**Pilot Project on Skill Development, Certification, Upgrading and Recognition:
United Arab Emirates & Kuwait**

(Project Document)

The governments of the State of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates are interested in gauging the effects of an integrated approach to the development, certification, documented upgrading and recognition of construction and service workers' skills on human capital formation, workers' welfare and income potential, and labour productivity, to inform contemplated policy initiatives in the areas of labour admission and labour mobility.

The UAE and Kuwait propose to collaborate with the governments of the Philippines, India and Pakistan in conducting a pilot project that identifies a group of construction and service workers that have been recruited by UAE and Kuwait employers to work in pre-selected construction and service occupations and conduct the following: (1) test workers to be certified as qualified for the jobs they were recruited to perform on the basis of occupational standards developed by the respective qualifications authorities in Kuwait and the UAE, (2) offer them the opportunity to be periodically tested and certified for up-graded skills, (3) document their accumulated skills throughout their employment, and (4) enter into agreements with the participating countries of origin on the mutual recognition of upgraded skills. The sample will be monitored for the purpose of identifying and measuring the impact of pilot activities in terms of the desired outcomes.

Kuwait and the UAE shall present the Pilot to the next meeting of senior officials of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue process and seek that the ADD formally adopt the Pilot as an ADD sponsored activity.

Pilot implementation will be supported by international training and certification service providers operating in one or more of the three countries of origin (Jas 1), international organizations (the World Bank, IOM and ILO) and a group of researchers (Zayed University, Center for Global Development, and New York University Abu Dhabi) that will anchor the monitoring and impact assessment activities and report on findings.

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1. **Pilot sample design and impact measurement methodology**

1.1 United Arab Emirates

The MOL, QCC and the NQA have an interest in the potential effects of the development of a comprehensive qualifications and skills recognition framework on the admission of foreign workers and their performance and mobility within the UAE, in line with the UAE Vision 2021. For this purpose, a field study is proposed to test the practice of recruitments, job matching, and placement using four occupations. Under the program, the QCC and its overseas affiliates will conduct pre-arrival and post-arrival certification and training, and the NQA will create a system of legal licensing in a secure "skill passport".

1.1.1 Occupations & Workers

A number of companies in the construction sector have agreed to participate in the project. Among the suggested occupation, we have chosen four occupations that have the highest expected rates of future recruitments to enable us achieve a reasonable statistical power of testing effects. Occupations, expected numbers of future employments in participating companies and countries of origin, are listed in the following table:

Occupation[1]	Total	Pakistan	India	Philippines
Construction Worker (General)	1800	0	1800	--
General Mason	1500	250	1250	--
Steel Fixer	1450	200	1250	--
Carpenter	1600	150	1450	--
Total per Nationality	6350	600	5750	0

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[1] The following estimates are collected from employers' database, particularly their expected arrival of workers from Pakistan and India. The total number of workers is also expected to increase over the coming months, given the employers' new construction projects in the UAE.

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1.1.2 Evaluation of the effects of the intervention

The effects of the intervention at the worker level could be rigorously estimated by an experiment. This experiment would randomly allocate different combinations of training and certification among the employees selected by employers.

The following figure shows one possible design for the experiment, requiring 2,000 workers:

		Certification		
		No test	Test 1,400	
Training	Orientation only 1000	$N = 300$	Pass	Fail
	Training 1000	$N = 300$	Pass	Fail

In this design, 2,000 workers would be recruited via the normal process followed by the employers. After employers identify that pool of applicants, each would be randomly allocated to one of the above cells and treated accordingly from then on.

- *In the rows of the table*: Workers in 'orientation only' receive basic pre-departure orientation on working in the UAE, but no skill-specific training. Workers in 'Training' receive basic skill training related to the occupations on which they are hired.
- *In the columns of the table*: Workers in 'no test' are not tested on their skill level. Workers in 'test' can pass or fail. Workers who pass can be licensed by the NQA with a secure document attesting to their skill level. Adding this treatment would allow the implementing agencies to identify the separate effect of a transparent and secure licensing mechanism, independently from other components of the intervention.

