International Labour Organization

Better Regional Migration Management

UKaid from the British people

Assessment of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda

Assessment of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda

ISBN: 9789220435809 (print); 9789220435816 (web PDF)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.54394/00034602

Printed in Ethiopia

Acknowledgments

This report was made possible through the contributions of various stakeholders committed to strengthening fair labour migration governance in Ethiopia, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Ministries of Labour, private employment agencies (PrEAs), employers' organizations, migrant worker associations, and civil society organizations for their valuable insights and expertise.

Special appreciation is extended to the interviewees, researchers, and field experts who provided critical data and firsthand accounts that informed this report. We also acknowledge the support of international organizations and experts who continue to advocate for fair recruitment and the protection of migrant workers.

Finally, we recognize the resilience of migrant workers, whose experiences and challenges underscore the importance of strengthening regulatory frameworks and safeguarding rights in labour migration. Their voices remain central to this work.

▶ Foreword

Labour migration continues to play an important role in shaping economic and social development across the East and Horn of Africa. For countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania, labour mobility offers opportunities for employment, skills development, income generation, and remittance flows that contribute significantly to household livelihoods and national economies. At the same time, migration pathways can expose workers to serious risks, including deceptive recruitment practices, excessive recruitment costs, contract substitution, exploitation, abuse, and inadequate protection throughout the migration cycle.

In this context, Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) occupy a critical position within labour migration governance systems. When appropriately regulated, monitored, and supported, PrEAs can facilitate fair recruitment, improve labour market matching, and contribute to safe, orderly, and regular migration. However, weak regulatory frameworks, limited enforcement capacities, informal brokerage systems, and insufficient cross-border coordination continue to create vulnerabilities for migrant workers across the region.

This *Assessment of Private Recruitment Agencies in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda* was undertaken to strengthen understanding of the regulatory, institutional, and operational environments governing private recruitment in the three countries. The assessment examines national legal and policy frameworks, licensing and oversight systems, recruitment practices, compliance mechanisms and institutional coordination arrangements related to labour migration governance. It further identifies key gaps, challenges and emerging good practices in the regulation of private employment agencies and proposes practical recommendations aimed at strengthening fair recruitment systems and enhancing the protection of migrant workers.

The assessment is grounded in the principles of decent work, fair recruitment, social dialogue, and the protection of workers' rights. It draws upon relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) standards and guidance, including the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, and contributes to ongoing efforts to align national recruitment governance systems with regional and international labour migration frameworks. The findings of this report are informed by an extensive consultative and evidence-based process involving ministries responsible for labour and migration, private employment agencies, workers' and employers' organizations, civil society organizations, development partners, and migrant workers, including returnees. The experiences and perspectives shared through interviews, focus group discussions, and stakeholder consultations have been instrumental in identifying both the systemic challenges and the opportunities for reform within the recruitment sector.

The ILO is pleased to support this initiative as part of its broader commitment to promoting fair recruitment, advancing decent work opportunities, and strengthening labour migration governance in the region. This work contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and regional processes under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU). We trust that this assessment will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, labour administrations, social partners, private employment agencies, and practitioners working to strengthen governance systems for labour migration and recruitment. Ultimately, improving the regulation and oversight of private recruitment agencies is essential to ensuring that labour migration contributes to inclusive development and that migrant workers are able to migrate and work in conditions of dignity, safety, and respect for their rights.

Ndaba, Khumbula
Director,
ILO Country Office for Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan Special Representative to the AU and UNECA

Mugalla, Caroline Khamati
Director,
ILO Country Office for the United Republic of Tanzania,
Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the EAC.

▶ Table of Contents

1

International Conventions and National Legislation Landscape

This section reviews the global and national legal frameworks governing labour recruitment and migrant protection, situating Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania within relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations (UN) conventions, as well as their domestic implementing legislation.

ILO Conventions and Guidance

- **ILO Convention No. 181 (Private Employment Agencies, 1997)** sets the core framework for licensing, supervision, fee restrictions, contract transparency, complaint handling and sanctions for private employment agencies (PEAs/PrEAs). It entered into force on 10 May 2000. Ethiopia has ratified the Convention; Uganda and Tanzania have not.
- **ILO Convention No. 97 (Migration for Employment, Revised 1949)** promotes equal treatment of migrant and national workers in relation to wages, social security and union rights. Ratification across Africa is uneven; none of the three countries is a party.
- **ILO Convention No. 143 (Migrant Workers, Supplementary Provisions, 1975)** addresses irregular migration and mandates protection against abusive conditions, trafficking and clandestine recruitment. It has not been ratified by Ethiopia, Uganda or Tanzania.
- **ILO Convention No. 189 (Domestic Workers, 2011)** extends decent work standards to domestic workers, a major category of migrant workers. None of the three countries has ratified this Convention.
- **ILO Convention No. 102 (Social Security (Minimum Standards), 1952)** sets baseline standards for social protection. None of the three countries are parties.
- **The ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment (2016)** together with the **Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs (2019 update), are** non-binding global benchmarks that support an "employer-pays" model, contract clarity and transparency across the recruitment chain. These instruments are frequently used to assess national practice, even in the absence of treaty ratification.

