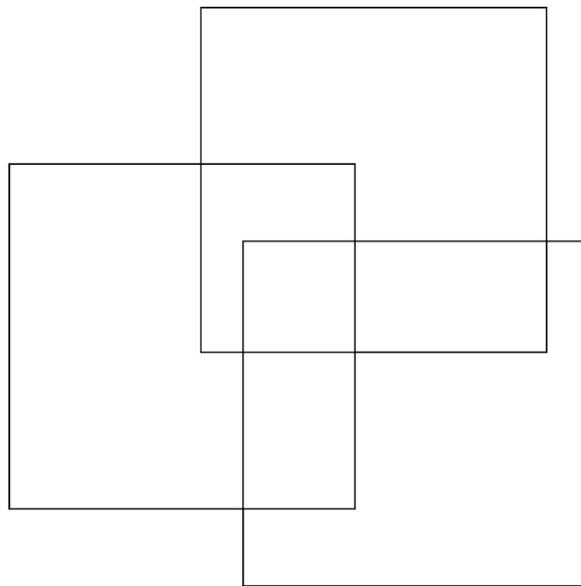




International  
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# **Employers' perspectives towards domestic workers in Kuwait**

A qualitative study on attitudes, working conditions and the employment relationship



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A qualitative study on attitudes, working conditions and the employment relationship

Working paper

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Within the ILO MAGNET project a qualitative study was carried out to assess the attitudes, perceptions and views of employers towards domestic workers. It aimed to understand the actual patterns of working conditions and employment practices and describe the nature of the employment relationship between domestic workers and their employers in Kuwait.

This report was authored by Ekaterina Porras Sivolobova with contributions from Dr. Alanoud Al Sharek and Mr. Khalid Tebe, and was supported by the World Justice Project. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

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## **NOTE TO THE READER**

**At the time of conducting this survey, there was no indication that a law on domestic workers would have been enacted. Hence, this paper reflects knowledge and understanding of the topic of domestic workers in Kuwait before the promulgation of Law which Kuwaiti legislators adopted on June 24, 2015.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic workers in Kuwait are highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Their vulnerability is due to the fact that interactions with employers take place in the privacy of homes and away from the public eye. This grants employers high levels of control and power over domestic workers. Furthermore, legislative and other forms of social protection in Kuwait are weak or non-existent, allowing for decent working conditions, including basic labour rights, to be constantly denied and ignored.

To improve the living and working conditions of domestic workers in Kuwait – by developing more informed policies and effective advocacy and awareness programs – the attitudes of employers towards domestic workers must be better understood. The research upon which this report is based aimed to explore general attitudes and perceptions of employers towards domestic workers, as well as develop a better understanding of actual working practices and the employment relationship between employers and domestic workers.

The report is based on a qualitative study comprised of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with employers. Within the report key findings are compiled with quotes from the employers, accompanied by recommendations based on the findings. The research revealed that employer attitudes towards domestic workers were often conflicting. For example, it was often expressed that domestic workers are “human too”. Conversely, practices such as withholding passports, long working hours, lack of a weekly day off, or preventing workers from going out was the norm, and strongly justified.

Furthermore, the research indicates that a majority of these attitudes and practices are deep-rooted in societal norms, and therefore unquestioned and overlooked. Improving the lives of domestic workers in Kuwait will require efforts to include them under labour laws, abolish or reform the sponsorship (*kafala*) system, maintain strict regulation of employment agencies, and raise awareness of societal practices that reinforce power and control over domestic workers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The vulnerability of domestic workers in Kuwait has been widely researched and published by international organizations and has gained international attention. These reports have included extensive recommendations to policy-makers and have urged improvements to the conditions of domestic workers.

A number of factors contribute to the vulnerability of domestic workers. These include the general lack of labour regulations in the domestic work sector, the sponsorship, or *kafala*, system under which the domestic worker is dependent on and bound to their employer, and the unregulated nature of recruiting agencies.

It is vital for domestic workers to be protected through institutional policies and adequate regulations. However, it is just as important for these policies and regulations to be translated into the attitudes and practices of employers – this is the determining factor to improving the working and living conditions of domestic workers.

### 1.1 Domestic workers in Kuwait

In Kuwait, domestic workers play an important role in society, contributing to the country's wealth and lifestyle. The country, with a population of only 1.3 million citizens, employs more than 660,000 domestic workers, representing one domestic worker for every two Kuwaiti citizens. After Saudi Arabia, Kuwait hosts the second largest number of domestic workers in the Middle East.

Within this context, domestic workers – the vast majority of whom are women and girls – are excluded from basic labour laws<sup>1</sup>, thereby denying them protection of their most basic human rights. This exclusion, together with gender discrimination in social and legal norms, has led to a marginalized, unprotected and vulnerable sector of society. Domestic workers are, in fact, amongst the least protected within the labour force.

A series of human rights abuses against domestic workers in Kuwait has been widely documented, described by some as a type of modern-day slavery. In extreme cases these have included unpaid wages, forced confinement, food deprivation, physical and sexual abuse, and forced labour, including debt bondage and trafficking.

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<sup>1</sup> Since June 2015, domestic workers are covered by a national law on domestic workers.

## 1.2 Background to the research

The employment relationship between domestic workers and their employers in Kuwait has not been thoroughly researched. A knowledge gap exists on the whole scope of this relationship, which includes attitudes and perceptions of employers towards domestic workers, actual contractual arrangements, the organization and boundaries of tasks and interpersonal relations.

The availability of detailed information on these various aspects of domestic workers is essential in order to establish objectives, develop and implement campaigns, and for monitoring and evaluation programmes aimed at supporting national policies and regulations, as well as the elimination of abusive practices.

### 1.2.1 Research objectives

The research conducted for the present report was aimed at closing the existing knowledge gap on the attitudes and perceptions of employers towards domestic workers, as well as a better understanding of actual working practices and the employment relationship between employers and domestic workers. The research focused on exploring such notions between the employer and the domestic worker that are perceived to be the norm in Kuwaiti society.

The overall objective of the research was to:

- identify priorities and programme actions;
- design effective ways to promote compliance with labour standards;
- develop a meaningful social dialogue among employers through well-designed workshops;
- launch an effective awareness-raising campaign; and
- provide the groundwork for subsequent quantitative research, guiding the precise formulation of survey questions and response categories.

The findings detailed in the present report may support, in particular, advocacy and awareness campaigns to change or improve attitudes and perceptions of employers towards domestic workers, as well as addressing the ways in which policies can be incorporated into the actual practices of domestic work.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Data collection

The data for this research was collected using a qualitative<sup>2</sup> approach through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with employers of domestic workers which spanned over the period of April 9<sup>th</sup> and May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The focus group discussions took place under the title: “A space for your voice: Strengthening communities through a dialogue on domestic workers”. It was hosted in the offices of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights in a separate and private room. Each focus group discussion lasted between two and a half and three hours. The in-depth interviews took place in either the work offices of the employer or within their home and lasted an average of one hour. All focus groups and interviews were tape-recorded, except for three interviews where the employers felt uncomfortable about being recorded.