An advantage of this design is that, for all workers in the experiment, some treatment is received. This would avoid problems that can arise when a control group receives no treatment whatsoever. For example, one group received no pre-departure contact at all, then any difference in outcomes between that group and a group that received pre-departure training might have to do with something besides the knowledge transferred by the training—such as simply the fact of having been paid attention by the body conducting the training, or the fact of having to travel to the training. In this design, all workers receive some sort of information.

1.1.3 Measuring outcomes

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This design could estimate the effects of training and certification on workers. It could also detect synergies between training and certification—such as determining whether or not the effects of training depend on certification. Many outcomes of potential interest are already recorded instantaneously in MOL administrative records. These might include changes of employer and contract earnings, or departures from the UAE, and can be assessed at high frequency with almost no cost.

Other outcomes may require surveys to be conducted of employers and/or employees: finer gradations of job level than are recorded in MOL administrative records, indicators of on-the-job performance or efficiency, subjective measures of employer and employee satisfaction, reasons for changing jobs, and reasons for departing the UAE. These particular surveys could also assess questions about spillover effects from worker to worker: Does having a trained and certified foreman make the entire work team—including untrained supervisees—more productive?

1.2 Kuwait

Kuwait's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and Occupational Standards Assessment and Certification Center (KOSAC) have selected the following four occupations from among a set of occupations for which GCC standards are being developed:

  i)   Cook
  ii)   Painter
  iii)   Electrical wiring technician
  iv)   Electronics technician.

Kuwaiti employers are being consulted to determine the number of workers that will be recruited from the Philippines, India and Pakistan, in each of these four occupations, over the next 6-month period. It is anticipated that approximately 30% of all recruited workers will be tapped to participate in the pilot in order to make the sample sufficiently large.

A KOSAC team will manage pilot implementation in coordination with their counterparts in the UAE. MOLSA and KOSAC will name Kuwaiti researchers to join a Project-wide Scientific Committee (see below).

2. Pre-departure training and certification

Training of Pilot workers prior to sitting in for the certification test shall not be required; however, the Pilot shall offer training to selected participating workers. The development of conforming training material shall be approved by the competent government authorities in the UAE and Kuwait and training shall be delivered at pre-designated training centers in all three COO's that are operated and/or associated with one or more international partners. The latter have agreed to offer their services free of charge to participating workers in support of the Pilot Project.

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For workers deployed to the UAE, the development of test material for the purpose of certification, the administration of the test at pre-designated centers and the issuance of the certificates shall be tasked to international partners, subject to review and approval of the test material by the UAE competent authorities.

Kuwait, on the other hand, has developed test questions for the designated occupations and will work with international partners to assist with the administration of the tests online.

3. <u>Up-skilling</u>

A "skills passport" shall be issued to participating workers upon arrival in the UAE or Kuwait by the relevant authority; it will contain an attestation of the possessed skills based on pre-departure certification for those workers who have taken the test and passed it.

For each of the selected occupations, the relevant Kuwait and UAE authorities shall develop standards for one or more higher level(s) of competency, or for graduating from the baseline occupation to a higher-skill occupation when appropriate. Up-skilling tests shall be developed on the basis of these standards in cooperation with international Project partners, and administered at designated dates and places (at least once a year). Up-skilling tests shall be made available to Pilot workers (free of charge) and their upgraded skills shall be recorded in their respective passports.

4- <u>Mutual skill recognition</u>

The ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and the Skills Department at ILO have drafted Guidelines for Recognizing the Skills of Returning Migrant Workers (2010). These guidelines may be utilized for the pilot.

Mutual recognition of skills by COO and COD pre-supposes harmonization of the respective occupational standards of selected occupations. Since the number of pilot occupations is relatively small, the relevant qualification authorities of participating COO's and COD's shall align their respective standards for the selected occupations so as to make mutual recognition of pilot-generated skill "passports" possible.

