who wanted to work in the Middle East: "The advertisement called for young, abled-bodied males aged between 18 and 35 to go and work in jobs such as security guards in the Middle East with good wages to improve their lives. In the advertisement, the successful candidates were promised a salary in the range of 900,000 to 2,000,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately US\$245 to US\$544)"

Intinda was intrigued by the salaries given out to workers in the Middle East. However, he was not willing to work as a security guard. He went on to inquire whether there were jobs that would fit what he studied for in school.

He reached out to the General Manager of Middle East Consultants ([which was shut down by the Ugandan government after it was accused of abusive practices](#)) but, to his surprise, he was told that there are no jobs for degree holders:

"The General Manager told me that if I wanted to go and work in the Middle East, I would use my Ordinary Level (O-Level) documents. The only requirement to work is good health and zeal for completing the assignments," he added.

Intinda was unwilling to work as a security guard in the Middle East, having studied mechanical engineering at the university. "Why would I have gone to school if I didn't practice what I learned in school?" he said.

As unemployment rises, more jobseekers look for employment opportunities abroad

With Uganda's unemployment rate growing day by day, the nation's citizens are looking elsewhere for employment opportunities. Over the years, the local population in Uganda has labeled the migrant workers to the Middle East as "kadama" which means "servant" in Arabic and is used colloquially to refer to domestic workers.

The recruitment companies in Uganda mostly prefer offering work opportunities to the Middle East in low skilled jobs. Asked about the lack of opportunities for degree holders, a recruiter recently answered that these workers request high salaries for their services in the Middle East and that it is easier to find opportunities in low paying jobs.

The renewed Uganda-Jordan labour agreement could provide more opportunities

Uganda and Jordan renewed a bilateral labour agreement in November 2022 that provides employment opportunities for Ugandans to legally work in the Kingdom of Jordan. Ambassador Abbey Walusimbi, the Senior Presidential Advisor on Diaspora Affairs, expressed his enthusiasm for the bilateral agreement between the two countries.

The agreement between the two countries places no restrictions on the types of jobs Ugandans can seek in Jordan. This means that Ugandans can apply for professional jobs in the Jordanian labour market, apart from "closed occupations" that are not open to migrant workers irrespective of their nationality. They can get jobs in agriculture,

manufacturing, resources and power, health and welfare, finance, trade, services, labour and taxation, transportation, and education sectors, among others.

For one to legally work in Jordan with a work visa, they ought to have the company's name, his/her name, address, work nature, and available branches, nationality, and profession. Documentation includes two copies of the employee's work contract, the company's valid vocational license, a copy of the worker's passport, the list issued by the Social Security Corporation, valid medical checkup certificate, and a photo of the worker, among others. Depending on the quota, employers have to respect quotas to recruit migrant workers, but if all the requirements are met, the license to work in Jordan is issued.



Yasiri J. Kasango is a student of journalism, media, and communication at Uganda Christian University. Yasiri Jr. seeks to write human interest stories that impact society in a positive way. He has a keen interest for labour migration stories, having close relatives who are considering migrating to the Middle East in the future.

Social media, a haven for Ugandan domestic migrant workers

By Nahurira Charity

Social media applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter have increasingly become a strong platform to most of Uganda's migrant domestic workers who become victims of abuse. As Uganda pushes its Vision 2040, there is a large number of Ugandans who migrate to the Middle East for work with hope for better employment opportunities, pay and standards of living.

According to Uganda's senior presidential advisor on Diaspora Affairs, Ambassador Abbey Walusimbi, there are approximately 50,000 domestic migrant workers legally registered in Jordan; 30,000 of which are from Ethiopia, and the rest coming from Uganda, Ghana, Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

The Trafficking in Persons Report (2021) by the United States of America State Department reveals that there is an increased number of Ugandan migrants being trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. Other claims of abuses and exploitation have been raised by Ugandans in the field of domestic work including withholding of their wages, long working hours with no breaks (up to 15 hours a day), denial of access to medical services, being randomly subjected to sexual harassment, being beaten up, kidney harvesting, detention of their travel documents, among others.