### 2.2. Research coverage

The research aimed to cover three priority areas: 1) the attitudes, perceptions and views of employers of domestic workers; 2) understanding actual employment practices; and 3) perceptions of the nature of the employment relationship.

### 2.3 Topics researched

A topic guide was drafted for the focus group discussions (FGDs) in order to help ensure that the priority areas were well covered, that there was consistency across all three focus groups and to help the facilitator conduct the FGDs in a logical manner yet allowing participants to engage and discuss spontaneously. Table 1 shows the topics, sub-topics and issues that were covered for both the FGDs and interviews. The complete guide for the FGDs is presented in Appendix A and the complete questions for the interviews can be found in Appendixes B and C.

As an appropriate source of information, the topic guide was drafted based on the preliminary guidelines for qualitative research on employment relationships and working conditions developed by the ILO.<sup>3</sup> Following the first draft of the topic guide, it

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<sup>2</sup> Qualitative research attempts to understand social phenomena using a narrative or discursive set of constructs, compared with quantitative approaches, which describe information on the population in statistical terms, or derive attitudinal scores on the basis of Likert or rating scales.

<sup>3</sup> The topic guide was developed by the ILO Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch (INWORK) on the basis of the subjects addressed by the ILO Domestic Workers Convention (C. 189) and the deliberations of the Committee on Domestic Work of the International Labour Conference in 2010 and 2011, and from review of literature, including empirical studies on the situation of domestic workers. For more information see the ILO website on domestic work: [www.ilo.org/domesticworkers](http://www.ilo.org/domesticworkers).

was later adjusted to better address the local Kuwaiti context and the given timeframe for each FGD with the support of the facilitator.

**Table 1. Sample topics addressed in the focus group discussions and interviews**

<b>Topic guide: Main topics, sub-topics and issues covered</b>		
<b>Main Topic</b>	<b>Sub-topic</b>	<b>Issues</b>
1. Actual patterns of working conditions and employment practices	1.1. The terms and conditions of work and employment of domestic workers	Remuneration; working hours; rest period; weekly rest; tasks.
	1.2. Living conditions of live-in domestic workers	Access to family, friends, access to the outside of the household and freedom of movement; mobile and internet access.
	1.3. Formal employment practices	Written employment contract; passport withholding.
	1.4. Recruitment	Formal and informal channels used by employers; references to agency fees.
2. The nature of the employment relationship between domestic workers and their employers	2.1. Contractual practices	Tasks assignment; whether the domestic worker was part of the contractual process; views about the usefulness of a written contract.
	2.2. Underlying perceptions and beliefs about the employment relationship	Meaning given to the notion that the domestic worker is, or should be treated, “like a member of the family”; how are domestic workers referred to in the household
	2.3. Grievances, disputes and conflicts	What are the main issues faced by employers; issues on absconding; opinion on the Mn7asha Instagram account.

3. Motivations underlying the behaviour of employers	3.1. Employers' side	Employers' reasons for hiring a domestic worker; importance given to having a domestic worker at home; scenario if the household would not employ a domestic worker.
4. Perception of the role of the Government and recruiting agencies	4.1. Role of the Government	Labour law, protection, role of the Government
	4.2. Recruiting agencies	Fees.

## 2.4. Participants

For selecting the participants for both the focus groups and the in-depth interviews, special considerations were taken in order to ensure a better representation of Kuwaiti society. However, it is important to acknowledge that the employers who participated may not represent all Kuwaiti employers or society as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

The key considerations when recruiting the participants included:

- age, sex, marital status, race, ethnicity, social class and income level; and
- employers with live-in domestic worker(s), live-out domestic worker(s) and no domestic worker.

The number of participants was set to:

- individual interviews: 6-8 participants;
- focus group discussion: 10-20 participants per FGD.

However, the actual number of participants for each FGD increased from 22 to 25 due to the interest of other participants to take part of the discussion. A total of 73 employers participated in the focus group discussions and six employers were part of the in-depth interviews. The gender ratio of the FGDs consisted of 48 per cent women and 52 per cent men. The in-depth interview participants consisted of all women.

## 2.5. Sampling

A snowball sampling (similar to a referral) technique with reliance on social networks was used to recruit participants for the three FGDs and the six in-depth interviews.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information refer to "limitations" in the present report.

*Snowball sampling:* An initial set of approximately 150 members of the population were invited to take part in the focus group discussions and were asked to identify other potential participants, and those identified were invited and further asked to identify others. A high initial number for potential participants was reached out with the understanding that not all members would respond back. This technique was also used for selecting the in-depth interviews. Individuals that were selected for the in-depth interview did not take part on the focus group discussions.

*Social network:* Through the social network of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, an invitation was sent looking for participants to take part in the focus group discussions. Those interested then contacted the Society directly to ensure that the requirements were met. Once the required characteristics were met, the participant was enrolled to take part in one of the three FGDs.

This method of referral obtained a larger number of participants than intended, leading to more participants taking part in the focus groups. This resulted in a positive and a more diverse engagement during the discussions.

It is important to mention that reaching out through the social network of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights could have brought the implication that the participants could be more incline to promote human rights. However, the results showed a variety of thoughts and their affiliation with the Kuwait Society for Human Rights did not posed a bias limitation. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the extent of issues faced by domestic workers in Kuwait goes beyond the limitations of this research and must not be underestimated.

## **2.6 Research tools used**

In this research, qualitative data collection methods were used. The research tools used included:

- three focus group discussions;
- six in-depth interviews;
- a profile questionnaire for the participants;
- observations/research notes.

## **2.7 Data analysis**

The data collected from the FGDs and the in-depth interviews was analyzed using a standard method. The method included several stages: recording, translation, transcription, coding, and analysis.

The FGDs and interviews were audio-recorded and reviewed shortly after they had taken place. All the FGDs were translated from Arabic to English, while the interviews were all conducted in English and did not need translation.

Following translation, the audio recordings were transcribed. For the interviews that were not recorded, the interviewer took notes. The transcribed data was then coded and categorized into themes according to the objectives of the research. This facilitated the managing, accessing, sorting and classification of the data collected.

Analysis of the data involved reading through the complete collection of transcripts, capturing the meaning, and reflecting upon the context of comments. Storylines were explored and simple descriptions were developed.

Once these basic descriptions were set, attitudes, conditions of work and the nature of the employer-domestic worker relationship were defined and compared between participants. Then, patterns among the different themes were identified.