UN Human Rights Instruments

- **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW, 1990)** is a comprehensive human-rights treaty covering the *entire migration cycle* (pre-departure, transit, stay and return). None of the three countries are States Parties. The Convention is supervised by the Committee on Migrant Workers (**CMW)**, which has issued **General Comment No. 1 on migrant domestic workers (2011)**.
- **UNTOC "Palermo" Protocols** are widely ratified instruments that complement labour governance where recruitment intersects with criminal activity.
    - **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000);**
    - **Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2000)**.

Both Protocols supplement the **UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC, 2000)**.

- **CEDAW General Recommendation No. 26 on Women Migrant Workers (2008)** — authoritative guidance under CEDAW addressing gender-specific risks in migration (for example, domestic work, sponsorship systems, and access to justice).

▶ Ratification snapshot (as of August 2025):

Instrument	Ethiopia	Uganda	Tanzania
ILO C.181 (1997)	Ratified (1999)	Not ratified	Not ratified
ILO C.97 (1949)	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
ILO C.143 (1975)	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
ILO C.189 (2011)	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
ILO C.102 (1952)	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
ICRMW (1990)	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified

National Legislation

Ethiopia

- Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1389/2025, which repeals Proclamation No. 923/2016 and its amendment (No. 1246/2021), is the principal legal framework governing overseas employment. It regulates public and private recruitment, licensing requirements (including financial guarantees), contract verification, skills and language assessments, medical screening, recruitment cost regulation, and sanctions, including licence suspension and revocation.

- The Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) is the lead authority responsible for licensing, inspection, and enforcement. The Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS), launched in 2022, digitizes job orders, agency licensing and renewal, worker biometric identification, training certification, and complaints registration.

Uganda

- The Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021 (Statutory Instrument No. 47 of 2021), issued under the Employment Act, 2006, provide the primary regulatory framework for overseas recruitment. The Regulations establish licensing criteria for recruitment agencies, including company structure, ownership, paid-up capital, and bank guarantees, as well as requirements for pre-departure orientation (minimum 14 days), standard employment contracts, inspection powers, offences, penalties, and licence suspension or revocation.

- Digital processing of recruitment activities is operationalized through the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS).

Tanzania

Primary instruments and systems.

- Mainland Tanzania Legal Framework: The regulation of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) and labour migration is primarily anchored in the National Employment Promotion Services Act, 1999 (Cap. 243), particularly Part V (sections 18–23), which recognizes and regulates Private Employment Promotion Agencies, including provisions on registration, fees, supervision, and licence cancellation. Part VI of the Act, which previously addressed foreign workers and work permits, has been repealed and replaced by the Non-Citizens (Employment Regulation) Act, No. 1 of 2015 (as amended), together with the Non-Citizens (Employment Regulations), GN No. 331 of 2016, which now govern the employment of non-citizens in Tanzania. The broader labour relations and enforcement framework is further supported by the Employment and Labour Relations Act, 2004 (Cap. 366), the Labour Institutions Act (Cap. 300), the Employment and Labour Relations (Code of Good Practice) Rules, 2007, the National Employment Services (Private Employment Promotion Agency) Regulations, 2014, and the Employment and Labour Relations (General) Regulations, 2017.

- The Guidelines for Private Employment Agencies (2025) supplement the Act by providing operational procedures for licensing, inspection, training coordination, and reporting.
- In Zanzibar, labour migration governance is administered under a separate constitutional and legal framework, including the Constitution of Zanzibar, the Employment Act, 2005 (Zanzibar), the Employment Policy, 2009 (Zanzibar), and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008).

Executive Summary

Labour migration is a key driver of economic growth and employment in Ethiopia, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania, with thousands of workers seeking opportunities abroad, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Remittances from migrant workers contribute significantly to household incomes and national economies; however, the migration process presents significant challenges. Workers often face high recruitment costs, exploitative conditions, contract violations, and weak legal protections in destination countries. While governments have taken steps to regulate recruitment and improve worker protections, gaps in enforcement, oversight, and coordination remain pressing concerns.

