



**IOM STRATEGY FOR  
THE GULF COUNTRIES**  
(2021–2024)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

---

Publisher: International Organization for Migration  
17 route des Morillons  
P.O. Box 17  
1211 Geneva 19  
Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 22 717 9111  
Fax: +41 22 798 6150  
Email: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int)  
Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)

Cover photo: Landmarks from across the Gulf Countries. © IOM/Husni TAWIL

Required citation: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021. *IOM Strategy for the Gulf Countries (2021–2024)*. IOM, Geneva

---

ISBN 978-92-9268-198-2 (PDF)

© IOM 2021



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 IGO License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO).\*

For further specifications please see the [Copyright and Terms of Use](#).

This publication should not be used, published or redistributed for purposes primarily intended for or directed towards commercial advantage or monetary compensation, with the exception of educational purposes, e.g. to be included in textbooks.

Permissions: Requests for commercial use or further rights and licensing should be submitted to [publications@iom.int](mailto:publications@iom.int).

\* <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>



**IOM STRATEGY FOR  
THE GULF COUNTRIES**  
(2021–2024)



# FOREWORD

---

I am pleased to present IOM Strategy for the Gulf Countries in the Middle East and North Africa. IOM is committed to continuing to work with partners and stakeholders in the Gulf to effectively address complex migration challenges and seizing the many opportunities human mobility offers to host governments, host communities, and migrants. This strategy builds upon the Regional Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA Regional Strategy), launched early in 2021, recognizing the unique migration specificities across the Gulf Countries.

The adherence of the Gulf countries to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is welcomed by IOM, and we look forward to continuing to work with Gulf governments to meet their international obligations. As part of its commitment to the United Nations Decade of Action to reach the sustainable development goals, IOM will work with Gulf countries to enhance the contribution migration makes to achieve these goals through enhancing migration governance systems. Several countries have already taken steps towards this end.

The IOM Strategy for the Gulf Countries takes into consideration the Gulf governments' national priorities to address the future of their national labour force and aims to create win-win solutions for all stakeholders on the migration spectrum. IOM works to ensure the rights and human dignity of all people in the Gulf and to building relationships of trust and confidence with partners and stakeholders. The strategy draws upon IOM's Strategic Vision 2019–2023, setting out a number of priority areas of work for the Organization – resilience, mobility, and governance.

I would like to thank colleagues at all levels of the organization – and particularly at the MENA regional and Gulf Missions' level – for their insightful contributions during the development of this strategy. It is particularly timely, given the high salience of human mobility at a time of increasing economic instability and high youth unemployment in several regions of the world, the persistent threat of climate change, the widening gender-poverty gap, the increase of violence against women, and the ongoing complex challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under this strategy, IOM will further its engagement with a wide range of partners and stakeholders in all Gulf countries, including governments, private sector and economic communities, UN sister agencies, and inter-State mechanisms and forums, on the priorities it sets out. I look forward to working with you over the next years to ensure that migration is safe, orderly, and regular, and seeks to never be an act of desperation, but rather one of choice.



**António Vitorino**  
Director General  
International Organization for Migration

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Foreword	iii
Acronyms	iv
<hr/>	
1. Introduction	1
<hr/>	
2 Migration and political outlook for Gulf countries	5
2.1 Migration context in the Gulf	6
2.2 Gulf countries national priorities and international commitments	8
<hr/>	
3 Regional strategic priorities and areas of expansion for the work of IOM in Gulf countries	9
3.1 Governance	12
3.2 Mobility	15
3.3 Resilience	17
3.4 Cross-cutting thematic priorities	19
3.4.1 Inclusive programming	19
3.4.2 Research and data management for evidence-based interventions	20
3.4.3 Climate change	20
<hr/>	
4 Pathway to achieving the strategic goals	21
4.1 IOM's approach to strategic partnerships	22
4.1.1 Whole-of-government	22
4.1.2 Whole-of-society	22
4.1.3 UN organizations and the United Nations Migration Networks	23
4.2 Inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration	24
4.3 Strategic communication	25
4.4 Cadre of regional and technical experts	25
4.5 Interregional collaboration	25
<hr/>	
5 Concluding statement: IOM in the Gulf in 2024	27
<hr/>	
Annex 1. Overview of IOM	30
Annex 2. Map of IOM presence in the Gulf countries	31
Annex 3. Strategic priorities in the Gulf countries	32

# ACRONYMS

---

<b>2030 Agenda</b>	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
<b>AVRR</b>	assisted voluntary return and reintegration
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CIOP</b>	Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme
<b>EHoA</b>	East Horn of Africa
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>GMDAC</b>	Global Migration Data Analysis Centre
<b>HDPN</b>	Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus
<b>HoA</b>	Horn of Africa
<b>MSD</b>	Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISCM</b>	Inter-State Consultation Mechanism on Migration
<b>IRIS</b>	International Recruitment Integrity System
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>NSOs</b>	National Statistical Offices
<b>SDG(s)</b>	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
<b>SMP</b>	Skills Mobility Partnerships
<b>TiP</b>	Trafficking in persons
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNMN</b>	United Nations Network on Migration
<b>VOTs</b>	Victims of Trafficking

““

*The IOM Strategy for the Gulf Countries complements the organization’s MENA Regional Strategy with a specific vision for IOM’s continued engagement with Gulf countries. It is launched at a critical time to enhance IOM’s expanding efforts in the Gulf countries to ensure that migration is safe, orderly, and regular and is guided by evidence-based policies and programming. The strategy was formulated in accordance with regional priorities that are informed by IOM’s Strategic Vision and Gulf countries’ own efforts to improve migration governance and to achieve the sustainable development goals. IOM works to ensure a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address migration from a holistic perspective that offers win-win solutions that protect and promote the rights and dignity of all people.*

””

**Carmela Godeau**

Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa  
International Organization for Migration

““

*The IOM Strategy for the Gulf Countries is a reflection of IOM’s ongoing commitment to work in and with Gulf countries on critical migration issues. IOM has been expanding its footprint in the Gulf countries for several decades. This strategy sets forth its vision to work with partners to reflect on and assess existing migration systems and to work together to create human centred approaches that both address challenges for, while also create opportunities from, migration. I look forward to continuing to engage with our partners in the Gulf towards creating a shared vision of migration governance priorities while ensuring that the rights, dignity, and safety of all people are maintained.*

””

**Hassan Mostafa Abdel-Moneim**

Special Advisor to the Director General for the Gulf  
International Organization for Migration



# 1. INTRODUCTION





# 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2020, more than thirty million international migrants<sup>1</sup>, and as referenced in the Gulf, foreign workers,<sup>2</sup> were living in the Gulf countries<sup>3</sup> of the Middle East - Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Sultanate of Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>4</sup> Today, the population demographics of several Gulf countries show that the total population of migrants outnumbers that of national citizens.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Gulf governments have demonstrated significant commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have also adopted the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#). Recognizing the unique migration situation in Gulf countries as well as their international commitments, IOM, as the UN's leading agency on migration and the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, works closely with its key stakeholders to promote humane, safe, and orderly migration. IOM is committed to continuing to work with its partners in the Gulf to ensure inclusive, gender-sensitive, and rights-based migration governance and to supporting their pathways to achieve positive, sustainable, and development outcomes that are aligned with their national development plans and visions.