## **2.8 Limitations**

The main limitation of the research was that the employers who participated in this research represent only a small fraction of the population and may not represent all Kuwaiti employers or society as a whole. In Kuwait, there are five levels of social stratification based on wealth, with the ruling family at the top followed by the Kuwaiti merchant families. In the middle are former Bedouins and desert nomads, followed by Arabs from other Arab countries, and foreigners at the bottom. Based on these strata, education, housing, healthcare, the ability to own property, social rights and marriage patterns are determined. The majority of the participants for the focus group discussions, based on their last name and income,<sup>5</sup> were Kuwaiti nationals belonging to the second and third levels of social strata, with only a small fraction of participants from the other three levels of social hierarchy. Furthermore, given the wide scope of issues related to employers and domestic workers, more focus group discussions organized by topic would allow a more detailed understanding of the attitudes, perceptions and practices of the Kuwaiti population as a whole.

Despite this limitation, the data gathered from the employers contributed to the research objectives to assess the attitudes of employers towards domestic workers that

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<sup>5</sup> Income information was requested from each participant and was part of the participant's profile. (See Appendix C)

are perceived to be the norm among Kuwaiti society. Furthermore, throughout the research honest opinions and attitudes were captured, allowing for a better understanding of employment practices.

### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section provides the findings from the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews with employers of domestic workers in Kuwait. The respondents' verbatim responses are presented in italics.

#### 3.1 Attitudes, perceptions and views

##### 3.1.1 The “necessity” of domestic workers

The research findings highlight the importance of the role that domestic workers play in the homes of the Kuwait society. Throughout all the FGDs the majority of respondents indicated that it is a “requirement” and/or a “necessity” for Kuwaiti households to employ a domestic worker. This answer was closely related to a common perception among participants that it is a norm in Kuwaiti society to employ a domestic worker.

Only a minority of respondents, mainly unmarried men and women, indicated that employing a domestic worker was rather a “luxury” and not a “necessity”. The other participants often challenged these comments by pointing out that once married or with children they will also seek to employ a domestic worker.

The main reasons expressed for needing to employ a domestic worker were: the size of the house; to take care of the elderly and children; to help the wife at home with the chores; and because both of the parents worked. Also, participants expressed that it is part of Kuwaiti history to employ domestic workers and it is a cultural fact that Kuwaitis “enjoy the services of others”. The two quotes below express the value of domestic workers to employers:

*“Having a worker [domestic worker] is both an economic and social reality. From an economic perspective, the Kuwaiti society requires a worker as it became a way of life. The households require support in taking care of, and this includes caring to the children or elderly. Having more than one worker is a societal factor.”*

*“Kuwaiti society has transformed into a society in which they enjoy the service of others. Although the service may be simple like cooking, or bringing a glass of*

*water, it became a norm. The Kuwaiti society has become greatly dependent on workers [domestic workers], to the extent that the worker is considered as part of the household commodity."*

The data indicate that participants perceive a need to employ a domestic worker for reasons that vary from an actual requirement or need, to a form of luxury and part of the societal norm.

### **3.1.2 The "value" of domestic workers**

When exploring how employers would manage a household if there was no possibility to employ a domestic worker, oftentimes participants expressed that everyone would take care of themselves or that the tasks would be divided. One participant further stated that "without maids, our lives would be better".

Only a minority (5 out of 31) of respondents admitted that it would not be possible or "it would be a mess in the house" without a domestic worker.

Some perceptions were contradictory. While most employers expressed the requirement to employ a domestic worker, most employers also conveyed the idea that they can manage without one.

The majority of respondents on this topic were mainly men (75 per cent), adding a gender perspective. However, the most common answers were supported equally by both genders (7 men and 3 women supporting the division of tasks among the house members and 8 men and 3 women stating that it is the responsibility of the wife, mother or daughters of the house to take care of the household tasks):

Man: *"The natural thing would be the mother or wife to do the chores."*

Woman: *"Everyone will be dependent on themselves."*

### **3.1.3 The "value" of domestic workers to women employers**

In 2013, more than 40 per cent of Kuwaiti women were part of the labour force, the highest percentage of working women from the GCC countries. When asked about the role of domestic workers and their contribution to allowing women to work, the majority of female participants rejected the notion that domestic workers contribute to this success in any way. On the other hand, although male participants were at first hesitant to answer, once they expressed their views, the men believed that domestic workers did play a role that allowed women to work:

*“Having a maid does not correlate whether or not the women works, its more of a time management issue. The woman can work.”*

*“It’s not the issue of the maid that would allow me to change, its me that wants to change. If a woman doesn’t want to go out, then she doesn’t. It’s my character and attitude that allows me to go out.”*

*“I apologize, but the role of the maid would ease the tasks of women. I apologize to say this, but having a maid does have a big impact on the women’s lives. It helps them in their urgencies.”*

*“The role of a woman has changed, she works now. We need a worker in the house to help the women. Because women can go out, a worker is necessary in the house.”*

Even though most of the female participants rejected the idea that domestic workers had influenced their ability to work, there was consensus among the men that expressed otherwise. Discussions of the possible contributions that a domestic worker could make for the women revealed a lack of acknowledgement from most of the female employers of the value that domestic workers bring to a household. This attitude portrayed a domestic worker as useful, but neither valuable nor someone who makes a difference to their ability to work.

## **3.2 EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP**

### **3.2.1 Direct relationship**

In exploring the direct relationship with the domestic worker and the scope of their work, there was consensus among participants that it is the responsibility of the woman (mother or wife) to set the household tasks. The man (husband) of the household is responsible for issues related to the driver and the domestic worker that takes care of the *diwaniya* (a reception area for men’s gatherings):

*“The lord of the house sets the scope of work for the driver; the wife would set the scope of work for the maid.”*

*“The maid is the responsibility of the wife.”*

### **3.2.2 Amala or khadama**

There are usually two terms used in Kuwait to refer to domestic workers. They are referred to as either *amala* (“worker” in Arabic in the Kuwaiti dialect), or *khadim/khadama* (“maid” in Arabic and translatable into “servant”).

In exploring the relationship between the employer and the domestic worker, the most common means of directly addressing domestic workers was by their name. When mentioning the domestic worker outside the household, or to others besides family, the most common term used was “khadama”.

The term “maid”, was the most common way of addressing their domestic worker by the participants. Interestingly, most of these respondents acknowledged that they were aware that “maid” is not the proper way to address a domestic worker, but most did so because, according to them, it is the most common way by which society addresses them.

A minority of participants also expressed that they had difficulties pronouncing the domestic workers’ names. Other participants said they call her according to her main tasks (nanny, cook, etc.) and one participant referred to the domestic worker as “house help”. One respondent stated proudly that the domestic worker is addressed as a “maid”:

*“My children call the term ‘maid’ as ‘mother’s help’.”*

*“Among others, its natural to call them [domestic workers] maid. But I don’t, and don’t let my children.”*

*“The name of the maid has changed to the house help. I encourage the previous speaker for what she said [the previous speaker mentioned that it is normal to address DW as maids]. The term maid is not very nice. We call her the ‘house help’.”*

On the topic of ways to address the domestic worker, in no instance did any participant use the term “amala” to refer to the domestic worker.