This report examines the legal frameworks, recruitment systems, and migration management in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. It highlights the role of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), government institutions, and international agreements in shaping labour migration policies. The analysis is based on policy reviews, stakeholder interviews, and international best practices, providing a comparative analysis on how each country manages external employment. Primary data was collected through 31 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with government officials, recruitment agencies, civil society actors, and labour attachés and two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with returnees and PrEAs, complemented by secondary sources including legal texts and administrative data.

Key Findings

1. Regulatory and Institutional Gaps: While each country has a licensing system for PrEAs, enforcement remains weak across all three countries. In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS) has improved transparency, but informal intermediaries continue to operate, exposing workers to trafficking risks. Uganda's External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS) provides a digital framework for recruitment oversight, but compliance issues persist. In Tanzania, the absence of a security bond for PrEAs reduces accountability, and government agencies such as the Employment Services Unit (ESU) are involved in both regulation and recruitment, creating conflicts of interest.

2. Recruitment Challenges and Informal Intermediaries: Across all three countries, informal recruitment networks dominate despite formal licensing processes. In Tanzania, unregulated brokers known as *bubu agents* operate in rural areas, misleading workers about job conditions. Similarly, in Ethiopia, unregistered agents exploit rural migrants, charging exorbitant fees and falsifying contracts. Uganda has limited oversight of informal intermediaries, leading to cases of contract substitution and forced labour in destination countries.

3. Pre-Departure Training and Worker Preparedness: Ethiopia has a mandatory 21-day pre-departure training programme, but its effectiveness is undermined by fraudulent certifications and limited alignment with job market needs. In Uganda, pre-departure training is largely managed by recruitment agencies, with insufficient government oversight. Tanzania lacks a standardised curriculum, and most PrEAs conduct only a few hours of basic training before deployment.

4. High Costs of Migration: Despite regulations prohibiting excessive fees, many workers pay high recruitment costs, leading to debt bondage. In Ethiopia, some workers spend up to $3,780 to secure employment abroad, often financing their migration through loans. In Tanzania, workers migrating to Oman often cover their own travel costs, as brokers arrange placements independently of PrEAs. Uganda has established caps on recruitment fees, but hidden costs persist, particularly for medical exams, visa processing, and administrative fees.

5. Weak Protection Mechanisms Abroad: Although Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) exist, enforcement remains inconsistent. Ethiopia has agreements with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Lebanon, but monitoring compliance is difficult due to the lack of labour attachés in destination countries. Uganda has one labour attaché in Saudi Arabia, limiting its ability to assist distressed workers. Tanzania is negotiating a BLA with Oman, a key destination for Zanzibari workers, but has yet to establish a structured monitoring system.

Recommendations

Enhance Licensing and Enforcement:

1. Enhance Licensing and Enforcement: Strengthen oversight of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) by introducing stricter penalties for non-compliance, enforcing security bond requirements, and establishing a structured inspection regime. This should include quarterly scheduled inspections and a minimum of two unannounced spot checks per year for each licensed PrEA, with a focus on high-risk agencies identified through performance audits and worker complaints.

2. As part of efforts to strengthen fair recruitment and migrant worker protections, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania should be encouraged to align more closely with international labour standards. Ethiopia has ratified ILO Convention No. 181 on Private Employment Agencies, which provides a framework for regulating PrEAs in a manner that protects workers' rights while promoting private sector participation. However, Uganda and Tanzania have yet to ratify this Convention, limiting their ability to formalize and effectively regulate private recruitment actors in line with international standards. Furthermore, none of the three countries has ratified ILO Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers or Convention No. 102 on Social Security (Minimum Standards), both of which are critical for enhancing the rights and welfare of key migrant worker groups, particularly women. Ratification and domestication of these conventions would not only strengthen worker protections but also enhance each country's credibility and bargaining position in bilateral labour agreements and regional migration dialogues.

3. Regulate Informal Intermediaries: Introduce a national registration system for informal recruiters, requiring PrEAs to declare their agents to local government authorities.

4. Standardise Pre-Departure Training: Establish mandatory, government-led training centres to ensure consistency in worker preparation, modelled after Indonesia's One-Channel Placement System.

5. Reduce Migration Costs: Enforce the employer-pays principle to prevent workers from financing their own recruitment, aligning with ILO Fair Recruitment General Principles and Operational Guidelines.

6. Strengthen Worker Protection Abroad: Deploy labour attachés in high-risk destination countries, establish emergency shelters, and improve complaints-handling mechanisms for workers in distress.