IOM established its presence in the Gulf in 1991 when it opened its office in Kuwait. During the past several decades IOM continued to play a role in the Gulf and has more recently expanded its programmatic and partnership base in a number of countries in the region. Currently, IOM has missions in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. The Organization also has active presence and partnerships in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and provides direct assistance to migrant workers and their families and Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) in Oman.<sup>6</sup> IOM's Gulf Missions have a wide partnership base with host governments, host communities, private sector, diaspora, civil society, migrant communities, academia, United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and/or United Nations (UN) Sister Agencies as relevant in each country, among other stakeholders. As IOM is Coordinator and Secretariat of the United Nations Network on Migration (UNMN), IOM Gulf Missions collaborate with United Nations (UN) agencies to provide system-wide support on issues on migration that support governments in meeting the objectives set forth in the Global Compact for Migration and the SDGs. UNMNs are established in five out of the six Gulf countries, of which three countries have submitted Global Compact for Migration voluntary national reviews.

The IOM Strategy for the Gulf Countries presents IOM's vision and priorities for Gulf countries and builds on its existing portfolio in the region. It also lays the foundation for IOM's strengthened cooperation with Gulf States on issues related to migration and presents its strategic goals in line with [IOM's Strategic Vision's](#) pillars which have

<sup>1</sup> Total number of international migrants at mid-year 2020, GMDAC Migration Data Portal (Source: UN DESA 2020) [www.migrationdataportal.org/data?t=2020&i=stock\\_abs\\_](http://www.migrationdataportal.org/data?t=2020&i=stock_abs_).

<sup>2</sup> In the Gulf countries, migrants are also referred to as temporary contractual workers.

<sup>3</sup> This strategy focuses on Gulf countries that are part of the Gulf Cooperation Council considering the commonalities in their migration patterns and social and economic characteristics.

<sup>4</sup> The percentage distribution of non-citizens' employment in the Gulf countries ranges between 77.6 and 90.9 per cent, for males and 9.1 – 22.4 per cent for females (Source: GCC-Stat. Labour Statistics in the GCC Countries for the First Quarter of 2020, April 2021, page 7 [https://gccstat.org/images/gccstat/docman/publications/Quarterly\\_Report\\_on\\_labour\\_Statistics\\_in\\_the\\_GCC\\_Countries\\_-\\_First\\_Quarter\\_of\\_2020.pdf](https://gccstat.org/images/gccstat/docman/publications/Quarterly_Report_on_labour_Statistics_in_the_GCC_Countries_-_First_Quarter_of_2020.pdf)).

<sup>5</sup> IOM *World Migration Report 2020*, page 4. [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> The IOM Bahrain Mission manages the Organization's activities in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates; and the IOM Kuwait mission manages the Organization's activities in Oman.

been adapted to the Gulf context. These goals include providing strategic policy advice and technical assistance on **governance** issues related to migration; supporting partners in ensuring migrants' safe and dignified **mobility** pathways; and supporting Gulf governments' efforts in assessing and forecasting migration drivers with the aim of building their **resilience** in handling migration movements, including through their role as actors operating in humanitarian contexts in the Middle East and other countries.

This strategy is anchored in, and complementary to, IOM's [Regional Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa Region 2020–2024](#) (MENA Regional Strategy) and is guided by the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (2030 Agenda) and the Global Compact for Migration. It builds on IOM's Gulf Missions' existing programmatic and policy interventions and on already existing partnerships in the Gulf countries. The Gulf Countries Strategy also creates synergies and complementarities with other IOM Regional Strategies, such as the [Regional Strategy 2020–2024 for East and Horn of Africa](#), among others.

The Gulf strategy is a forward-looking document that recognizes Gulf countries' emergence as key actors in the humanitarian and development spheres. It also charts a pathway for increased efforts to double-down on finding win-win solutions for migration actors in the Gulf. Over the next three to four years, IOM aims to consolidate its efforts in the Gulf countries of working with partners to achieve the SDGs through enhancing migration's contribution to sustainable development as outlined in IOM's [Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#) (MSD) and as part of IOM's commitment to the UN Decade of Action. IOM aims to work with partners to maximize the important role of migrants as agents of development who actively participate and contribute to the economic and social development of the Gulf countries as well as their Countries of Origin. IOM's work in the Gulf, wider MENA region, and globally is informed by rights-based<sup>7</sup> and “leave no one behind”<sup>8</sup> principles. These principles emphasize the importance of protecting the rights of all vulnerable communities, including trafficked persons, regardless of their migration status, and of ensuring their human rights, dignity, safety, and protection.



IDP Children in Al-Sowaida, Syrian Arab Republic, where IOM is able to reach beneficiaries. © IOM 2013

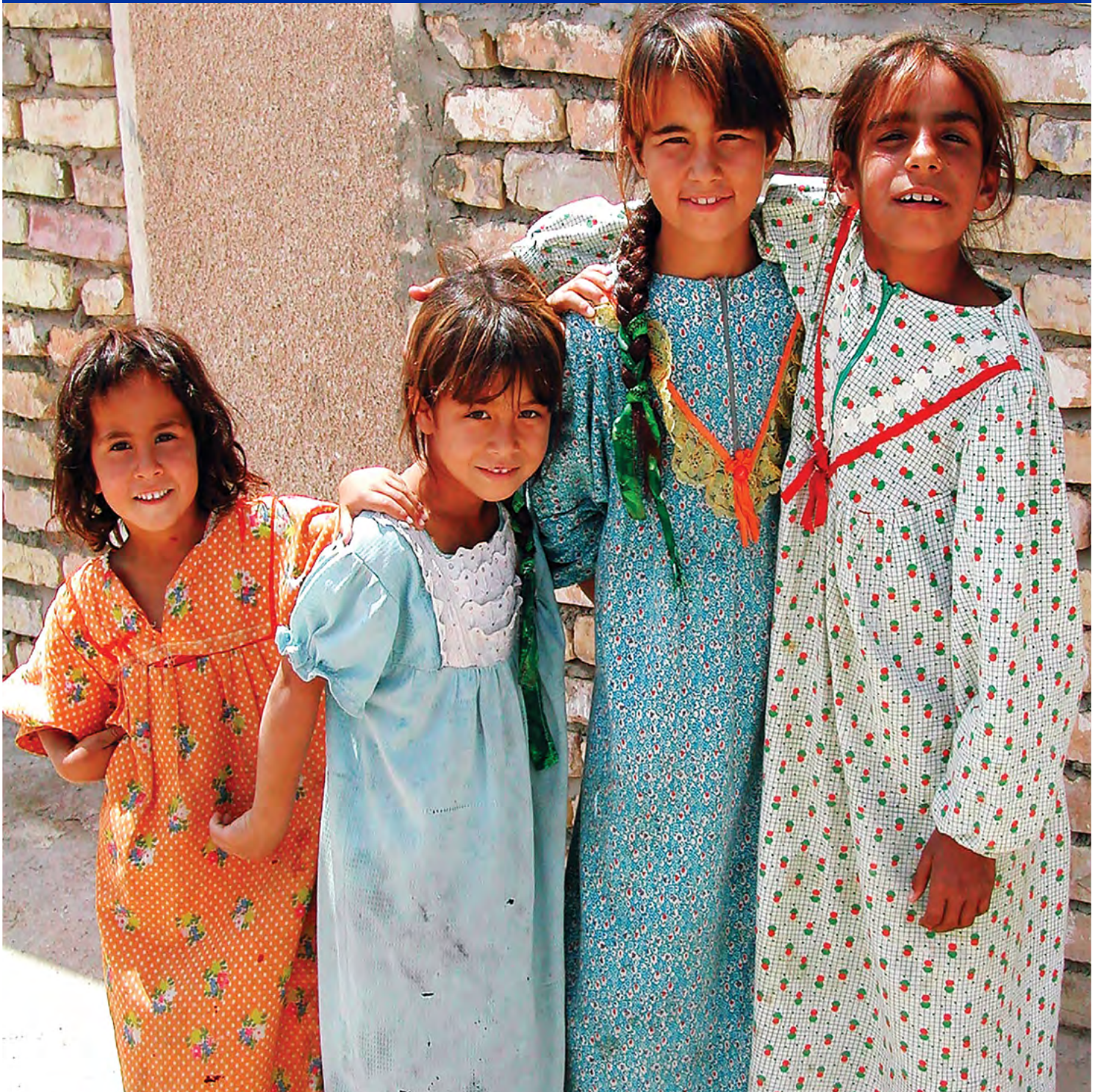
<sup>7</sup> *Rights-based approach to programming*, IOM. <https://publications.iom.int/books/rights-based-approach-programming>.