### **3.3 EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES**

#### **3.3.1 The salary**

When inquiring about the salary, the majority of respondents answered that the salary was set either by the agency or the embassy and that a raise was possible after two years, as written in the contract with the agency or through a verbal agreement between the domestic worker and the employer. Only one respondent indicated that the salary was negotiated between the domestic worker and the employer.

In other instances, employers use control and power in their relationship with their domestic worker by expressing that the salary is either up to the sponsor, “if she deserves it” or depends on the domestic worker’s skills and performance:

*“In regard to salary, there is no rule that we follow: if she deserves it, then we increase.”*

*“Her salary was set by the agency, and the difference in pay between my maids does not correlate with their skills. If she’s good, then I raise her salary.”*

*“The sponsor sets the salary.”*

*“The embassies set this, and after 2 years, I could increase.”*

*“The culture of the domestic worker is different from now and then. The domestic worker usually negotiates now. Of course, there are contracts between the agencies, and the embassies. But of course, relations between you and the domestic worker would negotiate the salary.”*

### **3.3.2 Days off and days out**

Another practice that reinforces the power and control of employers over domestic workers was the perception that it is up to the employer to grant a day off, rather than the domestic worker’s right to a rest day. Furthermore, if days off were granted, it was perceived that it is up to the employer whether the domestic worker could spend the day off outside or inside the home.

The majority of respondents shared the belief that domestic workers should take a day off, but it was also the norm, which was strongly supported, not to allow domestic workers to leave the house. The most common practice expressed was one day off every one or two weeks inside the home. This practice was portrayed as the responsibility of the employer, rather than the right of the domestic worker, but also as a method of protecting the household from a domestic worker seen as potentially criminal or problematic:

*“If the worker leaves the house she would later bring problems to the house.”*

*“It is for her [domestic worker] security to stay at home.”*

*“I am against having a maid, and I am against having a maid take a holiday. She might bring the problems home. It could lead to theft, or other problems.”*

*“Of course the contract says she [domestic worker] can’t go out. We allow her to go out in other forms. She goes out with the children 360 mall. Different forms of leave, dependent on the maid. Her leave may change her way of thinking. She might bring problems out.”*

Throughout the arguments of why domestic workers are not allowed to go out, a negative perception of domestic workers was displayed; in one instance, their rights were said to be based on their nationality, shedding light on racial stereotypes present in Kuwaiti society:

*“It depends on the nationality for them [domestic workers] to go out. Filipinos are different to Ethiopians. Filipinos are okay to go out. Ethiopians are thin, and if they leave this may cause problems. They live in our houses. Some of the nationalities may not be permitted.”*

The next most common argument with respect to the day off was that the domestic worker does not like to go out or does not ask to have a day off. This possible behaviour of domestic workers might be due to a lack of awareness or intimidation, resulting in their rights being infringed by their employers. In exploring further the issue of time off and working practices, it was revealed that there is a practice of not giving a day off:

*“No, she [domestic worker] does not leave the house. The worker’s number of leave days is in accordance to the to the contract.”*

*“I don’t allow her [domestic worker] to go out. At home, there are a million things to do. But I don’t allow her to leave.”*

### **3.3.3 Communication to the outside**

The majority of respondents enforced restrictions on domestic workers who possessed a mobile phone. There was consensus that domestic workers needed to be supervised for perceived “dangerous” behaviour.

The most common restrictions for using a mobile phone included the prohibition of using the Internet or a camera. In some instances the phone needed to be with the employer and the domestic worker had to ask when wanting to use it:

*“A mobile phone with no net or camera is allowed. We need it because in case of emergencies, we can contact her [domestic worker]. She doesn’t take the mobile phone when she goes on leave.”*

*“It’s not that I don’t let her have a mobile [Corrects her previous statement], I have her personal phone, and she comes to me when she needs to use it.”*

The view that domestic workers have negative intentions and that they are there only to work was also a prevalent perception among the participants. This attitude opens up a discourse on the constant violation of basic rights that domestic workers face, practices that have become part of the social norm rather than the exception:

*“She [domestic worker] is not allowed to have a mobile, definitely no, it’s dangerous. She can use my phone, but she can’t have her own phone.”*

*“I say no, personally. I agreed with them [domestic workers] to work so they have to work. Instead of a phone, let her talk to her own nationality.”* [The respondent later explained that the domestic workers can talk to other domestic workers when visiting other family members.]

Although in instances it was expressed that domestic workers are allowed to own a mobile phone, the motives were not based on the rights of domestic workers but rather on personal reasons:

*“Because we don’t allow her [domestic worker] to go out, then at least she needs to have a phone. It is a must to have a mobile.”*

*“All my workers have a mobile telephone, but I wish I hadn’t given them. This is because they are up late on their phones. But I give them anyway. Laptops not allowed.”*

### **3.3.4 Freedom of movement**

The research results showed an indisputable support for employers withholding the passport of the domestic worker. All respondents expressed that passports must be kept with the sponsor. In two instances respondents acknowledged that the passport belongs to the bearer, but for different reasons the employer must keep the passport.

Withholding the passports of domestic workers was perceived as the norm; there was consensus among respondents that this must be the practice. The reasons expressed for withholding passports varied from the belief that it was not their right to hold their own passport, to making sure that they did not commit a crime:

*“Because the worker could run away. By holding her passport, it saves a lot of trouble because the sponsor can control when or when not she can travel.”*

*“I don’t think its right for her [domestic worker] to have her passport. Many employees who want to leave, they ask permission from their employers. Laws are different for workers.”*

*“Naturally, it’s with the lord of the house. If we give them [domestic workers], of course there’s going to be a problem. They come from a simple background, they might use it for a bad reason.”*

*“The passports are with me [employer] for it to be safe, and they [domestic worker] would not commit a crime.”*

### **3.3.5 Contractual practices**

The absence of government regulations<sup>6</sup> or good employment practices contribute to the vulnerability of domestic workers. All participants in the research acknowledged that there is no written contract between the employer and the domestic worker, thus strengthening the control of the employer. The norm among employers is to have a verbal agreement with the domestic worker:

*“All agreements are of course verbal. We set the rules for her [domestic worker], if we see her tired, we send her to sleep.”*

*“All contracts are verbal. Between you and the worker. For example, they don’t sleep post eleven.”*

## **3.4 OTHER CHALLENGES**

### **3.4.1 Employment agencies**

The topic of employment agencies was often an emotional one and highly discussed. Although employment agencies contribute to the current conditions of domestic workers, the discussions were geared towards the protection of the employer. All participants agreed that the fees are too high and that the fees reflect neither the service nor the skills of the domestic workers. There was also consensus that the agencies needed to be regulated:

*“There is a difference between the prices of the maid. The fees are incredibly expensive. Sometimes its not worth it because they don’t do much.”*

Other comments revealed that employment agencies actually play a role in the attitudes of employers towards domestic workers. Prices imposed by the agencies are high, thus

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<sup>6</sup> In 2015, the Government of Kuwait has adopted a law on domestic workers.

translated into high expectations of the employers. Furthermore, working hours, days off and the right to have a mobile phone are often already decided by the employment agency supporting employers in denying domestic workers their rights.