Domestic workers own social media accounts, and some have created groups of their own for entertainment, politics, social, and economic discussions which have acted as a means of sharing art, and a way to express themselves during their stay at work. In short video clips, audio messages, status updates, and photos, migrant workers can share with the public what happens in their lives and protest against the unfair treatment at their different workplaces.

Ms. Vanessa Namubiru, a former domestic worker in Jordan says that while at work, social media platforms are the fastest way to raise one's voice and advocate for the rights of workers. Through these platforms, domestic workers have been able to prevent further abuse.

"The only way you can be able to help a fellow domestic worker or "khadama" as they are often called, who is being abused and needs urgent help is by sharing information on your Facebook so that the message reaches many people who can help her. It works better than you trying to reach out to the police," says Namubiru.

She also narrates that domestic workers who don't have access to Internet or phones and need urgent help use letters to communicate to neighboring fellow domestic workers who then share the information to the public on their social media handles.

Aisha Kisakye, a resident of Kyaliwajala in Wakiso district says that in February 2020, she was able to know that her sister who was working in Balqa, Jordan, as a domestic worker was wracking in great pain with no access to treatment through loud outcries of fellow Ugandan domestic workers on Facebook.

"We were scared that she would lose her life. It took us almost a month, we got in contact with the recruiting agency that had taken her, and we were helped to have her back," Kisakye narrates.

Mark Abaine, who works with a private recruiting agency in Uganda that he does not want to name says that they have been able to reach out and watch over the migrants they send to Jordan through their social media updates.

"When these migrant workers get any problems, we are informed quickly unlike before. They send us messages using WhatsApp and Facebook. This is what we always tell them while briefing them, when conditions get tough, they should always reach out to us," he narrates.

Abaine adds that however much most of them prefer to use social media, there are always other ways to advocate for their rights in case they are being victims of abuse while at their workplace. They are informed about them prior to their departure. These include reaching out to the embassy, Interpol or calling the police by dialing the emergency numbers which are always given to them before leaving Uganda.

In December 2022, Jordan and Uganda reopened the labour migration corridor during a meeting between Jordan private recruitment agencies and senior presidential advisor on Diaspora Affairs, Ambassador Walusimbi, giving Ugandan migrants hope for better working conditions. During this meeting, they were able to renew the Bilateral Labour Agreement between both countries, which runs until November 2026.

Ambassador Walusimbi appreciated Jordan's efforts in opening to Uganda's migrant workers and promised that the Ugandan government will do everything possible to ensure that Uganda's local recruitment agencies follow the requirements to Jordan. He also requested the Jordanian government to set free all those Ugandan migrants who are being detained.

“While we do this, we must ensure that we protect the rights and safety of Ugandan migrant workers, while Ugandans do the same for Jordanians in our country,” Walusimbi said.



Nahurira M Charity is a Ugandan journalist, originally from Sheema District, in the western part of Uganda. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Communication from Makerere University in May 2022. She is passionate about multimedia journalism and communication for development. Currently, she works with MasterCard Foundation Alumni at BRAC Uganda (MFABU) as communication personnel. Nahurira has authored and published several media articles and organized several campaigns and events. She also runs an online jewelry store by the names of Cherie jewelry.

How Jordanian media addresses domestic worker's issues: between hate speech and representing workers as commodities

By Safaa Baroudi

“ Domestic workers’ recruitment agencies can sell the domestic worker to more than one employer if they want to,” by these words, one of the citizens described the relationship between domestic workers and recruitment agencies in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan during a video report published by one of the largest Jordanian online platforms through social media. This person considers that the domestic worker is a commodity that recruitment agencies can sell, as and whenever they desire.

The citizen was talking during a video report published by a Jordanian online platform that is followed by over a million followers through its different social media platforms. The report addressed domestic workers leaving their workplaces without informing their employers. The report included a series of professional shortcomings, such as using the word "maid" instead of "domestic worker"⁶ where the ILO glossary suggests not to use the words "maid" or "servant" to describe those who work in households but recommends the term "domestic worker".

This statement comes within a series of professional and moral shortcomings that can be observed in the Jordanian media coverage of domestic workers’ issues. These workers come from different African and Asian countries, notably: Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Philippines.