<sup>8</sup> *Leave no one behind*, UN Sustainable Development Group. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>.





## 2. MIGRATION AND POLITICAL OUTLOOK FOR GULF COUNTRIES





## 2. MIGRATION AND POLITICAL OUTLOOK FOR GULF COUNTRIES

### 2.1 MIGRATION CONTEXT IN THE GULF

Migratory flows to the Gulf are predominantly characterized by labour mobility and migration from Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and from within the Middle East. Within this discussion, it is important to state that while in the Gulf context the term “foreign worker” is utilized to reference the people who move to the countries for work, IOM refers to those individuals as “migrants” per the Organization’s institutional definition provided in its [Glossary on Migration](#). Per the Glossary, IOM utilizes the term migrant to refer to persons who move away from their usual country of residence for any number of reasons.<sup>9</sup>

Most migrants in the Gulf enter as temporary contractual workers under the *Kafala* sponsorship system.<sup>10</sup> Several Gulf countries have implemented reforms to the *Kafala* system.<sup>11</sup> Some of these reforms have included major steps to prevent and combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons; pioneering self-sponsorship work permit systems for high-skilled workers; and reinforcing ethical recruitment to protect workers from abuse and exploitation, as well as guaranteeing safe and regular pathways.<sup>12</sup>

Due to the Gulf countries’ significant economic development over the last few decades, they have drawn millions of skilled, semi-skilled, and low skilled workers to various sectors, including construction, maintenance, services, retail, and domestic work.<sup>13</sup> Income differentials between Countries of Origin and Countries of Destination are a key driver of migration since Gulf countries provide higher wages and employment opportunities for migrants. This provides these workers with the opportunity to send remittances back home<sup>14</sup> and fuel the economies of both Countries of Origin and Destination, highlighting their role as agents of development.

Migration to the Gulf also includes mixed migration flows, which are underpinned by multiple interconnected socioeconomic, political, environmental, and conflict drivers. Migration along the Eastern Route, i.e. movement between countries in the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) region to Yemen and towards countries on the Arabian Peninsula,<sup>15</sup> has

<sup>9</sup> IOM Glossary on Migration, “migrant”, pages 132–133.

<sup>10</sup> The *Kafala* sponsorship system requires all migrants to have an in-country sponsor, usually their employer. The *Kafala* system governs the relationship between the sponsor and migrant through a set of legal and administrative requirements with regards to the following: entry into and visa for the Country of Destination, renewal of work and residency permits, termination of employment, transfer to different employers, and exit from the Country of Destination. The system is in place in most Gulf countries, as well as Lebanon and Jordan and regulations vary from country to country. Several Gulf countries have been implementing reforms to the *Kafala* system.

<sup>11</sup> IOM MENA Regional Strategy 2020–2024, page 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 13–14.

<sup>13</sup> IOM *World Migration Report 2020*, pages 83–84.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> IOM 2020 Migration movements between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, 26 January 2021 <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/2020-migrant-movements-between-horn-africa-and-arabian-peninsula-january-december-2020>.

long been a significant migratory corridor. Migratory movement on the route between the Horn of Africa (HoA) along the Eastern Route to Yemen has traditionally been one of the world's busiest maritime routes that impact the migration context in Gulf countries.<sup>16</sup> Despite fluctuations started during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the significance of this route is not expected to change. The primary drivers for migration, along the Eastern Route continue to be economic.<sup>17</sup> More specifically, migration along this route is fueled by unemployment, intermittent or insufficient wages, land-related factors such as climatic shocks and land depletion.<sup>18</sup> In some contexts, conflict and political instability underly as well as exacerbate these drivers. While these drivers may contribute to irregular migration flows into the Gulf countries, once in the country, migrants may also fall into irregularity due to having overstayed their visa, changed or lost employment,<sup>19</sup> or absconded.

Many of the Gulf countries have had COVID-19 vaccination campaigns that include migrants, and in some cases have put provisions in place for undocumented migrants. However, irregular or undocumented status continues to pose a challenge as migrants fear being identified by authorities, while different Gulf countries have varying regulations around the management of their foreign labour forces. Moreover, migrants continue to be exposed to the threat of human trafficking on the migration route to and in Gulf countries. Recognizing this as a significant challenge, several Gulf governments are taking active measures to combat human trafficking.

Migration flows to the Gulf countries have impacted population demographics in several of the Gulf countries, as they make up the largest proportion of their populations.<sup>20</sup> Gulf countries have long been developing job nationalization strategies and schemes in their development plans. The purpose of these plans is to encourage more participation of their citizens in the labour market, as well as to diversify their economies and limit reliance on oil revenues. These schemes will have a significant impact on future labour migration policies and consequently on migrants, as more jobs become restricted to national citizens. Nevertheless, significant economic disparities in the world will continue to influence migrants' decisions to migrate to Gulf countries to secure their livelihoods, as well as those of their families who are largely living in their Countries of Origin. Meanwhile, Gulf countries will continue to rely on migrant workers despite nationalization and automation plans, which will include low-skilled, as well as high-skilled work. These trends will also be compounded by the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on migration into and out of the Gulf countries; as well as increased health and mobility challenges as has been witnessed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>16</sup> IOM. Migration Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen, page 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> IOM. 2020 Migration movements between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

<sup>19</sup> This will vary per regulations as well as ongoing reforms taking place in different Gulf countries.

<sup>20</sup> IOM *World Migration Report 2020*, page 70.

## 2.2 GULF COUNTRIES NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Gulf countries have adopted the SDGs and have integrated them within their national agendas and visions in their respective countries. Furthermore, the different Gulf governments' national development plans and strategies share many common priorities with each other. Among those priorities the following have been identified to likely shape major migration developments in the Gulf:

- 1 Transformative economic growth and diversification of economies
- 2 Human development and social services, including health and education
- 3 Skills development of future generations and youth
- 4 Women empowerment in the workforce
- 5 Preparedness for environment and climate related disasters
- 6 Preservation of cultural identity
- 7 Partnership to achieve sustainable development

Several of the Gulf countries' national agendas also address their priorities for the foreign workers in the labour market and focus on different areas. Those areas include social services for their populations (including those of migrants); creating skills criteria and requirements; improving the working and living conditions of foreign nationals; combating human trafficking; and reforming labour migration management systems (including reforming visa issuance systems).

Gulf countries have also spearheaded and engaged in regional dialogues and Inter-State Consultative Mechanisms, a select number of these are highlighted in this section. One of these mechanisms is the Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian Labour Sending and Receiving Countries (Abu Dhabi Dialogue), an interregional dialogue between Gulf and Asian countries. IOM serves as an observer on the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and provides technical expertise through contributing to its research agenda and other areas of operations which will be introduced in a later section. A number of Gulf countries are also observers on the Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin in Asia – Colombo Process. Moreover, in 2020, the United Arab Emirates was the chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The United Arab Emirates is also a part of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. Countries in the MENA region are part of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs, a Regional Consultative Process whose permanent secretariat is the League of Arab States, a long-standing partner of IOM.

In light of the migration trends in Gulf countries as well as their national priorities, this strategy presents a comprehensive approach to migration. IOM aims to realize this approach through existing and new partner arrangements with governments, the private sector (including recruitment agencies and employers), civil society actors, UN agencies, international organizations, as well as through the UNMNs.