When inquiring about the information given by agencies, there was also consensus among participants that agencies do not give enough information or the information given is deceptive or inaccurate:

*"I agree with the gentleman, the prices vary [among agencies]. And the information they give is not necessarily accurate, as sometimes you hire the maid to do a specific job, and she can't do it, like cooking."*

*"Sometimes they [the agencies] tell us she [domestic worker] is young, and she's old and cannot work well."*

The current system of hiring through employment agencies and the practice and its acceptance of choosing and being chosen through a catalogue of workers is also setting the attitudes, perceptions and practices of employers towards domestic workers:

*"Here is an idea, I bring her [bring the domestic worker to the employer's home], try her out, and then if I don't like her, I give her back [to the employment agency]. There should be laws [regarding domestic workers "running away"], that would regulate this issue. Where is the solution, we are in need of a solution [to protect employers]."*

Recently, the Kuwaiti National Assembly rejected a proposal to establish a company (50 per cent owned by the Government and 50 per cent owned by citizens) to recruit domestic workers with the intentions to prevent abuse from employment agencies against domestic workers and to reduce the rising expenses of employing one. When this information was shared among participants, the majority were not aware of this initiative. Therefore, the discussion tended to focus on the role of the Government.<sup>7</sup>

In this session, the conversations focused on the lack of governmental actions<sup>8</sup> to regulate the current situation of employment agencies in Kuwait and the lack of governmental support towards families that avoid employing a domestic worker:

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<sup>7</sup> In June 2015, the Government of Kuwait adopted a law which establishes a public-sharing company that organizes the recruitment of domestic workers.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

*"I am going to say something that might make you all unhappy. I would like the Government to come in and boost the idea of the maid. Why don't they give her rights. The Government should give women money to raise the children until they're old enough to go to nurseries. As they already give support for people working in the private sector. Then we won't have a need for a maid."*

### **3.4.2 Absconding**

Absconding, or "running away" as it is most popularly known in Kuwait, was revealed to be a common issue faced by the participants. Most respondents expressed that the reasons for the domestic worker absconding were not related to the employer themselves, except when the employer "spoiled her". The main reasons given for absconding were outside influence ("lured") to work elsewhere or agencies advising them to leave for no apparent reason:

*"We spoil her [domestic worker] and everything, and we don't have bad relations with her. Okay, I don't allow her out of the house but why should I?."*

*"They [domestic workers] run away because its their own stubborn behaviour."*

*"She [domestic worker] ran away to work somewhere else. She called her employer and told her that she really cares for the family, but needs a different environment. Sometimes they don't have a reason for running [away], just like that she would run away."*

In lesser instances respondents acknowledged that the reasons included too much work or mistreatment from the employer. On the other hand, it was also indicated that a lack of knowledge of Arab culture and their "very simple background" were contributing factors:

*"You must consider that they [domestic workers] come from a very simple background. They have made a lot of sacrifices to work for us. One hundred per cent reason for them to run away is because of the sponsor. They may not allow them to eat, or sleep. That is the biggest reason."*

*"The biggest cause of runaways is because of our behaviour towards them [domestic workers]. We order them significantly. Also, bad treatment towards them. The second reason is that they run away because they were lured by friends, the neighbour's workers."*

Despite some contribution of responsibilities towards the employer for the domestic worker running away, one respondent addressed that it is not important of who ran away but, rather, what is important is “who will protect the sponsor from this.”

### **3.4.3 Attitudes towards “runaways” – Mn7asha**

The topic of “runaways” was usually intense among the participants, often leading to longer discussions in comparison to the other topics. In researching further the attitudes and perceptions of domestic workers that abscond, the Instagram account “Mn7asha” was introduced. Mn7asha was a Kuwaiti Instagram account where employers could share pictures of those domestic workers who had absconded. The account drew much attention from both supporters and opponents of the idea.

The research data revealed that the majority of the respondents had experiences of domestic workers absconding. When asked about their opinion of the Mn7asha Instagram account, the majority agreed that it was a good initiative for keeping employers informed, although not everyone agreed that the pictures should have been posted without the permission of the domestic worker. One participant did express that it was not justified since the account only shared the pictures of the domestic workers who had absconded but not the reasons why:

*“I support this 100 per cent. I used to see maids on the street early in the morning with their bags packed, and I have always wanted to stop and ask ‘hey where are you going this early’.”*

*“This is a good idea, it notifies us. There were instances in which Whatsapp warned us of a runaway maid that has AIDS.”*

Due to high criticism, the Instagram account has been closed.

### **3.4.4 The role of the Government**

Although the participants agreed that there should be a higher involvement from the Kuwaiti Government on issues regarding domestic workers, there was a low level of knowledge on what the Government can or should do. For example, a labour law to protect domestic workers was never mentioned, and the initiative to establish a government-owned company to improve current conditions of domestic workers did not receive much attention throughout the discussions.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

There have been multiple and detailed recommendations on the need to include domestic workers under labour laws, as well as to reform or abolish the sponsorship system. For the purpose of the present research, few recommendations on these issues have been drawn up. Instead, the following recommendations are based on the perceptions of employers and their attitudes towards domestic workers.

### *Further qualitative studies*

There are specific topics that deserve further attention, particularly regarding employers' attitudes towards domestic workers on issues pertaining to discrimination, the relationship between female employers and their domestic workers, children, and absconding. The research revealed that attitudes are ingrained and the right effort must be made to promote a culture of non-discrimination and respect towards domestic workers.

Furthermore, research should be conducted to identify which employment practices are the main contributors of exploitation for domestic workers. Such research would help identify the key practices that need attention, as well as how to fill the gaps that addressing these would create for employers.

On the other hand, focus group discussions would be an efficient method for including employers in the process of changing society. The inclusion of employers would facilitate acceptance of new attitudinal norms that would replace old ones.

### *Terminology*

Attempts to change the terms used when referring to domestic workers would be an important aspect in changing current attitudes of employers towards respecting them as workers. A national survey could be conducted to find out what terms are most commonly used to refer to domestic workers, in what context and by whom. The results can define the target group and method to develop successful projects aimed at increasing the awareness on correct and more respectful terminology.<sup>9</sup>

### *Rights-based awareness campaign*

Develop a rights-based awareness campaign to reach all segments of society, including children, in order to encourage long-term attitudinal changes towards domestic

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<sup>9</sup> It is hoped that the new legislation passed in Kuwait in 2015 will help changing terminology related to domestic workers.

workers. Such campaigns should aim to change the attitude of employers on issues related to rights and responsibilities, such that days off and the freedom to leave the employer's home would become the norm rather than the exception.

These awareness-raising efforts are a basic approach to building a well-informed society. Efforts must be made to build awareness and help create a more professional relationship between employers and domestic workers.