The relevant authorities in COO's and COD's shall work together to ensure harmonization of initial occupational standards that are subject to pre-departure certification and those that are used to test for up-skilling certification during or at the end of the worker's residence in the respective COD. COO-COD collaboration on harmonization may be facilitated by international organizations and/or participating international training and/or certification service providers.

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Full harmonization of national qualification frameworks is not within the scope of this pilot. As a possible outcome of the Pilot, the ILO may facilitate COO-COD collaboration on expanded harmonization of qualification frameworks.

5- Project organization

Project oversight shall be tasked to a broad-based Steering Committee (SC) comprised of the project's owners (participating governments), other interested governments, international training and certification service providers and international organizations.

A Scientific Committee of researchers shall be tasked with the monitoring and impact evaluation functions.

A Project Management Committee shall be tasked with managing project activities.

5.1 Steering Committee

5.1.1 Mandate

The Steering Committee (SC) shall act as an advisory board, providing comprehensive strategic direction and counsel for project implementation, monitoring and assessment. Members of the SC shall:
- Contribute to the formulation of the overall project plan;
- Periodically review interim outcomes and provide technical and directional support to the project management team;
- Propose policy alternatives on the basis of interim deliverables and final outcomes;
- At their discretion, offer assistance to participating governments and Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) member states in the development of national, bilateral and multilateral initiatives that are in line with the objectives of the pilot project and based on its outcomes, when invited to do so;
- Assist with communicating final outcomes to global stakeholders for the purpose of knowledge sharing.

The SC is co-chaired by the governments of Kuwait and the UAE.

5.1.2 Membership

SC Membership shall be comprised of:
- Participating ADD governments: Kuwait, UAE, the Philippines, India and Pakistan (project owners);
- Swiss EDA (SDC);
- International Organizations: World Bank, ILO, IOM;
- Training/Certification/Quality Assurance Partnering Agencies: Jas 1.

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- UAE Contractors/Employers: Al Habtoor Group, Ghantoot Group, Arabtec and ETA Ascon;
- Kuwait Contractors/Employers (TBA)

5.1.3 Meetings

- The SC shall meet no less than twice a year for the duration of the pilot project.
- Invitation to the SC meetings shall be circulated by the ADD Secretariat on behalf of the governments of UAE and Kuwait, along with a draft agenda and the relevant documents as prepared by the Management Team. The draft agenda shall be decided upon in consultation with participating ADD governments.
- Meeting minutes shall be circulated by the ADD Secretariat within two weeks of the conclusion of the SC meet.

5.2 Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee will be responsible for the upfront design of the sample, monitoring and evaluating the impact of project activities and producing interim reports and preparing the final report on findings. Members will be selected by the governments of the UAE and Kuwait.

5.3 Management Committee

5.3.1 Mandate

A project management team shall be assembled by the UAE and Kuwait, in consultation with participating ADD countries of origin. The team shall operate from the UAE under a Project Manager (PM), to be housed at the ADD Permanent Secretariat in the UAE. The Team shall be responsible for strategic and operational project management and will draw on the combined expertise of organizations represented on the SC and members of the Scientific Committee. The PM shall report to the director of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue Permanent Office.

SC member organizations which operate offices in the UAE and/or Kuwait may assign representatives to join the Management Team. SC member organizations that do not have offices in the UAE and/or Kuwait, and are interested in providing project management support may assign representatives to participate in key/milestone meetings of the Management Team.

The PM shall assist with the implementation of project activities, monitor progress and compile progress reports.

5.3.2 Membership

In addition to the PM, the Management Team shall consist of:
- Representatives of the UAE MOL, NQA, FDC and QCC;

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- Representatives of Kuwait's MOLSA and Kuwait Occupational Standards Assessment and Certification Center (KOSAC);
- Representatives of partner organizations that operate in UAE and/or Kuwait.

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