7. Improve Digital Migration Systems: Upgrade EEMIS (Uganda), ELMIS (Ethiopia), and ESMIS (Tanzania) to ensure better tracking of migrant workers, contracts, and employer compliance.

8. Enhance Bilateral and Regional Negotiations: Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania should negotiate as a bloc to secure better protections in the GCC, leveraging international frameworks like the Doha Dialogue to promote fair recruitment.

Labour migration presents both opportunities and risks for Ethiopia, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania. While governments have taken steps to improve recruitment systems and worker protections, critical gaps remain in enforcement, training, cost regulation, and support services abroad.

Addressing these challenges requires stronger regulatory oversight, enhanced digital systems, and greater international cooperation. By adopting international good practices such as the Philippines' centralized regulation of recruitment agencies through the Philippine Overseas Employment

Administration (POEA) and comprehensive welfare support via the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA); Sri Lanka's zero cost migration policy, which mandates that employers bear all recruitment-related expenses; and Indonesia's One-Channel Placement System, which supports fair government-to-government recruitment, Ethiopia, Uganda, and United Republic of Tanzania can build a more ethical, transparent, and worker-centred migration system that protects migrant rights while contributing to national development.

Introduction

Labour migration is a key driver of economic and social development, facilitating mutually beneficial relationships between labour-sending and labour-receiving countries. Globally, migrant workers account for a significant share of the workforce, particularly in sectors such as domestic work, construction and agriculture.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are approximately 167.7 million migrant workers worldwide, constituting nearly 4.7 per cent of the global workforce[1]. These workers fill labour shortages in destination countries while remittances provide vital financial support to households and national economies in countries of origin. The World Bank estimates that remittances reached $626 billion in 2022, significantly contributing to poverty reduction and household incomes in low- and middle-income countries[2].

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—comprising Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman is among the largest destination regions for migrant workers. Economic expansion in these countries, particularly in infrastructure development and the service sector, has created strong demand for foreign labour. Migrant workers, particularly from Africa and South Asia, form a significant share of this workforce, often undertaking low-paid, labour-intensive jobs. For labour-sending countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania, the GCC provides important employment opportunities, with thousands of workers migrating annually in search of improved livelihoods.[3]

Despite economic opportunities, recruitment processes are often characterized by systemic challenges, including informal recruitment networks, contract substitution, excessive fees, and weak regulatory oversight. In Ethiopia, gaps in enforcement, fraudulent certification processes and reliance on informal intermediaries have contributed to the exploitation of migrant workers[4]. In Uganda, while the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS) has introduced a level of formal oversight, informal recruiters continue to operate, often charging high fees and engaging in deceptive recruitment practices[5]. In Tanzania, limited coordination in migration governance and continued reliance on manual processes leave individuals vulnerable to exploitation.

Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) play a central role as intermediaries between workers and employers, facilitating recruitment, training and placement. However, in all three countries, their effectiveness is constrained by weak regulation, limited public trust and competition from informal actors. Digitalization, improved monitoring mechanisms, and stronger enforcement of labour laws are necessary to promote fair recruitment practices[6].

This report examines the labour migration landscape, regulatory systems, and the role of PrEAs in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. It identifies existing challenges and presents actionable recommendations to strengthen migration governance and protect migrant workers from exploitation.

1 International Labour Organization (ILO), *Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers: Results and Methodology*, 4th Edition, 2024.

2 World Bank, *Migration and Development Brief 37*, 2022.

3 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Labour Migration in East Africa: Trens and Challenges*, 2021

4 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Trafficking in Persons Report: Ethiopia, 2021

5 Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD), Uganda, External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS) Report, 2022.

6 ILO, *Promoting Fair Recruitment Practices in East Africa*, 2022.

Objective and Scope of Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the governance, operations and impact of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania, with a particular focus on their regulatory frameworks, institutional oversight, business practices and contributions to labour migration systems. The study aims to identify strengths and gaps in existing systems, examine the role of PrEAs in fair recruitment, and provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance worker protection, promote fair recruitment practices, and align migration management with national labour market needs. It further seeks to strengthen compliance with international labour standards, including the ILO's General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Convention No. 181 on Private Employment Agencies.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Assess the regulatory mechanisms for licensing, monitoring, and inspecting PrEAs.
2. Identify gaps in compliance with fair recruitment standards and address informal recruitment practices.
3. Examine the role of PrEAs in facilitating migration and safeguarding migrant workers.
4. Recommend strategies to enhance coordination among stakeholders, including government ministries, PrEAs, civil society organizations (CSOs), and international actors.
5. Promote the adoption of best practices and regional collaboration for improved governance of labour migration

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study encompasses the regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms surrounding labour migration in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. These three countries represent diverse migration landscapes and regulatory systems, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving recruitment practices in East Africa.