For such awareness campaigns and moral arguments can form the basis for change. Alongside an increased awareness of rights and responsibilities, these types of campaigns should also aim to improve the current image of domestic workers from that of 'dangerous' to a more humane one.

### ***Day off***

A weekly day off for domestic workers would increase their quality of life significantly and should be a mandatory practice in Kuwait. Legislating a day off would improve the balance of power between the employer and the domestic worker, and facilitate in law and in practice any future reforms to the sponsorship system or labour laws. A "day off" campaign must be considered as an alternative as well as a monitoring system that ensures domestic workers enjoy a day off and out.

### ***Role of children***

The role of children within society must take priority. The research indicates that the raising of children by domestic workers was an important issue among employers and needs further study.

Future research should focus on the perceptions of employers regarding the relationship between domestic workers and employers' children, as well as the expectations of employers towards their children in regard to household chores and behaviour. Research on these aspects would help to promote campaigns aimed at creating a new generation built on respect and responsibility.

### ***Absconding***

Qualitative research must be conducted to understand the multiple reasons for domestic workers absconding, through both a dialogue with domestic workers as well as with employers. This research would help to determine working conditions, practices, and expectations of both the domestic worker and the employer, as well as other possible factors not yet considered.

### ***Employment agencies***

Stronger regulations and monitoring of employment agencies is a requirement to promote and ensure that the rights of domestic workers are being respected. The research clearly indicates that employment agencies contribute to systematic practices of discrimination, exploitation and abuse of domestic workers in Kuwait. Kuwaiti authorities must take a proactive role to regulate, monitor and enforce mechanisms that will not only promote the rights of domestic workers but also protect employers.

Furthermore, social accountability should be made a criteria for employment agencies to receive or renew a business license. Social accountability would help prevent, among other things, human trafficking and change the perception of employers that treat domestic workers as commodities that can be sold or returned.

### ***Contract***

The current lack of written contracts allows for domestic workers to remain vulnerable and be exploited. Written contracts between the employer and domestic worker should be a mandatory practice.

Advocating, in both origin countries and in Kuwait, for a standardized employment contract should be considered as an option. It would help protect the rights of domestic workers, as well as change the relationship between employers and domestic workers by increasing workers' bargaining power.

### ***Labour law***

There should be advocacy for the ratification and implementation of the ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, 2011 (No. 189) and the inclusion of domestic workers into the labour code and law, together with implementation, enforcement and monitoring mechanisms. This would offer protection as well as provide domestic workers with a firm basis to demand their rights.

### ***Sponsorship (Kafala) system***

The *kafala* system is a main contributor to the vulnerability of domestic workers. Reforming the sponsorship system is a key step towards limiting the power that employers have over domestic workers while, at the same time, easing the responsibility that employers have as a sponsor.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the research was to assess the attitudes of employers towards domestic workers, understand patterns of working conditions and employment practices, and uncover the nature of the employment relationship. Attitudes can translate into practices that can discriminate and exploit a domestic worker. These practices can then become deeply embedded in society and remain unquestioned. Thus, it is of high importance to examine the different range of attitudes and practices that contribute to the working and living conditions that the majority of domestic workers in Kuwait experience.

From the research study the following conclusions can be summarized:

- Domestic workers living and working in Kuwait are part of a social system under which, even if existing laws were changed to protect them, they would still be vulnerable to exploitation due to the social fabric of Kuwait.
- Practices such as withholding passports, working more than 12 hours a day, denying days off and prohibiting or limiting communication to the outside world through a telephone are common among employers and not perceived as unusual. Among some employers, these were not even questionable.
- In general, domestic workers are not perceived as workers by Kuwaiti employers. The system that regulates domestic work, such as the kafala system and the hiring process through the agencies, is a major factor that allows exploitative and discriminative practices to be seen as the norm.
- It is important for domestic workers to be protected through legislation, but it is just as important for these laws to be translated into the attitudes and practices of employers. This is the key determining factor for improving the working and living conditions of domestic workers in Kuwait.

The present report has been developed with the intention that it will support efforts that improve the rights of domestic workers – to design effective policies, campaigns and projects. These efforts should address attitudes and practices that currently violate the rights of domestic workers. Equally, these efforts should also advocate for a proactive government that promotes the rights of domestic workers while also protecting employers.

## 6. REFERENCES

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## 7. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: FGD GUIDE

#### Focus Group Discussion Guide

#### 1. THE NATURE OF THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOMESTIC WORKERS (DW) AND THEIR EMPLOYERS

*[Employers' reasons for engaging a DW, considerations and preferences in selecting a particular worker, importance given to a "skilled" domestic worker or to training a domestic worker. Monetary value, what would be the cost of not having a DW – willingness to pay; readiness to stop employing a DW. When is a DW "too costly to hire?". Perceived advantages and disadvantages of live-in and live-out arrangements.]*

##### 1.1. The "value" of domestic work to the employer and motivations for hiring a DW.

- What are the usual reasons why households employ a live-in DW or a live-out DW? (How many DWs does a household need?) What are the reasons why they employ several DWs?
- If you could not have found (or had been unable to hire) the DW(s) you are now employing, what would be the consequences for you and/or your family/household? Who would do the work she (or he) is currently doing?
- What is the monthly rate for live-in DWs in Kuwait? In your opinion, does this amount reasonably correspond to the amount of work and responsibilities performed by an average live-in DW? Would you pay more? Could you pay more?
- Has the decision to hire a DW(s) affected the lifestyle of the woman/women in the household? In which ways?
- Do you believe that having a DW at home has allowed the women to work? Would she have without a DW?
- In regard to the DW, who in the family is most likely to be responsible for all issues related to the DW? (hiring, assigning the work, the day-to-day tasks, issues arising?) The woman or the man in the household?

##### 1.2. Underlying perceptions and beliefs about the employment relationship.

Employers' views about their rights and obligations. Do employers see themselves as "employer". Meanings given to the notion that the domestic worker is, or should be treated, "like a member of the family".

- From your experience, how do most employers regard their DW? (It is very important that this is asked as an open-ended question. Then pay close attention to the wording; i.e. “servant”, maid, helper, daughter/girl, worker, etc.)
- How do employers and their family members address the DW(s)?
- What do you understand when you hear that the DW is, or should be treated, “like a member of the family”? Do you agree? Why or why not?

## **2. ACTUAL PATTERNS OF WORKING CONDITIONS AND EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES**

### **2.1. The terms and conditions of work and employment of domestic workers.**

(Remuneration, defined working hours, rest period, days off, leaves and holidays. Tasks and how these are organized.)