### 3. REGIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF EXPANSION FOR THE WORK OF IOM IN GULF COUNTRIES



### 3. REGIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF EXPANSION FOR THE WORK OF IOM IN GULF COUNTRIES

In response to the migration trends and developments in the Gulf countries, Gulf governments' national development plans and priorities, and international frameworks and agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda and Global Compact for Migration, IOM has identified **nine** strategic goals for its work in the Gulf countries. The strategic goals are clustered under the **governance**, **mobility**, and **resilience** pillars introduced in IOM's Strategic Vision. Noting that while the goals are organized under these three pillars, they also intersect. IOM's programming, policy, and research interventions<sup>21</sup> address the multidimensional reality of migration and the interlinkages between different thematic areas and sectors, such as the intersection between health and border management, labour mobility and social protection, or emergencies, disaster risk reduction and climate change. This reflects IOM's integrated approach to addressing migration holistically and through bridging together governments, private sector, and other relevant stakeholders to create innovative solutions and pathways that maximize opportunities from migration as well as address challenges. IOM aims to continue delivering and expanding on integrated and joint-technical programme interventions.<sup>22</sup> These interventions are in the areas of labour migration governance, integrated border management including health border management, smart admissions, ethical recruitment and orientation programmes, safe human mobility pathways, environment and climate programming, skills development and mobility partnerships, human trafficking identification, protection, prevention and referral, and assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes. With a similar goal to address migration comprehensively, IOM's work is informed by a route-based approach, which recognizes the interconnectedness of experiences in Countries of Origin, Transit, and Destination.

The nine strategic goals address priorities that are relevant to the migration context in the Gulf countries. Significantly, IOM also recognizes the political and socioeconomic nuances of each of the Gulf countries. For this reason, IOM Gulf Missions work with stakeholders from each country to ensure dialogues and interventions respond directly to their needs and priorities. IOM collaborates with partners to create a common vision towards enhanced migration governance that aligns with their national development plans

<sup>21</sup> IOM's operations and thematic focus areas represent the full spectrum of its global activities, including: (a) movement, pre-departure orientation and resettlement; (b) emergency preparedness, prevention and response; (c) post-crisis transition and recovery, including peacebuilding; (d) migration health, including health assessments, mental health and psychosocial support; (e) labour mobility and human development; (f) migrant assistance and protection, counter-trafficking, assistance to vulnerable migrants, and assisted voluntary return and reintegration; (g) migration and border management; (h) migration policy, research, cooperation and partnership; and (i) migration, environment and climate change.

<sup>22</sup> IOM Gulf Missions are currently implementing a number of cross-cutting technical programmes. Examples of these include: a programme on the protection of and skills development for domestic workers; a training programme for labour inspectors jointly on combating labour exploitation and trafficking in human beings; a protection programme on counter-trafficking that also includes trainings for labour inspectors and recruitment agencies on IRIS standards.

and ensures the rights and dignity of citizens and migrants in Gulf countries. IOM's core institutional values place a premium on building relationships of trust and confidence. In parallel, IOM implements similar, and in some cases, the same activities across Gulf Missions. This ensures coordination across Missions and helps them identify similar migration trends and best practices amongst the Gulf countries. IOM's Strategic Results Framework further enables making the connections across these interventions through highlighting the same outcomes that are achieved. IOM's strategic goals and strategic objectives for the Gulf countries are detailed in the following sections.







## 3.1 GOVERNANCE

Gulf governments are taking steps to reform migration governance while also envisioning stronger national labour forces as they assess their own internal population demographics and socioeconomic needs in their societies. IOM forms partnerships with a range of migration actors to assess and improve their migration governance systems and processes. The Organization's Gulf Missions have already established partnerships with national ministries, regional and local government agencies and authorities, employers, economic and social institutions, and other relevant stakeholders. Through these partnerships, IOM provides strategic policy-level and technical assistance to enhance partners' existing capacities in the governance of migration, including labour migration, and the provision of assistance and protection measures to migrants. IOM acknowledges the reforms that several of the Gulf governments have made to the *Kafala* sponsorship system in their countries to promote enhanced migration governance. The Organization prioritizes the provision of technical assistance to Gulf governments to further enhance their ability to monitor, evaluate, and enforce the applied measures and to continue their reform efforts to the *Kafala* system. IOM is also supporting Gulf countries to critically examine impacts of the *Kafala* sponsorship system on the rights and protection of migrants, including domestic migrant workers, and to identify adequate reform measures and priorities.

Through the governance lens, IOM utilizes a systems-level approach to achieve the type of transformation that will ensure efficient, safe, orderly, and dignified migration management. The Organization's intent is to create synergy with its partners with the aim of working towards a common vision for good migration governance. It convenes and facilitates consultative processes between Countries of Origin, Transit, and Destination to promote interregional collaboration in pursuit of coordinated approaches to migration governance. The strategic goals introduced in this section present IOM's vision to build on IOM's existing and successful governance interventions in the Gulf. IOM aims to continue prioritizing critical areas such as labour migration management, inclusive and equitable social protection, border management and health, skills development for host and migrant populations, and accessibility and outreach of provisions to the COVID-19 vaccine. At the core of the governance pillar is IOM's responsibility to support Gulf governments to implement and report on its global commitments to the Global Compact for Migration, especially through utilizing the UNMNs. The five strategic goals under the governance pillar are:

### Strategic Goal 1:

Advance engagement and create synergy on key migration priorities, while addressing the social and economic dynamics of changing population demographics in Gulf countries

---

- a. Assist Gulf governments in building their capacities to report on international obligations and commitments, including SDGs, the Global Compact for Migration, and other frameworks and commitments. As part of this process, support governments' ongoing data collection and knowledge production efforts on migration.
- b. Capitalize on/promote the active engagement and leadership of Gulf representatives on the Global Compact for Migration and lead partnership discussions with UNMNs to support programmatic, policy, and advocacy priorities on migration.

- c. Facilitate open communication with Gulf governments about population demographics in their countries; and create synergy with them regarding migration priorities, terminology, and attitudes, including understanding migrants' role as agents of development. Create open channels for governments to utilize IOM technical expertise on migration

### Strategic Goal 2:

Provide policy, technical assistance, and support to Gulf governments in human rights-based labour mobility management and case protection processes for migrants

---

- a. Contribute to effective migration governance for Gulf governments, including labour mobility management processes, as part of their commitment to the Global Compact for Migration, SDGs and national agendas and in alignment with the MSD. Adopt IOM's technology-based models and solutions for migration governance as needed and relevant to the Gulf context.
- b. Provide technical support to Gulf governments on their initiatives to reform labour migration governance frameworks, especially around the *Kafala* sponsorship system and policies related to absconding. Provide technical assistance on these initiatives through ensuring the use of inclusive approaches that protect the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as domestic workers, while ensuring that employers receive their due rights.
- c. Assist governments in analysing and identifying reform priorities related to social protections, amongst the general migrant population and with a specific focus on domestic workers and other vulnerable groups.
- d. Engage with Gulf governments to find ways to create safe spaces and shelters for all vulnerable migrants in need of protection.

### Strategic Goal 3:

Serve as a convener of Inter-State Consultation Mechanisms (ISCMs) and policy dialogues between Gulf governments and Countries of Origin and Transit, from Africa and Asia, around migration issues relating to these corridors

---

- a. Contribute to supporting policy dialogues and ISCMs between Gulf countries and Countries of Origin and Transit on the migration corridor through existing, as well as new, ISCMs.