The study examines the following thematic areas:

1. Governance and Regulatory Frameworks:

- Assessment of the legal and institutional frameworks governing PrEAs, including registration, licensing and inspection mechanisms.
- Evaluation of how these frameworks are implemented in practice, including enforcement capacity, inter-agency coordination and gaps between policy and practice.
- Review of compliance with international labour standards, particularly the ILO's General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Convention No. 181.
- Analysis of formal and informal recruitment practices and their interaction with regulatory structures.

2. Migration Governance:

- Exploration of the role of bilateral labour agreements (BLAs) and their impact on worker protection in destination countries.
- Assessment of institutional coordination among key stakeholders, including government ministries, private recruitment agencies, and civil society organizations.

3. Operational Practices:

- Investigation of informal recruitment networks and their impact on the integrity of migration systems.

- Analysis of the role of digitalization in improving regulatory oversight and reducing fraudulent practices in recruitment processes.

4. Worker Welfare:

- Examination of pre-departure training programmes and their alignment with the demands of destination country labour markets.
- Exploration of mechanisms for addressing grievances and safeguarding migrant workers' rights.
- Stakeholder engagement
- Identification of the roles and contributions of various actors, including government agencies, PrEAs, CSOs, international organizations, and migrant worker associations, in shaping migration governance.

Methodology

Study Design

This assessment employed a qualitative research approach combining a desk review, stakeholder engagement and primary data collection across Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. An inception report was first developed to define the objectives, scope, tools, and target groups for data collection. Following this, the team conducted Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) using a semi-structured tool to explore stakeholder perceptions, institutional frameworks, and the operational realities of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs). Stakeholders included government officials, federation representatives, Civil society organizations (CSOs), and recruitment agencies. Country-specific contexts were taken into account to ensure the relevance and accuracy of findings.

Fieldwork and interviews were complemented by a review of national legislation, bilateral labour agreements (BLAs), and institutional documents, including strategic plans, evaluation reports, and partner assessments. The methodology was adaptive, allowing for real-time incorporation of new insights during data collection. Interview notes were anonymized and coded thematically for synthesis.

Data Collection

The study incorporated four primary data collection methods:

1. Desk Review: A systematic review of policies, laws, and international frameworks provided the contextual foundation for the study. Key documents included:
   - National labour laws and policies governing PrEAs in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania.
   - ILO's General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment
   - Convention No. 181 on Private Employment Agencies.
   - Secondary sources, including government reports, ILO publications, academic research, and migration-related datasets.
2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): A total of 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders across the labour migration ecosystem, including:

   Ethiopia

   - Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS): Overseas Employment Department; Training Provisions and Development, Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS).
   - Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)
   - Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation Private Recruitment Agencies representatives (four)

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Confederation of Ethiopian Employers Federation (CEEF)
- Confederation of Ethiopian Employers Association (CEEA)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) Ethiopia

Uganda

- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), External Employment Unit, Returnees and Reintegration Department
- Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA)
- Private recruitment sector expert (consultant affiliated with UAERA and Guardian)
- External Labour Agencies Uganda (ELAU)
- Managing Director, private recruitment company
- Platform for Labour Action (PLA)
- Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE)
- National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU)
- Uganda Labour Attaché in Saudi Arabia

Tanzania

- Employment Services Unit (ESU)
- Ministry of Labour and Investments, Zanzibar
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Prime Minister's Office - Labour, Employment and Relations
- Licensing Department, Dodoma
- Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (TUCTA)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Tanzania Recruitment Agencies Association (TRAA)

The interviews explored:

- The effectiveness of PrEA licensing and inspection mechanisms.
- Challenges in enforcing fair recruitment practices.
- The impact of informal recruitment networks.
- The role of digitalization in migration governance.

3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): FGDs provided insights into the practical realities faced by stakeholders:

   - In Ethiopia, FGDs with returnees documented experiences with recruitment, pre-departure training, and employment abroad, highlighting vulnerabilities such as contract substitution, high recruitment fees, and weak grievance mechanisms.
   - In Tanzania, FGDs with PrEAs explored their perspectives on regulatory frameworks, compliance challenges, and their role in promoting fair recruitment.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted thematically, using a coding framework aligned with the study's objectives. Emerging themes were triangulated across countries to identify both context-specific insights and cross-cutting regional challenges. Where possible, findings from primary data were cross-referenced with secondary sources to strengthen validity.