Hate speech towards domestic workers

Criminal offenses committed by domestic workers create a state of resentment through Jordanian public opinion, which is accompanied by hate speech against domestic workers. In articles published in daily newspapers, Jordanian writers express the need to curb these crimes and tighten the control on domestic workers. However, the percentage of crimes committed by foreigners in Jordan represents about 14% of the total crimes committed in Jordan according to Jordan Public Security. An estimated 67% of which are the misdemeanor offenses, such as simple robbery and assault.

The number of foreigners in Jordan is estimated at about 3 million, or 30.1% of the total population, including 315,000 registered expatriates in the Ministry of Labour, and the same number of unregistered expatriates, while the number of female domestic workers is estimated to be around 70,000.

Dr. Ramiz Abu Hassira, a professor of media at the Middle East University, says that many Jordanian media platforms are not sensitive to professional aspects when dealing with domestic workers’ issues, stressing the need to raise awareness among Jordanian and Arab journalists of the importance of applying professional standards in dealing with human-interest and labour-related issues.

Official statements reveal the hard conditions domestic workers’ face

Jordanian media continuously publish news reports on domestic workers’ issues, most of them, focusing on the view of Jordanian state officials and domestic worker’s recruitment agencies. The views of domestic workers, who are often under paid, is rarely expressed.

In a statement, a staff member of the Domestic Workers Recruitment Agencies Syndicate said that Ethiopian and Ugandan domestic workers are paid about US\$225 to US\$250 monthly, which is less than the minimum wage of around US\$365 determined by the Jordanian law, which does not cover domestic work.

The staff member of the Syndicate also stated that Philippine domestic workers are paid around US\$400 monthly, thus most of the families prefer African domestic workers as their wages are less than domestic workers from the Philippines or other Asian countries.

⁶ The International Labour Organization developed a media-friendly glossary in 2017 with media professionals from the Middle East. The glossary recommends using the word "domestic worker" to underscore that "domestic work is work and that a domestic worker has labour rights".

https://www.ilo.org/beirut/projects/fairway/WCMS_552778/lang--en/index.htm

In media reports, the domestic workers' recruitment agencies urge the authorities to arrest domestic workers who leave workplaces without telling employers. Figures indicate that there are over 20,000 domestic workers who work in Jordan irregularly after 'running away' from their workplace, these repeated claims lead the general public to have a negative opinion towards domestic workers.

Commercial ads that present domestic workers as a commodity

Many of the advertisements for domestic workers present the domestic worker as a tool for achieving happiness for the families by giving rest to the housewives from household chores. The domestic worker is portrayed as a non-stop machine, ignoring the human side, and thus turning the domestic worker into a commodity, which can be replaced when the employer wants to.

With technological evolution, most domestic workers' recruitment agencies have been resorting to social media platforms, and this has increased professional irregularities with advertisements, since control over social media platforms is less important than for licensed media platforms.

While preparing this report, we monitored six domestic workers' recruitment agencies social media platforms operating in the capital city of Amman. We monitored the advertising materials of these offices during the last quarter of 2022 and analyzed them according to the presentation and content.

With regard to the presentation, 8% of the advertising content was in form of video interviews with domestic workers coming to Jordan, 83% of the content contained emoji images accompanied by a written text, and 9% of the advertising content featured video interviews with owners of recruitment agencies.

With regard to content, the analysis showed that 95% of advertising content focused directly on the ability of domestic workers to perform chores, in addition to taking care of children and elderly, 76% the content focused on the quick arrival of domestic workers to Jordan, 36% of the content stressed the recruitment agencies' guarantee for domestic workers if they left work or refused to continue to work, 32% of the content focused on the safety of the domestic workers from infectious diseases, and 15% of the content focused on the domestic workers' ability to speak Arabic.



Professional shortcomings can be listed as: showing the images and interviews of domestic workers without their consent, not determining the job description of the domestic worker, showing that the domestic worker is ready to do all the tasks being asked to do even outside the household, ignoring the human side of the domestic worker and presenting her as a non-stop machine.