#### **Defining the boundaries of work; “valuation” of domestic work; remuneration:**

K works as a live-in domestic worker. Every day she wakes up at 5am and starts her day by preparing breakfast for her employers who leave home to work at 7am. From there she washes the car and when finished she starts waking up the children and prepares them for school; then she cleans the house and does the laundry, which she finishes by 1pm. Then she prepares lunch for the children whom she picks from school together with the driver at 3pm. After making sure they are clean, have eaten and gone to sleep, she washes their clothes; by the time she is finished, her employers are back home and it is time to start cooking dinner. She will then iron their clothes for the next day, go shopping with her employer for needed items and do all other tasks as they assign to her. K does not have time to rest. Most of the time she sleeps by midnight. The salary she is paid is very minimal and not enough for those who depend on her. Her employer provides food and accommodation. K thinks it is a good thing to work as a live-out domestic worker because then she can go home and does not have to do the extra activities, if only it was well-paying.

### **2.2. Desirability and feasibility of setting boundaries or limits to the job of a DW**

- In your experience, what are the tasks and responsibilities of DWs in Kuwait?
- Are these tasks the same day-to-day or are they demand-driven (that means driven by the employer’s household demands)?
- Is there a limit to what tasks DWs are required to do and the hours they are expected to work, a beginning and an end? Should there be?
- Is it feasible to define and limit tasks, demands and working time in the case of live-in DWs? How?
- Could problems arise if tasks and work hours are not defined? Why or why not? What kind of problems?
- Do you think the employer and the DW should agree on a “job description” (list

of responsibilities) and a schedule of work and rest periods? Why or why not? Is it common to do so?

- Is it common that the DW is asked/told to work in households of the employer's daughter, son or extended family?

### **2.3. Perceptions and opinions about "in-kind payment"**

- Is food and lodging usually provided for by the household where the domestic worker lives? Then explain what is meant by "in-kind payment".
- Do you think DWs should pay anything for food and accommodation in the household they live in?
- Are there other forms of in-kind payment that are used in Kuwait? (If the participants do not know: When the family travels with the DW, would that be considered as an in-kind payment? Or when eating out on restaurants?)

### **2.4. Criteria for setting a salary**

- Usually, how is the salary decided for a live-in DW? Is it common to raise the salary, and if so, under what conditions?
- Can the salary be negotiated with the DW? Why or why not? Under what conditions would you negotiate?
- Employers usually have to pay an agency when hiring a domestic worker. Is it common for employers to deduct this payment from the DW's salary? Should it be deducted or not? Why or why not?

### **2.5. Perceptions of minimum wage**

- Are you aware of any national minimum wage for DWs? Can you say what it is?
- As a matter of fact, the Government recently set a minimum wage for Indian DWs. It used to be between 70-75 KWD; this was raised to 100 KWD starting from March 2015.
  - Do you think this is reasonable, too high or too low? Why?
  - Do you think all households adapt to such raises in the national minimum wage?
- Will a rise in the national minimum wage affect your household's decision to hire a DW? Why or why not? Can households "afford" to pay this new level of minimum wage? If not, what would households do? Would they stop hiring DW? Would they just not comply?

### **2.6. Rest days**

- How many days off does the DW at your household get per month?
- How do you decide which days off to give the DW?
- Does the DW spend time outside the household on his/her day off? Why or why

not?

- What happens when the DW is too sick to work?

### **2.7. Holidays**

- Most of the DWs have families living outside of Kuwait; do they go to visit their home country? How often? Are these trips paid for and do they get paid for holidays? Do you have to hire a new DW for this period of time?

## **3. LIVING CONDITIONS OF DOMESTIC WORKERS WHO RESIDE IN THE HOUSE OF THEIR EMPLOYER: Access to family and friends/freedom of movement**

### **3.1. Living Conditions**

- Could you briefly describe where the DW lives? (Is it a private room, how big? Are there any windows? Can it be locked from the inside? Does she have access to a proper bathroom?)
- Do they eat the same meals as other members of the family? Or they cook their own food?
- Do you think that the quality of food and lodging of live-in DWs varies a lot from households to household? If yes, what would be the differences?

### **3.2. Communication to the outside**

- Do DWs usually have access to a mobile or telephone phone? Computer? Internet?
- Should the DW be able to use a mobile phone? Why or why not?
- Are these provided by the employer (internet/mobile)? If not, would you consider it? Why or why not?

### **3.3. Freedom of movement**

- Is it common for employers to keep the passport of the DW? Should the employer keep the passport? Why or why not?

## **4. FORMAL EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES BEING APPLIED: Written employment contract**

### **4.1. Contractual practices**

- In your case, do you have a formal work contract with the DW(s)? If yes, do you have a written contract? If not, do you have an oral agreement? Or none at all? What is specified in the contract? (Terms and conditions of employment, duties, hours and days of work, wage, time and method of payment, etc.?)
- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of having a written contract?
- Do you record working hours? How?
- How is the DW paid and how often?

- Is a receipt provided upon payment?

## **4.2. Recruitment and job search practices**

### **4.2.1. Channels used to hire a DW**

- When looking to hire a DW, what do you do? (Do you go to an agency, do you ask family or do you ask other DW(s) working with your family for recommendations?) In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages with these means?
- In your experience, how do employment agencies treat domestic workers?
- How do agencies approach potential clients/employers? What do you think of the fees charged by employment agencies?
- If you are to hire a DW through an agency, what information do they provide you? Is this information accurate? Is it enough information?
- Recently, the National Assembly rejected a proposal to establish a company (50 per cent owned by Government & 50 per cent owned by citizens) to recruit DWs to prevent any abuse against DW and to reduce the rising expenses to hire a DW. What do you think of this proposal?

### **4.3. Skills/training**

- What are your impressions of the qualifications and skills of the DW/DWs?
- In your opinion, could DWs benefit from additional skills or training? (I.e. does the DW have sufficient skills to performed the tasks assigned? In your opinion, are there any variations in the level of skills of the DW (depending on age/nationality/tasks to be performed/etc.?)
- If yes, what skills/kind of training could the DW need to meet your expectations?
- Who in your opinion should pay for this training?
- Would you be willing to pay extra to get a more skilled DW to work with you?

## **5. THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT**

- In your opinion, what do you think the role of the government should be in issues pertaining domestic workers?
- Should there be any intervention through legislation and appropriate measures related to domestic workers? (Hiring process, employment agencies, absconding, support for domestic workers, etc.)
- Do you believe that there should be a law regulating domestic workers? Why or why not?

## **6. GRIEVANCE AND DISPUTE SETTLEMENT:** How employers deal with grievances, disputes, conflicts.

- Are there any recurrent/particular challenges issues employers face in their

relation to the DW(s)? What are the usual responses to these problems or challenges?

### **6.1. Absconding**

- Have you (or anyone you know) experienced a DW quitting the employment and household without consent of the employer (“run-away”)? If yes, please elaborate. What do you think are the reasons that DWs leave their employer? What could be a solution for this?
- Does the #Mn7asha mean anything to you?
- In 2014 a Kuwaiti Instagram was created (Mn7asha) to provide a platform for Kuwaiti citizens to upload pictures and IDs of DWs who had “run away” or “absconded”. What is your opinion on this type of campaign?