#### Strategic Goal 4:

Provide technical support to Gulf governments in achieving their objectives towards increasing their national population's participation in the labour market and upskilling migrants, with a particular focus on youth and women

---

- a. Assist Gulf governments in identifying mechanisms that support skills recognition and matching and encourage skilled labour migration to Gulf countries, while offering win-win solutions for all stakeholders involved; for example, by utilizing IOM's Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMP) framework. Highlight migration's role as a driver of sustainable development.
- b. Support with technical assistance on skills assessment and development schemes to support national youth's integration in the labour market as well as to support the upskilling of youth migrants.
- c. Facilitate/organize technical assistance to Gulf governments on the integration of women's participation in the labour market, including upskilling migrant women.

#### Strategic Goal 5:

Facilitate dialogues and build capacities of Gulf governments to provide access to health for all, including people on the move, and to assess the impact of mobility on public health

---

- a. Build on ongoing strategic partnership with the World Health Organization to finalize the assessment about the current health challenges and the state of migrants' access to health services in Gulf countries. Based on the assessment, determine health priorities for people on the move and develop a plan to address these with Gulf governments.
- b. Assist governments in assessing migrants' health conditions and threats along the mobility continuum, including systems for health screening. Offer the Health, Border and Mobility Management framework as a reference.
- c. Bolster COVID-19 response through a four-pronged approach:
  - 1) deliver training to relevant government entities on the impact of mobility on health in the context of controlling the spread of the disease;
  - 2) collaborate with UN agencies to advocate for migrants to be included in national vaccination plans, especially undocumented migrants;
  - 3) address vaccine hesitancy amongst migrants through awareness campaigns; and
  - 4) conduct awareness-raising on invalid/discriminatory reporting which stigmatizes migrants as "carriers" of COVID-19.

## 3.2 MOBILITY

IOM works with Countries of Origin and Transit and host governments to address the needs, rights and vulnerabilities of migrants and members of their families along the migration pathway, including their return and reintegration. The Organization adopts a holistic and route-based approach to ensure safe, orderly, and humane mobility pathways for these migrants. This mobility work is supported by [IOM's Policy on the Full Spectrum of Return, Readmission, and Reintegration](#). IOM's Gulf Missions have been leading some of the Organization's work on migration and mobility. Under the auspices of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, IOM Bahrain acts as the management site for the Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme (CIOP), a multi-country initiative that advocates for tailored and harmonized orientation for migrants at all points in the labour migration cycle. This includes pre-employment, pre-departure, post-arrival and pre-return. CIOP was developed by IOM for and responds to the informational needs of migrants within the Gulf context. As a result of this experience, IOM Bahrain has a mandate to support the Organization globally in advocating for information programmes to be designed with this approach in mind.

In recognition of and in parallel to a number of Gulf governments' increasing commitment to combating human trafficking in their countries, IOM has been collaborating with several ministerial, regional and local public agencies as well as shelters to develop best practice counter-trafficking interventions through providing them capacity strengthening training. IOM has also increasingly been providing direct assistance services to VoTs, including assisted voluntary return and reintegration. Furthermore, leveraging its role as the chair of the Global Policy Network on Ethical Recruitment, IOM is committed to working with governments and private sector to ensure ethical recruitment practices. This includes working on border management through public and private partnerships to ensure the effective management of transparent identity management and ethical recruitment systems. The two strategic goals under the mobility pillar are:

### Strategic Goal 1:

Ensure migrants' safe mobility pathways along the migration life cycle to, from, and during their presence in the Gulf

---

- a. Partner with Gulf governments and Countries of Origin to provide information and orientation to migrants during the migration life cycle. Encourage the adoption of the CIOP approach where possible.
- b. Support through technical assistance to government entities the implementation of AVRR of migrants, including building capacity in transparent and effective case management practices. Introduce joint capacity strengthening initiatives between Countries of Origin, Transit, Destination to ensure safe mobility pathways.
- c. Facilitate technical assistance to Gulf governments on border management. Identify viable and safe alternatives to detention of irregular migrants; screen detained migrants for Trafficking in Persons (TiP); and provide referral of the presumed VoTs to shelters and services for specialized assistance.

- d. Assist governments in assessing and improving their identity management systems with a focus on effective and internationally compliant systems.
- e. Collaborate with employers and recruitment agencies to identify and introduce reforms in their ethical recruitment and employment practices. This includes reinforcing practices that are in line with the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS), smart admission, transparent and accurate documentation, skills certification and recognition, and the promotion of environmental, social, and corporate governance standards.

### Strategic Goal 2:

Develop a comprehensive approach and mechanism to counter-trafficking utilizing prevention, protection, prosecution, policy, and partnership mechanisms

---

- a. Partner with government agencies, shelters, non-governmental organizations, recruitment agencies, and other relevant stakeholders to build capacity in counter-trafficking interventions, as well as to deliver direct assistance programmes:
  - i. Prevention: Support Gulf governments with technical assistance on their initiatives to reform the *Kafala* sponsorship system as previously mentioned. Collaborate with governments to raise awareness about the dangers of being trafficked and counter-trafficking measures through public awareness campaigns that target migrants, recruitment agencies, and employers.
  - ii. Protection: Build the capacities of shelters to provide specialized services and to assess and deliver psychosocial support/ psychosocially informed care (including for minors, women and girls). Provide direct assistance to VoTs. Build the capacities of justice systems to establish complaint mechanisms that address grievances and provide access to remedy.
  - iii. Prosecution: Collaborate with criminal justice systems to recognize signs of human trafficking and to prosecute trafficking cases as such (instead of workplace disputes or as a matter of unpaid wages).
  - iv. Policy: Assist Gulf governments in developing standards of operation to address the trafficking of migrants, including issuing temporary residence permits to TiP victims. Facilitate bilateral agreements on return and reintegration.
  - v. Partnership: Work in partnership with public, private, civil society, diaspora, and academic stakeholders to ensure the protection of VoTs. Work with these partners to support the development and roll out of National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs). IOM will be serving as a technical capacity partner to the Bahrain based Regional Center of Excellence for Capacity Building in the Field of Combatting Trafficking in Persons.



### 3.3 RESILIENCE

IOM works with partners to address current migration challenges while also forecasting and preparing for human-induced or nature driven events that may contribute to human movement. IOM is committed to engaging with Gulf governments to enhance resilience and capacity in assessing and forecasting migration trends in their countries and creating innovative solutions that are rights-based and human-centred. The Organization also seeks to support these governments in disaster risk reduction, assessing and identifying early warning signs of environmental hazards, including those related to climate change, and how they will impact migration patterns in their countries. At a time where a myriad of political, economic, humanitarian, environmental, and health crises are converging, IOM aims to work with Gulf governments to identify immediate and long-term solutions that respond to the needs of vulnerable communities. Gulf governmental institutions have traditionally housed humanitarian and development branches that deal with the provision of humanitarian, early recovery, and development support. As such, Gulf governments' engagement and influence in the global humanitarian and development sphere continues to grow. IOM aims to support Gulf governments' expanding role in the global humanitarian system and to assist them in applying the Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus (HDPN)<sup>23</sup> approach to the local contexts they operate in within the Middle East and other regions.

In the near future, the Organization will be launching IOM's Islamic Philanthropy Fund, which will work with Gulf governments, foundations, charities, Islamic financial institutions, and individual donors to support vulnerable communities in the Gulf countries as well as other parts of the world. Through this Fund, IOM is eligible to function as an intermediary agent that can collect and distribute Muslim alms, including *zakat*.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, IOM will be able to make greater contributions to the efforts of governments and communities to reduce poverty and hunger, prepare and rapidly respond to disasters, and to rebuilding initiatives through provision of direct assistance to the poor. Through the Fund, IOM will also expand its efforts to implement relief and development projects that improve the health and alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable. The two strategic goals under the resilience pillar are:

#### **Strategic Goal 1:**

Support Gulf governments in forecasting migration trends in their countries, including examining synergies between migration, environment, and climate change and assessing health-related challenges

- a. Collaborate with multiple stakeholders to conduct ongoing assessments of migration drivers through utilizing a route-based approach in order to inform policies and programming related to migration issues between Gulf States and Countries of Origin and Transit in Asia and Africa. Utilize migration data and research to create the evidence base.
- b. Assist Gulf governments in forecasting and assessing migration trends related to climate change and other environmental hazards through

<sup>23</sup> The OECD DAC defines the HDPN in a recommendation from 2019. More information is available at the following link: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Form of almsgiving in the Islamic faith that is considered a religious obligation.

the lens of disaster risk reduction and early warning systems. Identify the necessary policy architecture that needs to be put in place at the nexus of migration and climate change.