Safaa Baroudi is a student in journalism at Middle East University. She has also participated in several training projects and activities Aone TV, CFI and Al Jazeera Institute. Safaa represented Jordan during the 2022 edition of the International University Debating Championship held in Istanbul, Turkey.

The lack of qualification is increasing the suffering of migrant workers in Jordan

By Nesreen Abu Lebdeh

Manila* sat on her couch telling her story about how she got to be a domestic worker in the Jordanian capital city of Amman since she moved from Kampala, Uganda's capital six years ago. Her story began when one of her friends told her about a job opportunity offered by a recruitment agency in Uganda. Manila did not flinch from applying for the job after the agent made her believe that she was going to work in a factory for a big salary with limited working hours. She signed the contract as well as a certificate indicating that she had received three months training.

Manila assured us that she had no idea what was in those documents or what the terms of the contract were because she is not able to read or write. She describes the suffering she endured when she came to Jordan for the first time.

"I didn't understand their language at first and I had no idea about the requirements of cleaning houses because their houses, food and clothing are foreign to me. I collapsed. But the kindness and patience of my employers helped me to survive that suffering and get used to the new situation. Now, I have been working with them for six years."

The 25-year-old Manila packed her luggage leaving her 3-year-old daughter behind, going to a Middle Eastern country that she knew nothing about, neither the culture nor the language. She was surprised as she arrived at Amman's airport that the employer was taking her to a house to work as a domestic worker and not to a factory.

Manila is one of many Ugandan workers who leave their families behind to provide better conditions for them. But instead, they find themselves in a foreign country with foreign people with whom it is difficult to communicate. Many workers cannot keep their passports, work for unlimited working hours, and have little or no off days or free time.

While Manila and other Ugandan workers migrate with the hope of a better salary and better working conditions, domestic workers frequently suffer from abusive working conditions and the salary varies according to their nationalities.

One of the administrators at the recruitment agency said that Ugandan domestic workers are paid about US\$225 to US\$250 per month. This amount is considered as less than the national minimum wage defined by the Jordanian government (US\$365 per month). In the meantime, domestic workers from the Philippines earn about US\$400 per month. Many employers prefer domestic workers from Uganda considering that they are paid lower wages. The administrator underlines that employers of Ugandan domestic workers must pay 2000 Jordanian dinars for the migrant workers to receive training and undergo medical examinations before they arrive in Jordan.

The deputy director of the recruitment agency, Tarek Al Noti, confirms that Uganda workers are professional, most of them are English speakers and the problem that recruitment agencies face with them are individual problems. These situations cannot be generalized and that issues should be solved by advising the employers and their workers and showing them the importance of following the instructions and regulations.

Um Belal is a homeowner and employer of Ugandan domestic worker. She has been employing a domestic worker for many years, during consecutive periods after her husband underwent surgery and she needed support to take care of her household. She faced difficulties to communicate with her such as not speaking Arabic and the unclear English accent she used. In addition, her domestic worker had difficulties to adapt to work, as well as religious, and cultural differences.

Little by little, her domestic worker adapted with support from her employer Um Belal, creating an atmosphere of affection and respect between the employer and the employee.

Lawyer and journalist Sakhr Al-Khasawneh indicates that the work of domestic workers is governed by the Domestic Workers Regulation. The worker, the employer, the Ministry, and the recruitment agency shall keep a copy of the contract.

Al-Khasawneh adds that the worker has the right to have a day off weekly, agreed upon between the worker and the employer, and a yearly paid leave of 14 days. This leave can be postponed until the end of the contract. The daily working hours of the worker are eight hours, including rest and mealtime with enough hours of sleep.

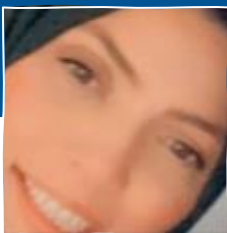
Al-Khasawneh elaborates on the obligations of both the worker and the employer. He says the worker must do the job with honesty and mastery, respecting the manners of the employer. The commitments of the employer are the payment of the cost of the residence permit, the work permit for non-Jordanian workers and the salary in due time, in local currency or the equivalent in foreign currency. In addition, the employer must enable the worker to contact his/her family, provide necessary clothing and food, and allow religious practice.