## APPENDIX B: In-depth interview questions

### I. PROFILE

#### 1. Socio economic profile of the household (HH):

- What is your occupation?
- What is your relation to the household (HH) head?
- What is your family size?
- How many household members are children and what their age is
- How many elderly or physically dependent adults are in the HH?
- What is your nationality?

#### 2. Domestic Worker (DW):

- Do you have any DWs?
  - If yes, how many? If many what is the role of each DW?
  - Why do you employ many DWs?
- Does she (they) live in your house or outside your house?
  - For those with live-in DW: why do you have live-in and not live-out DW?
  - For those with live-out DW: Why do you have live-out and not live-in DW?
- When were they employed?
- Who does household tasks and chores in your household apart from the DW?

### II. RECRUITMENT, PLACEMENT PRACTICES

#### 1. Overview:

- Please explain how you found and came to hire your DW(s) and why?

#### 2. If hired directly or recommended by a friend:

- Have you ever considered recruitment through agencies?
- Why not?
- What do you think of the agencies?

#### 3. If recruited through a third party:

- Was the DW placed by an agency, friend or another recruiter?
- Have you met the recruiter?
- What is the agreement with the agency? Are there any fees and/or obligations to the agency?

- What happens if the employer terminates employment with the worker?
- What happens if the employer has complaints about the worker?
- What happens if the worker wants to leave the employer?
- If there is a written contract with the employer, is it signed by the worker or the agency or both?

#### 4. Training:

- Did you give the DW any training?
  - If yes, what type of training (cooking, washing, children care, cleaning, etc.)?
- In your opinion, should DWs be trained before being employed, or receive in-service training? Why or why not?
- If pre-service training:
  - Who should provide pre-service training?
  - Would you pay your DW a higher wage than you are paying now if she had undergone training, and in which skills?

### III. CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS & EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

#### 1. Existence and nature of agreement:

- What type of agreement do you have with your DW(s)?
  - Do you have a written agreement with your worker regarding terms and conditions of employment?
  - Or do you have only an oral agreement but nothing in writing?
- Do you think a written contract would be useful? In what ways? In what ways it would not be useful?

#### 2. If the employer does not have a written agreement:

- Before the DW started employment, did you agree on the terms and conditions of employment? If yes, what did you agree on?
- How did you reach this agreement? Was there any negotiation?
- Can the terms agreed upon be changed? If yes, how and under what conditions?

#### 3. Termination of agreement or of employment:

- Can the worker decide to leave the employment anytime?
- Can you dismiss or send home the DW anytime? Under what circumstances this could happen?

4. Perception of employment relationship:

- In your view, what are the obligations of the DW towards the employer and what are their rights?
- What are the rights and obligations of the employer towards the DW?

IV. PRACTICES REGARDING REMUNERATION

1. General practice:

- In what form are you paying your DW? (Cash, bank deposit, in-kind.)

2. Cash wage payment:

- How much are you paying your DW(s)?
- What criteria do you use to set the wage?
- Do you give or have you given any wage increase? If yes, what criteria are used?
- Is the amount you pay and are payment practices similar to that of other employers you know?

3. Wage issues:

- How frequently is the payment done? Are there cases when the payment is delayed? What are the reasons if it is delayed?
- Are there any deductions in wages? What would be the reasons and the amount? Is the worker informed about the deductions in advance?
- Do you have any pay slip or any record of receipt of payment?

4. Knowledge and perception of national law on minimum wage:

- Do you know what is the minimum wage for DW in Kuwait?
- Do you think this amount is reasonable? Would you pay this amount would you continue to employ a DW if the minimum wages were raised?

V. SCOPE OF WORK

1. Tasks, limits:

- What tasks are done by the DW?
- Which ones are not expected tasks?
- Does your DW work in one HH or more than one? Why or why not?
- Do you sometimes do some of the tasks that your DW does, or do some tasks together? If yes, could you explain?

## 2. Control over work:

- Who assigns tasks to the DW and who supervises her? Can more people assign tasks?
- What happens when the DW cannot finish tasks for the day?
- What do you do when a task was not done properly? Is there any punishment? If yes, in what ways?

## 3. Workload:

- What do you think of the amount of work your DW does?
- Do you think some of the tasks she has to do are physically difficult or involve risks to safety and to health?

# VI. WORKING TIME

## 1. Working hours

### 1.1 Overview:

- How many hours does your DW work per day, per week?
- Are her hours usually fixed? Are they regularly observed? Or are they flexible and variable?

### 1.2 For live-in DWs:

- What is the usual time that you expect the DW to wake up and be ready to begin the first task?
- What is the usual time the DW finishes? What is the average time they have for night sleep?
- Do you expect the DW to wake up during the night if her services are required?
- Do you compensate the DW for extra hours made to work? If yes, how much?
- How much time do you give the DW to take meals?
- Do you give rest periods or pauses during the day? Do you think it is

enough or not?

2. Rest days:

- Do you give the DW a day off per week? Is that fixed or flexible?
- Can the DW leave the house on her day-off? If yes, how many hours do you allow her to go out of the house?

VII. LIVING CONDITIONS – PRIVACY AND TREATMENT

1. Privacy and quality of living conditions:

- Where is their sleeping area?
- How would assess comfort, cleanliness, hygiene and safety of the DW living area?
- Does the DW have a place to keep and safeguard clothes and personal belongings?

2. For live-in and live-out DW:

- What toilet facilities does the DW use?
- Do they have the same food for meals?

3. Communication to outside:

- Can the DW use a mobile phone? Why or why not?
- Can the DW use a laptop? Why or why not?

VIII. DISPUTES, GRIEVANCES, PROBLEMS, RELATIONS

1. Can you explain what problems/challenges you face with your DWs?

2. What actions do you take?

3. Describe your relation with your employee

- How do you address her? (Worker, maid, by her name, sister, etc.)
- How do you refer to her when speaking to others?
- Describe the relationship between the DW and the rest of your family members. Does she get along with everyone in the house? If not, what is the source of conflict?

ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD OR COMMENT ON?

## APPENDIX C: Profile questionnaire

Focus Group Participant Demographics			
Date:		Time:	
		Place:	
What is your occupation:  <input type="checkbox"/> Government  <input type="checkbox"/> Private  <input type="checkbox"/> Social Organisation  <input type="checkbox"/> Not employed	What is your family size:  <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3  <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6  <input type="checkbox"/> 7-9  <input type="checkbox"/> 10-12	How many in your household are under 18 years old?  <input type="checkbox"/> 0  <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3  <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6	How many elderly or physically dependent adults are in the household:  <input type="checkbox"/> 0  <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2  <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4
What is your income (household income per month):	Your Nationality:  <input type="checkbox"/> Kuwaiti  <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Kuwaiti  If not Kuwaiti, how long have you lived in Kuwait?  _____	Your age:  <input type="checkbox"/> 20-30  <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40  <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50  <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60	Your gender:  <input type="checkbox"/> Male  <input type="checkbox"/> Female