- c. Assist Gulf governments in planning for health-related challenges, including conducting risk assessments, preventing future pandemics, ensuring safety for labour mobility in the countries, and developing relevant policy and response plans.

### Strategic Goal 2:

Serve as a partner to Gulf governments in supporting the development of emergency and humanitarian response strategies for countries outside of their countries

---

- a. Support Gulf governments' relief and humanitarian aid initiatives through strengthening their capacities in emergency preparedness and response interventions, efficient disaster relief management, and post-crisis early recovery interventions in other countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and globally.
- b. Build the capacity of Gulf governments, including humanitarian assistance departments, to ensure HDPN approaches in their relevant interventions.
- c. Acknowledge public and private sector humanitarian actors' resources and expertise in the Gulf; collaborate in strengthening their connection to the international humanitarian and development system.
- d. Pilot and launch the Islamic Philanthropy Fund through establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships in different Gulf countries.



Rama, a Syrian refugee resettled to Switzerland. © IOM 2019/Angela WELLS

## 3.4 CROSS-CUTTING THEMATIC PRIORITIES

IOM views the strategic goals with the lens of a number of cross-cutting areas that inform programmatic and policy interventions.

### 3.4.1 Inclusive programming

#### 3.4.1.1 Gender equality

Given how gender shapes every stage of the migrant journey, IOM is committed to mainstream gender considerations in its policies and programmes and contribute to gender equality. This approach ensures that IOM's interventions in the Gulf respond to the needs of all migrants in a gender-sensitive manner. IOM integrates gender-sensitive approaches into the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. These approaches are reflected in: 1) Migration policy to promote a model of migration management that centres on people, including their rights, and on gender equality principles; 2) Participation to ensure that consultations with stakeholders are inclusive; 3) Gender-sensitive teams to ensure that all project staff, trainers and others involved in project implementation are trained on gender and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and of sexual harassment, and who also consider gender balance and address any potential barriers to working on projects; and 4) Gender-sensitive and inclusive migration data collection and analysis to capture the various needs of migrants, which is important to inform evidence-based migration policy. Through these efforts, IOM recognizes the risks, challenges, opportunities and benefits experienced by migrants during the migration process, and tailors its interventions to be gender-sensitive. This includes ensuring the protection and rights of domestic workers, VoTs, and survivors of gender-based violence.

#### 3.4.1.2 Youth inclusion

IOM is keen to more deliberately inform its programmes and policies with youth-responsive approaches and interventions in Gulf countries. IOM's youth-inclusive policies are developed in line with Youth 2030, the UN Youth Strategy. IOM has developed a set of priorities to address youth needs within the migration context. IOM's interventions in the Gulf aim to respond to the Organization's youth engagement priorities. This is especially relevant in the Gulf context, considering the population of youth migrants<sup>25</sup> as well as the Gulf governments' priorities to enhance the skillsets and capacities of their national youth populations to enter different sectors of the labour market.

#### 3.4.1.3 Disability inclusion

IOM respects the diversity of all individuals and recognizes the challenges and barriers persons with disabilities may face across the migration continuum. IOM is committed to working with partners in the Gulf to assess the needs of migrants with disabilities and tailor policies and programmes accordingly. IOM reports progress on indicators derived from the [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) on an annual basis.

<sup>25</sup> According to GMDAC Migration Data Portal, the share of international migrants between 15 and 24 years residing in the Gulf countries at mid-year 2020 is between 8 and 14.2 per cent depending on the country (source: UN DESA, January 2020) [www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stock\\_young\\_perc&t=2020](http://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stock_young_perc&t=2020)).

### 3.4.2 Research and data management for evidence-based interventions

IOM programmatic and policy interventions are driven by evidence-based research and data management at the local, regional, and national levels and are in line with IOM's [Migration Data Strategy](#). Currently, IOM has partnered with several UN agencies on critical research studies on the Gulf countries, including migration and health access, migration and social protection, as well as a number of other thematic areas. IOM looks forward to build on and create new research-based partnerships with national statistical offices (NSOs), government institutions, as well as UN sister agencies and other international and national organizations to conduct research on the intersection of migration with development and humanitarian issues. The Organization also seeks to enhance the development of research that provides insights into migrants' experiences throughout the migration continuum and to develop partnerships with local civil society organizations and migrant organizations that can facilitate data collection. IOM also aims to support partners with capacity strengthening efforts in data collection and analysis, and to highlight successful tools that could be utilized such as IOM's Migration Governance Indicators and Migration Profiles, as well as platforms such as the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC). IOM also looks forward to engaging NSOs and government institutions on supporting their data collection efforts in relation to reporting on GCM and SDG objectives. Ultimately, IOM seeks to encourage partners to create and utilize data management and analysis tools, if not already existing, to promote evidence-driven migthe Global Compact for Migration solutions and to highlight best practices on regional and global levels.

### 3.4.3 Climate change

IOM acknowledges the compounded effects of mounting environmental pressures and hazards related to climate change. Environmental degradation and climate change continue to impact human mobility, as migration is one of the adaptation strategies. The Gulf and wider Arab countries are experiencing rising temperatures, sea level rise, natural hazards, floods, and other complex environmental threats.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Gulf economies continue to rely on oil, despite diversification efforts. These realities are creating and will keep contributing to a myriad of complex political, social, and economic developments that will impact migration flows inside and outside of the Gulf countries. The effects of climate change in Countries of Origin will also continue to impact migration flows, as has been being witnessed by movement patterns from EHoA countries into the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, climate change also impacts migrants' abilities to safely work in extreme weather conditions, considering health effects such as heat stress and dehydration. IOM has been a key partner in advising governments and facilitating partnerships on migration, environment, and climate change. The Organization is keen to work with Gulf governments on this important issue, especially considering these countries' adoption of climate related conventions.<sup>27</sup> IOM aims to support Gulf countries' efforts to produce knowledge about environmental drivers of migration within their contexts. It also seeks to assist them in identifying priorities related to the migration, environment, and climate change<sup>28</sup> nexus including exploring green jobs and nature-based solutions for migrant, women, and youth as well as for host communities. IOM's work in this area will be further guided by the IOM Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change.

<sup>26</sup> UNDP. Climate Change Adaptation in the Arab States: Best practices and lessons learned, July 2018, pages 24–26 [www.undp.org/publications/climate-change-adaptation-arab-states](http://www.undp.org/publications/climate-change-adaptation-arab-states).

<sup>27</sup> Examples include: Gulf countries' ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, signing on to the Paris Agreement and the commitment to reporting on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and acknowledgment of the environmental migration clauses in the Global Compact for Migration through their adoption of this Compact.

<sup>28</sup> More information about IOM's objectives regarding Migration, Environment and Climate Change is available at the following link: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/iom-and-migration-environment-and-climate-change-mecc>.



## 4. PATHWAY TO ACHIEVING THE STRATEGIC GOALS



## 4. PATHWAY TO ACHIEVING THE STRATEGIC GOALS

### 4.1 IOM'S APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

IOM promotes whole-of-government and whole-of-society partnerships to collaboratively address migration issues from a comprehensive perspective, while also working in partnership and collaboration with UN sister agencies and through the UNMNs.