The Executive Director of Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights in Jordan, Linda Al-Kalash points out that the complaints received by the center come from workers of various nationalities. Retention of passports is the most observed violation, in addition to excessive overtime work, in violation of the Labour Law. Al-Kalash adds that depriving workers of a weekly leave and preventing them from contacting their families is an offense.

For its part, the Ministry of Labour said that the Ministry has not received any complaints from employers regarding the lack of experience of Ugandan workers. The Ministry relies on the certificates submitted as part of the application process for obtaining a work permit. These certificates are supposedly approved by the countries of origin. The Ministry is unable to inspect the households in which the workers work to follow up on their situation, except in cases that require immediate intervention by the competent authorities.

The Ministry indicates that the Domestic Workers Regulation, as amended in the year 2020, specifies for the employer, the agency, and the domestic worker the rights and duties of each party. A decision was issued by the Ministry to specify the costs of recruiting and employing domestic workers according to each nationality and the amount of compensation. The Directorate of Domestic Workers guided and educated auditors and employers with all the amendments made to the Domestic Workers Regulation, which contributed to reducing the number of complaints.

The Ministry had received 1,192 complaints in 2019, while it reached 621 in 2020. A significant decrease was observed in the number of complaints submitted by migrant workers in 2021, when 439 complaints were registered.



Nesreen Abu Lebdeh is currently studying press and media at Middle East University. She has received an award within her university for her investigative journalism reporting. Some of her reports have been featured in the Jordanian newspaper Al Ghad.

How migrant workers contribute to the development of Uganda through remittances?

By Sydona Nazze and Precious Ashaba

Thousands of Ugandans who have opted to go to Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan to look for greener pastures working as domestic workers are now financially well and are greatly contributing to the economic development of Uganda through remittances, the transfer of money back to the country of origin.

The majority of them go with dreams and hopes of working for a better life and creating financial freedom for their families and communities. Many eventually achieve this by starting up business enterprises and through foreign direct investments such as land, housing, or agricultural innovations.

According to World Migration Report 2020, migrants enhance global innovation through concentrating in economic sector that tend to be more innovative through patents and as entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, for those who have managed to invest in long-term enterprises, have started up businesses and are fostering investments and trade in Uganda.

How and where migrant workers can invest?

As a migrant worker, investing money is something good rather than keeping it in the bank where it doesn't expand or make any profits. This can help a migrant worker come back home with at least a starting point.

30-year-old Mariam Nabukenya spent four years in Jordan working as a domestic worker and she was able to buy her own piece of land. She constructed a structure to start a poultry business.

"I discovered that poultry is a good business because I have seen people get rich through it. I am still in Jordan working but the poultry business is going on well because I sent money home, people helped me set it up and everything is progressing. I want to come back home when I have where to start from," Nabukenya revealed.

Nabukenya who went to Jordan as a domestic worker is now employing three people in Uganda who are working on her poultry business.

"Right now, I am also an employer of three. They help me in different aspects to do my poultry business. One of them is responsible for ensuring the chicks get food, another is the cleaner and one supplies food. All three receive a salary," she adds.

Ever since she left Uganda, Mariam has been consulting from businessmen who have guided her on what to do in order to be successful. She is using such knowledge to invest and advises all Ugandan migrant workers in Jordan to start up micro enterprises so that when they go back, they have where to start from.

Shamsa is 29-year-old and comes from a family of seven siblings. She left Uganda for Jordan to work as a domestic worker in February 2019 having a dream of changing the situation at home. She reveals that her mother had bought a plot of land but had no money to construct a house on it. After working for six months, Shamsa started sending the money home so that her mother can buy some of the building materials.

"My interest was to change life at home because we had nothing. I used to earn 900,000 Ugandan shillings monthly (less than US\$245), so I started sending money back home for buying materials such as iron sheets, cement, and blocks. As I speak now, I have been able to put a house on mummy's plot in Nsangi and the remaining portion of land I constructed business rentals which are already having tenants," says Shamsa.

According to her, investing in rentals is a long-term investment which cannot make losses. She reveals that these rentals have generated money and she has been able to eradicate poverty in her household and upon her return to Uganda in May 2022, she started up a boutique business of her own.