This approach enabled a comprehensive and balanced evaluation of the role of PrEAs in labour migration, highlighting regulatory gaps, operational bottlenecks, informal dynamics and business environment constraints.

Limitations

- Data Availability
  Inconsistent record-keeping by some government agencies and PrEAs limited access to complete datasets.
- Stakeholder Participation
  Logistical and scheduling constraints affected participation in KIIs and FGDs, particularly among migrant worker groups in remote areas.
- Variations Across Countries
  Differences in regulatory frameworks, levels of digitalization, and enforcement capacity posed challenges in making direct comparisons between Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Despite these limitations, the study employed a robust methodological framework to ensure data reliability and validity of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to international ethical research standards:

- Informed Consent: Participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives, and their consent was obtained prior to participation.
- Confidentiality: All data were anonymized to protect participant identities.
- Voluntary Participation: Stakeholders participated voluntarily and could withdraw at any stage without consequence.

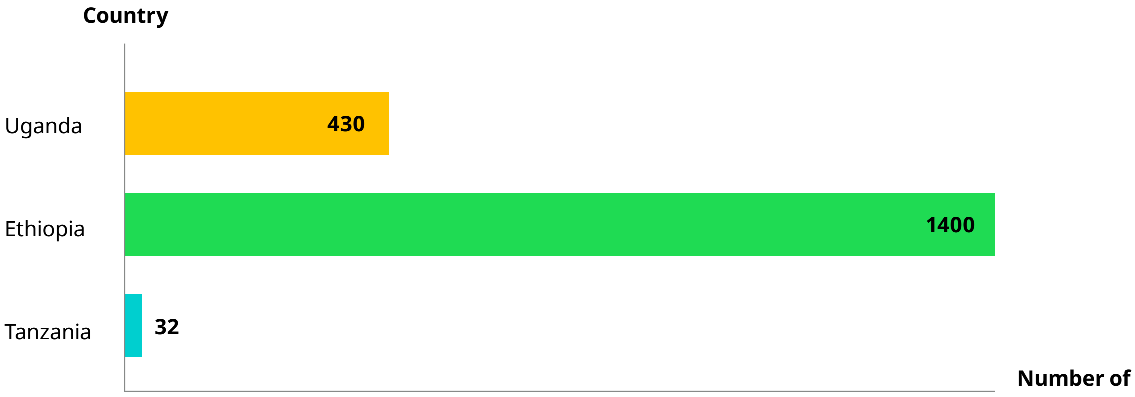
These measures ensured that the study was conducted with transparency, fairness, and respect for all participants.

2

Overview of PrEAs, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda

Labour migration is a growing sector in East Africa, facilitated primarily through Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs). While regulatory systems differ across Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, the core business model of PrEAs involves sourcing, screening and placing workers—typically women—in domestic or care-related jobs in Gulf countries.

Between 2016 and April 2025, Uganda deployed 311,657 workers abroad, of whom 84 per cent(263,672) were women, predominantly placed in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Saudi Arabia alone accounted for over 254,000 deployments during this period, with additional flows to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar.



Number of Licensed Private Employment Agencies in East Africa

Ugandan PrEAs operate on a commission-based model, earning revenue from placement fees paid by foreign employers. Agencies are responsible for vetting job offers, training candidates (typically via in-house or partner training centres), and processing medical, visa and travel requirements. The External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS) serves as the digital backbone for verifying job orders and agency licensing.

Ethiopia has licensed approximately 1,400 PrEAs, of which only 300 – 400 are active in overseas labour recruitment. In 2022 alone, it is estimated that around 38,000 workers primarily young women were deployed to countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar for domestic work. Ethiopia's Labour Migrant Information System (E-LMIS) provides a digital platform to register workers, vet contracts and issue biometric labour IDs, although access to post-deployment monitoring data remains limited.

Ethiopian PrEAs typically operate as small- to medium-sized enterprises, many of which lack regional offices and depend heavily on informal agents (Delalas) to recruit workers from rural areas.

Tanzania has the smallest formal deployment system among the three countries. As of 2023, there are only 32 licensed PrEAs, most of which are located in Dar es Salaam. While there is no official deployment registry, qualitative inputs suggest that only a few thousand workers are placed abroad each year, mostly in Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar.