#### 4.1.1 Whole-of-government

IOM has established many partnerships with government entities in the Gulf States starting in Kuwait and over the past several years expanding to other countries. IOM values working with national, regional, and local level governmental authorities to establish a common set of priorities on migration that align with the governments' national plans and with IOM's priorities. These partnerships allow for systemic level changes to be made that enhance migration governance through utilizing a whole-of-government approach that engages every level of government. IOM also plans to enhance coordination with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretariat. As part of IOM's institutional commitment to its work in the relevant countries, in 2019, IOM's Director General appointed a Special Envoy to the Gulf to engage with senior level officials.

IOM similarly prioritizes establishing relationships with Embassies and Consular services of Countries of Origin and Transit to cooperate on programmes such as CIOP, AVRR, border management, counter-trafficking, and other critical areas of coordination and to discuss the latest developments along the migration corridors.

#### 4.1.2 Whole-of-society

In accordance with Global Compact for Migration Resolution #44, IOM has and will continue to establish partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders as part of its whole-of-society approach. As migration to the Gulf is significantly characterized by labour migration, IOM will increase its cooperation with private sector employers as partners and stakeholders. IOM has increasingly established partnerships with academia in the Gulf and plans to expand its academic collaborations as part of its evidence-based programming interventions and to strengthen academic institutions' capacity in migration processes and research. IOM works with civil society organizations to provide them with technical support for their direct assistance and service delivery to migrant communities and looks forward to expanding these partnerships. IOM is also keen to continue to engage with entities such as the Migration Forum in Asia and other regional forums. As part of this strategy, IOM is also planning to enhance coordination with the Arab and regional media as part of its communication priorities to create a more nuanced discourse around migration and sustainable development.

### 4.1.3 UN organizations and the United Nations Migration Networks

Through the UNMNs, IOM aims to work with UN partner agencies to put forward a unified voice around the Global Compact for Migration and the SDGs, especially through the lens of migration as a cross-cutting area. As an active member of UNCTs in the Gulf, IOM looks forward to continuing to collaborate with UN sister agencies to streamline efforts on the development of Common Country Assessments and Sustainable Cooperation Frameworks and to coordinate policy and programmatic efforts. Through its Secretariat and Coordinator role on the UNMN globally, IOM envisions that in-country UNMNs continue to be utilized as collaborative platforms to enhance coordination among UN agencies and with Gulf governments to agree on migration and SDG related priorities and interventions. In partnership with its respective co-chairs, IOM convenes and spearheads UNMN discussions that bring government representatives and UN agencies together around implementing the Global Compact for Migration objectives. IOM aims to enhance coordination between UNMNs in Gulf countries and in Countries of Origin and Transit as a platform to identify route-based approaches to address the full spectrum of migrants' needs.



IOM Kuwait commemorating World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2019. © IOM 2021/Mayada SERAGELDIN



## 4.2 INTER-STATE CONSULTATION MECHANISMS ON MIGRATION

One of IOM's most critical roles is to convene governments through ISCMs. ISCMs are instrumental for open dialogues between Countries of Origin, Transit and Destination and as a platform to reach agreement on critical migration issues and to identify long-term sustainable solutions. These communication channels are crucial for creating ownership, buy-in, and commitments on the pathway to achieving more effective migration governance between sending, receiving, and transit countries. At this critical time where Gulf governments have committed to the Global Compact for Migration and SDGs, IOM will increase its coordination efforts to closely collaborate with Gulf governments to support their inter-State and global engagement in such dialogues. IOM is keen to engage with the GCC Secretariat and continue its engagement with the League of Arab States on ISCMs.

IOM plans to continue coordinating with Gulf governments on ISCMs between multiple corridors. One such corridor is between the Gulf countries and EHoA countries as Eastern Africa is an increasingly significant area of origin of migrant workers traveling to the Gulf primarily for employment opportunities.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, despite the conflict in Yemen, the Gulf of Aden remains a main transit route between EHoA and the Gulf countries,<sup>30</sup> highlighting the need to increase coordination with Yemen as a Country of Transit. IOM aims to collaborate with the African Union Commission and Gulf governments to enhance coordination amongst sending and receiving countries, as well as identifying areas of collaboration under the Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration for East and Horn of Africa. IOM will continue to engage with the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and the Colombo Process on migration between Gulf and Asian countries. Moreover, IOM is keen to engage Abu Dhabi Dialogue as well as other ISCMs and global platforms to facilitate dialogue and support evidence-based policymaking around climate change and migration in the Gulf, in addition to continued engagement on labour mobility and labour migration, ethical recruitment and migrant workers' rights, bilateral labour migration agreements, and international migration law.

As part of its efforts to support Gulf governments' counter-trafficking initiatives, IOM aims to continue engaging with Gulf governments on the Government Forum to Combat Trafficking in Persons in the Middle East. The Forum was established by the Government of Bahrain's National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Labour Market Regulatory Authority in 2018, in cooperation with IOM and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in the GCC. The Forum is now taking place on an annual basis.

Through these and other ISCMs and forums, there is an opportunity for Gulf countries to engage in learning exchanges and promote successful migration governance models with other countries, such as those in the European Union. One such opportunity is to engage Gulf countries in IOM's ongoing efforts to discuss labour mobility, talent partnerships, and the SMP model with the European Commission. Moreover, as several Gulf countries are taking active measures to combat human trafficking, another opportunity to exchange their experiences is through the Government Forum to Combat Trafficking in Persons in the Middle East.

<sup>29</sup> IOM *World Migration Report 2020*, page 61.

<sup>30</sup> IOM Yemen Situation Report July 2021.



### 4.3 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Migration is a complex issue that intersects with multiple political, economic, and social factors at the national, regional, and international levels. For this reason, IOM values creating open and transparent communication channels about migration challenges and opportunities. IOM engages in ongoing communication with Gulf governments and all relevant stakeholders to create synergy on migration priorities. IOM also aims to raise awareness and create a constructive and nuanced discourse on migration. The Organization seeks to achieve this through conducting awareness campaigns that help engage migrants and make their experiences relatable, as well as to disseminate facts and information about migrants and migrant communities. IOM communication, as well as its programming and policy advice, are driven by evidence and fact-based data and research. IOM strives to form the evidence base through the production of research and think pieces. As an international organization that respects the local cultures of its partner countries, IOM is increasing its efforts to create communications channels in Arabic through digital and non-digital channels and in official dialogues with Gulf representatives from various sectors. IOM also strives to enhance communication on combating xenophobia and stigma around migrant workers.

### 4.4 CADRE OF REGIONAL AND TECHNICAL EXPERTS

IOM's strength comes from its extensive footprint on the ground that is supported by its regional and global team members. This team includes regional specialists who have a deep regional understanding of the Gulf countries as well as technical experts who lead programmatic and policy work. IOM Gulf Missions spearhead relationships with ministries and local authorities, private sector, civil society, academia, and a number of other stakeholders. These Missions make it a priority to understand and respond to the local contexts of the Gulf countries. IOM's Gulf Missions are supported by the Organization's MENA Regional Office and by its international headquarters' departments. IOM's cadre of staff works with partners as technical experts and advisors.

### 4.5 INTERREGIONAL COLLABORATION

IOM works globally and on an interregional level to build synergies between its Regional Offices to maximize the reach and impact of policy and programmatic interventions between Countries of Origin, Transit and Destination. As part of this strategy, IOM MENA Regional Office looks forward to increasing collaboration with regional offices in Nairobi, Bangkok, among others. The regional offices will also continue to ensure interregional collaboration between UNMNs of Gulf countries and sending and transit countries.