"I am glad that I changed the living conditions at home but also contributed to the development of my country, Uganda. The Uganda Revenue Authority gets 30% Rental Income Tax annually from the rentals I own in Nsangi as well as the money I pay to the Kampala Capital City Authority for operating my boutique business," Shamsa adds.

However much Shamsa successfully achieved what she dreamt of, some of the migrants get their dreams shuttered as a result of investing in wrong and unpopular businesses due to lack of financial literacy. Shamsa says many of her friends who have been in Jordan before her are still struggling with life because they saved money on their accounts instead of investing it.

How these remittances develop Uganda?

The UN Migration report 2020 reveals that migrant workers contribute to the economic development of their countries of origin through the remittances to meet basic needs of their families. Uganda's minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Betty Amongi while sharing the End of Year Performance Highlights in 2021 said that Ugandans working in the Middle East remit about US\$900 million (about 3 trillion Uganda shillings).

Overall, remittances of migrant workers account for about 5% of the Gross National Product as of 2021. A migrant worker earns about US\$270 (1 million Ugandan shillings) per month for two years. This means the person can earn a gross income 24 million Uganda shillings, some of which can be sent home.

Remittance inflows to GDP (%) in Uganda was reported at 2.82% in 2020, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators.

What experts say?

In an article by Daily Monitor, Dr. Muhumuza Fred, an economic analyst and researcher in Uganda noted that “we need dollars but most importantly, these feed directly into households of the migrant workers, many of which are very fragile and vulnerable people, and support the local economy at grass roots.”

He agrees that remittances play a role in safeguarding food security, health services, health care, savings, and investment opportunities for the friends and families of the migrant workers which in the long run leads to development.

Remittances help Uganda narrow the gap of economic standing and disparities between its economy and that of other countries since they are known to exceed official aid transfers in some regions and act as a buffer from economic shocks. Mobile money and the blend of formal and semi formal financial services have driven up Uganda's financial inclusion rate to 78%, second highest in East Africa.

“While there has been a great transition to digital financial services, the key concern for Uganda remains to make money transfer safer, more secure and cost effective,” said Tilda Nabbanja, Head of Financial Literacy at Bank of Uganda.



Sydona Nazze graduated from Makerere University with a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Communication. She is a freelance writer who has worked with different news websites to create content. Throughout her different activities, writing has always been her interest. She likes capturing moments and has passion in writing about human-interest stories. Sydona worked as a correspondent and a sub-editor at Post Media Limited. She once worked with Greek Reporter News website as a reporter. Her goal is to become a chief-editor in one of the big media houses in her country Uganda. Besides her professional work, Sydona loves reading, acting drama, traveling places and making new friends.



Precious Ashaba is a skilled digital marketer currently working at Shuya Health, as well as a freelance journalist for Minority Africa. She holds a certification in multimedia journalism from Media Challenge Initiative and has a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Communication from Makerere University in Uganda. Passionate about solution journalism, Precious believes that the power of storytelling can be used to make the world a better place.

Leisure and time off

By Karmel Al Madi

Living in a capitalist world means "the more, the better" and is applied to most aspects of our daily life. But using capitalist terms, leisure time has been looked at as a luxury rather than a basic human right.

Psychologists and sociologists argue that leisure has a positive role in the production process by enhancing the self-development of workers, which in return improves their labour productivity. To go further in proving that, even back to the 19th century, there was recognition that working excessive hours posed serious dangers on the workers' health. But how is it now?

According to Article 24 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours periodic holidays with pay."

With this in mind, let's have a look at the condition of Ugandan workers in Jordan.

According to the labour agreement signed between Jordan and Uganda, every worker is entitled to a weekly day off, and in the case of domestic workers, this day is to be spent at home where they work for reasons related to their safety when going out in places they are not familiar with.

The Domestic Workers Regulation number 90 of the year 2009 also states that all domestic workers are entitled to only eight hours a day of work, but this can also change in practice depending on the type of work the domestic worker is assigned to and the agreement between the worker and employer.

If a complaint is filed for breaking of any of the rules stated in the Regulation, it will result in the sentencing of the perpetrator, and this sentencing varies depending on the severity of the offense.