Tanzanian PrEAs operate within a relatively low-regulation environment, with no requirement for security bonds or standardised pre-departure training. Most workers are recruited through informal agents (commonly referred to as "Bubu", who dominate recruitment in rural and peri-urban areas and are reported to charge fees to workers, despite national regulations. The Labour Market Information System (LMIS) is under development but is not yet used to track job orders or worker flows.

Uganda

Contextual Background

Uganda has witnessed a substantial rise in labour migration, particularly to the Middle East, over the past decade. This trend is driven by high unemployment rates, limited domestic economic opportunities, and growing demand for foreign labour in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman[7]. The majority of Ugandan migrant workers are employed in domestic work, construction and security services.

Between 2018 and 2022, Uganda facilitated the migration of approximately 227,457 workers to various countries[8], with the Middle East as the primary destination. Official records further indicate that between 2016 and 2018 alone, 31,859 Ugandans migrated to the Middle East for employment. Remittances from these workers play a significant role in Uganda's economy, contributing nearly US$1 billion annually.

Despite these economic benefits, Ugandan migrant workers face significant risks, including exploitative working conditions and forced labour[9]. Studies indicate that a considerable proportion of Ugandan migrants in the Middle East experience contract substitution, underpayment, excessive working hours and even physical abuse[10].

Private Recruitment Agencies and Legal Framework

According to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), Uganda has registered 430 Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), of which 320 are currently active[11]. These agencies play a central role in facilitating employment opportunities for Ugandan workers abroad, particularly in the Middle East.

The regulatory framework governing PrEAs in Uganda is primarily set out in the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021. These regulations outline licensing procedures, inspection protocols, accreditation of foreign recruitment agencies, recruitment processes, advertising guidelines, fee structures, and pre-departure orientation and training requirements. A notable provision is the four-party employment contract, which establishes joint accountability between Ugandan and foreign recruitment agencies to joint accountability, thereby strengthening protections for migrant workers.

To enhance oversight and streamline operations, the MGLSD introduced the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS), an online platform that facilitates monitoring of Ugandans working abroad. EEMIS provides a list of approved and vetted companies and job opportunities, thereby promoting transparency and supporting prospective migrant workers in making informed decisions.

However, while the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021, remain the central legal framework, they have not been updated to reflect recent developments, most notably, the introduction of EEMIS. Although EEMIS is widely used for licensing renewals and compliance monitoring, it is not formally referenced or embedded within the current regulations. This gap has created implementation challenges, confusion, and uncertainty among stakeholders, particularly regarding the system's legal status and standard operating procedures. Recruitment agencies and government officials have called for amendments to the regulations, and several multi-stakeholder consultations have been conducted to review and revise the guidelines to better reflect the digital tools and the evolving operational context[12].

7 **ILO (2023).** Labour Migration in East Africa. Available at: ilo.org

8 **Afrobarometer (2024).** Migration & Employment Trends in Uganda. Available at: afrobarometer.org
Government of Uganda (2020). Labour Migration Report. Available at: mglsd.go.ug

9 **GAATW (2022).** Uganda Country Report on Migrant Labour. Available at: gaatw.org

10 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs. *Ugandan Labor Migrants to the Middle East*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor. Available at: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/reports/Uganda-FL-Labor-Report-FINAL-508.pdf

11 Senior Labour Officer, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Kampala, Uganda, 23 January 2025

12 Managing Director, Jerusalem Recruitment, Kampala, Uganda May 2025

Stakeholders consistently emphasized that without formal legal anchoring, EEMIS remains vulnerable to inconsistent application. Amendments to the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021 are therefore required to formally embed EEMIS, define mandatory digital compliance standards, and establish system-wide Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Legal Instrument	Key Provisions
Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021	Regulates PrEAs, including licensing, fees, worker protection measures, and bilateral labour agreements.
Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (PTIP) Act, 2009	Criminalizes all forms of human trafficking, with penalties up to 15 years' imprisonment. Establishes the Coordination Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP).
Immigration and Citizenship Control Act	Regulates immigration, visas, and border control. Implemented by the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC).
Children's Act (Amended 2016)	Prohibits the exploitation of children in migration-related employment.
Labour Unions Act, 2006	Supports worker representation and protection against unfair treatment in employment abroad.

In Uganda, the regulation of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) is governed by the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021, under the oversight of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). These regulations establish a comprehensive framework for the registration, licensing, and inspection of PrEAs to promote fair recruitment practices and protect migrant workers.