A close-up photograph of a young Ethiopian woman. She is wearing a blue headscarf with a vibrant floral pattern in orange, yellow, and red. Her hands are raised to her face, covering her mouth and nose. Only her eyes and forehead are visible. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## 5. CONCLUDING STATEMENT: IOM IN THE GULF IN 2024



## 5. CONCLUDING STATEMENT: IOM IN THE GULF IN 2024

---

IOM reaffirms its commitment to migrants, host governments, and host communities in the Gulf and to countries and communities of origin. IOM presents a forward-looking strategy and extends a responsive, flexible, rights-based, and human-centred approach that works in alignment with the Gulf countries' national agendas.

Through working with Gulf governments, Embassies and Consular services of Countries of Origin and Transit, UN sister agencies, and a range of partners, IOM believes there is a significant opportunity to positively change the discourse on migration in the Gulf. There is also an opportunity to highlight migration as a powerful driver of sustainable development where migrants have an important role as agents of development in both Countries of Origin and Destination. IOM is confident that UNMNs are critical to promoting this discourse as at the core of achieving the Global Compact for Migration and the SDGs, is giving migration due consideration to maximize its development potential. IOM will continue to work with Gulf governments and UN agencies, among other partners, to coordinate and evaluate both development-focused and migration-specific policies and actions to maximize the benefits of the migration–development nexus through whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.

As IOM expands its work in the Gulf, both unexpected challenges and opportunities will arise. IOM's adaptability to change, adjustment of priorities, expanded partnerships, and openness to changing internal and external perceptions about IOM's role in the Gulf will be critical drivers of success.

Guided by the Global Compact for Migration, SDGs, and the organization's principles and values, IOM strives to be a strategic and technical partner that drives dialogue, action, and commitment to enhanced migration governance and long-term sustainable development. IOM looks forward to expanded partnerships, dialogue, and action and to working together to address challenges, identify and build on opportunities, and create win-win solutions for all migration stakeholders.

# ANNEXES





## ANNEX 1. OVERVIEW OF IOM

---

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the UN's leading agency on migration and the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, working closely with its key stakeholders – migrants and Member States – to promote humane, safe, and orderly migration. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants from an integral and holistic perspective, including links to development, in order to maximize the benefits and opportunities of migration and reduce its challenges. Established in 1951, IOM now has more than 170 Member States, offices in over 400 field locations and more than 14,000 staff – 90 per cent of IOM's staff being deployed in the field. In the Gulf countries, IOM has three country offices in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. IOM also has active presence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and provides direct assistance support in the Sultanate of Oman.

As recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human mobility is indivisible from sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and the commitment to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind – will not be achieved without due consideration of migration. Additionally, the Global Compact for Migration is grounded in the 2030 Agenda, and promotes the principles of having a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address this intrinsic link. This Strategy will support the Member States to achieve this, ultimately leveraging the potential of migration through a whole-of-government approach to achieve sustainable development outcomes for all. It is a direct contribution to the Decade of Action to fast-track progress for reaching the SDGs. It brings greater coherence and development impact to IOM's activities and allows for a joined-up approach to the way the Organization designs and delivers its operations, as called for in IOM's Strategic Vision.

IOM's Strategic Vision, presented to IOM Member States in 2019, spans the period of 2019 to 2023. The Vision articulates how IOM plans to meet its new and emerging responsibilities, including IOM's mandated role as Network Coordinator. It sets out the "direction of travel" for IOM, is forward looking and encourages "joined up thinking". This Strategy is aligned with the Vision, its corresponding Regional Strategy 2020–2024 for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the IOM Strategic Results Framework, which are anchored in the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda (and the Global Compact for Migration).

## ANNEX 2. MAP OF IOM PRESENCE IN THE GULF COUNTRIES



IOM MISSION

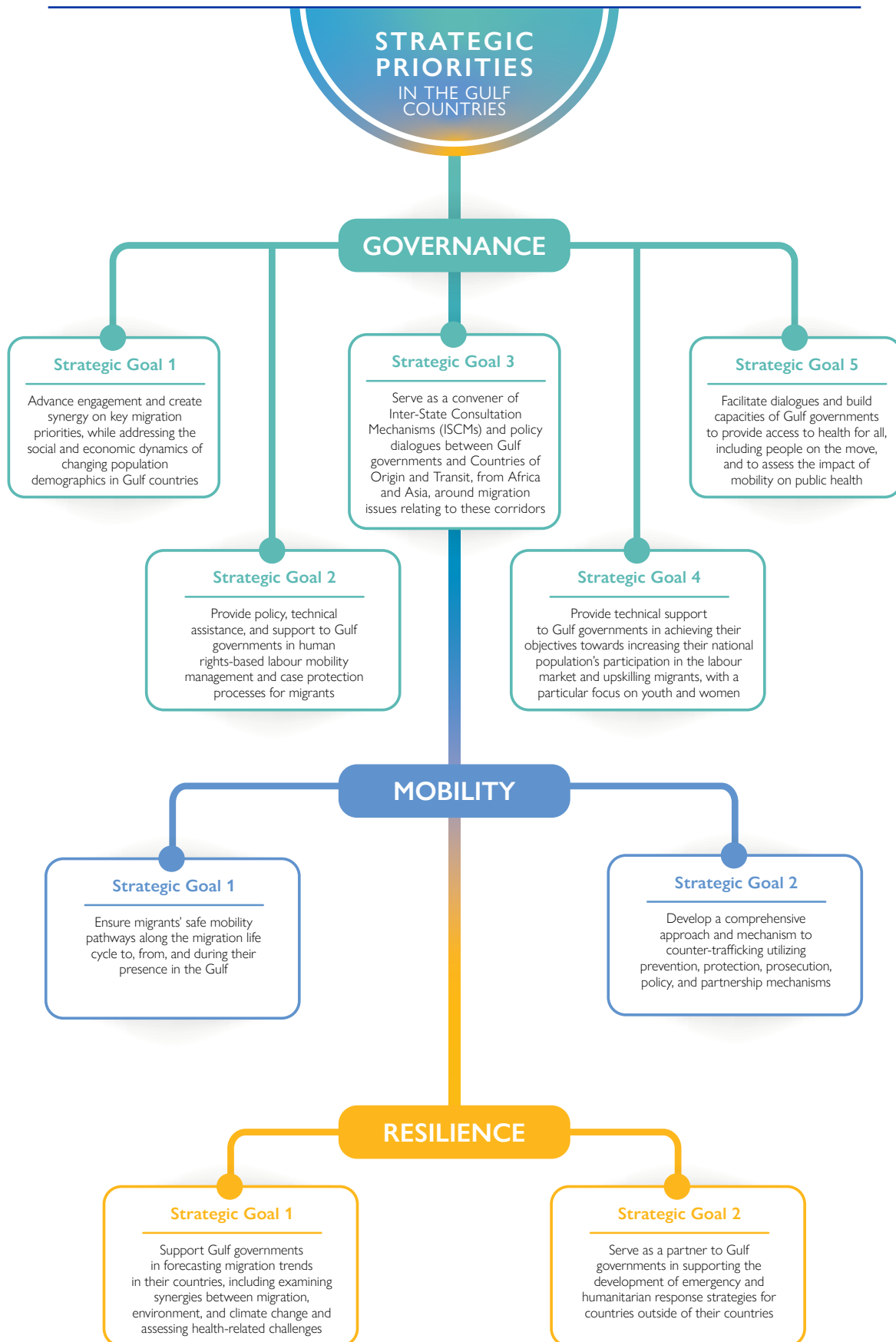


IOM PRESENCE

Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

# ANNEX 3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES









International Organization for Migration (IOM)

17 route des Morillons, P.O. Box 17, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 717 9111 • Fax: +41 22 798 6150 • Email: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int) • Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)