Looking at it from a personal perspective, it is a well-known fact that, as human beings, we need time off, hence the creation of a weekend, and the freedom to do whatever we feel like on these off-days, like watching our favorite TV shows, going out with our friends, playing our favorite sport, or sharing a meal with a loved one.

In terms of huge events that are enjoyed worldwide, the latest of them is the 2022 Football World Cup, and considering that football, or soccer, is the most popular sport in Uganda, were Ugandan workers in Jordan allowed to partake in watching this huge event and cheering on whatever teams they chose to?

In a conversation with Afiya, a Ugandan worker who resides with a family in Jordan, she explains that although she doesn't get a specific weekly day off, she's always included in the family's activities, whether that be going out for lunch, travelling, or going on trips in general. Afiya is always being made to feel like a member of the family and enjoys spending time with them. She also explains that the only reason she hasn't watched the World Cup is because she is not a fan of football.

The case of Afiya is similar to most cases of domestic Ugandan workers in Jordan. But unfortunately, most does not mean all, which makes it extremely important to recognize the importance of leisure and how the lack of it can backfire by worsening the mental health of workers and affecting their connection with the families they work for and live with, which will result in the overall decline in their quality of work and life as well.



Karmel Al Madi is a 2nd year journalism student in Middle East University. Karmel loves reading books and learning about new cultures and hopes to become a movie critic.

Washed stained pants in leisure time

By Biira Hellen

Fazila* who hails from Gobero, Mukono (Uganda) has just returned from Jordan. She narrates how she used to utilize her free time while still in Jordan. Fazila, who found favor from her boss, first worked as a domestic worker before being given a babysitting job at her employer's company.

The evening was always for making extra money. She washed blood-stained panties for women and girls. Even those who never had domestic workers would bring their laundry. She did that job willingly and earned extra dollars that increased her earnings. "I could earn US\$1 to US\$8 per evening". Fazila advises migrant workers to utilize their free time in active work but also in leisure activities.

⇒ Listen to advice to fellow migrant⁷

However, the leisure moments for one migrant worker may not be the same for another. Joy Masika, who is currently working in Jordan as a domestic worker spends her free time on social media. She says social media especially TikTok relieves her sadness.

She creates TikTok videos to entertain herself and her fans. Joy also uses the leisure time to communicate with her family in Uganda through WhatsApp video calls and voice notes. How does she get data? Joy says that Wi-Fi is provided and has no limited access as long as she first does what her employer requires.

⇒ Watch Joy a domestic worker in Jordan on TikTok⁸

What is leisure? This is time when you are not working, time when you can do whatever you want, or enjoyable activities that you do when you are not working.

"A free time is an entitlement in the contract between the migrant worker and the employer," explains Mr. Zaif Sekazi, the systems administrator at Leaven Holdings limited recruitment agency in Uganda. Leisure does not only include resting after work but also having off-day days on weekends.

"The weekend in Jordan is different because their Monday is our Sunday," stresses Zaif. He further says that either the worker chooses to spend the free time indoors and is free to call his or her friends or go out with the employer.

Those who decide to use leisure as a means of mental development, who love good music, good books, good pictures, good plays, good company, good conversation – what are they? They are the happiest people in the world - William Lyon Phelps

Employees all over the world need leisure to reenergize and satisfy psychological needs. Despite the negative stories flooding in the press and on social media, the fact is that without leisure, these workers would be in a terrible mental health situation. Imagine a machine that works without repair! Leisure reenergizes them. Do not forget, work without play makes Jack a dull boy.

The best intelligence test is what we do with our leisure. Laurence J. Peter



Biira Hellen is a graduate from Makerere University. She holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Communication. She hails from the Mountains of the Moon (Mt. Rwenzori) in Kasese District, Uganda. Biira feels reporting about a variety of human-interest stories is her goal. "I want to report on a variety of human-interest stories because humans have different stories to tell, many injustices to expose to seek justice and stories of encouragement to fellows".

⁷ <https://on.soundcloud.com/nUEo8>

⁸ <https://youtu.be/V0hJ33-g7oE>