Registration and Licensing

Prospective PrEAs must first register as legal business entities with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB). This process includes name reservation, submission of incorporation documents, and obtaining a certificate of incorporation. Following incorporation, the agency submits an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the MGLSD, accompanied by a non-refundable fee of UGX 100,000. The application must include detailed information such as the company profile, directors' credentials, audited financial statements and a bank guarantee of UGX 100 million to ensure financial accountability. The External Security Organisation (ESO) conducts background checks on directors to verify their integrity and compliance with legal requirements. A pre-licensing inspection is then carried out by MGLSD officials to assess the agency's physical premises and ensure compliance with operational standards. Upon satisfactory completion of these steps, the MGLSD grants a two-year renewable license, authorizing the agency to recruit and place Ugandan workers abroad.

Inspection

To maintain compliance and uphold recruitment standards, the MGLSD's External Employment Unit (EEU) is mandated to regularly inspect licensed PrEAs. These inspections monitor adherence to the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021, and assess the protection of migrant workers. Inspections may be scheduled or unannounced and typically involve a review of agency records, recruitment practices and facilities. Inspectors assess the accuracy of documentation, transparency of recruitment processes, and adequacy of pre-departure orientation programmes. Agencies found to be in violation of the regulations may face penalties such as suspension or revocation of their licenses.

Type of Inspection	Purpose	Frequency	Scope
Routine Inspections	To regularly assess PrEAs' compliance with the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021.	Since 2020 carried out annually during license renewal	Evaluates agency operations, record-keeping, recruitment practices, and facilities to ensure compliance with regulatory standards.
Spot Inspections	To promptly investigate specific complaints or reports of violations against a PrEA.	Carried out as needed, without prior notice.	Focuses on particular areas of concern highlighted in complaints, such as unfair and unethical recruitment practices or failure to adhere to contractual obligations.
Pre-Licensing Inspections	To assess the readiness and suitability of an agency's facilities and operations before granting an operating license.	Conducted once, prior to the issuance of a license.	Examines the physical premises, safety measures, staffing, and other operational aspects to ensure compliance with regulatory standards.
Change of Premises Inspections	To verify the suitability of new premises when a PrEA relocates or opens a branch.	Conducted whenever an agency changes its location or establishes a new branch.	Assess the new premises to ensure they meet the required standards for operation.

Analysis of the Business Environment of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) in Uganda

Financial Realities

Ugandan PrEAs operate under significant financial constraints. To obtain a license, agencies are required to submit a security bond of UGX 100 million (approximately USD 27,000), which constitutes a substantial barrier for smaller operators. Beyond this, agencies incur ongoing expenses, including office rent, staff salaries, compliance with digital systems such as the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS), and costs associated with pre-departure training and documentation processing.

Revenue streams for PrEAs primarily derive from commissions paid by foreign employers. However, delays and inconsistencies in these payments often compel agencies to charge additional fees to migrant workers, despite legal prohibitions. Access to affordable credit remains limited, as financial institutions often perceive recruitment agencies as high-risk ventures, thereby hindering their ability to scale operations or invest in necessary infrastructure.

Operational Realities

The operational landscape for PrEAs in Uganda is complex. Agencies must navigate multiple regulatory requirements, including regular inspections by the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD), adherence to licensing protocols, and meticulous reporting through systems such as EEMIS. Coordination with foreign partners to secure job orders and process accreditation documents adds another layer of complexity.

The Issue of the $30 Fee

Under Uganda's Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021, foreign recruitment agencies are required to pay a fee of $30 for each job vacancy submitted for approval. While this fee is intended to cover administrative costs, many Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) report that it has become a financial burden, particularly when processing large volumes of job orders. The cumulative effect of this fee can be especially challenging for smaller agencies operating on tight margins. Stakeholders have called for a review of this fee structure to ensure alignment with the operational realities of recruitment agencies and to avoid constraining their capacity to facilitate employment opportunities for Ugandan migrant workers.[13]

13 Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021.

Pre-departure training, mandated to last 14 days, is frequently condensed due to cost and logistical challenges. The dual responsibility of training and recruitment, particularly where a significant number of certified training centres are agency-owned, can lead to operational inefficiencies and potential conflicts of interest.

Digitalization efforts, while intended to streamline processes, have introduced new challenges. Agencies report that systems such as EEMIS are not user-friendly and are subject to frequent downtime, disproportionately affecting smaller agencies with limited technological capabilities.

Stakeholders further noted that cumulative regulatory fees, including the $30 job order fee, have a disproportionate impact on smaller agencies and may indirectly incentivise cost-shifting to workers.

Competitive Realities

The recruitment sector in Uganda is highly competitive, with over 430 licensed PrEAs. However, only approximately 150 are currently active, of which around 50 are actively deploying workers. Larger agencies, with established networks and capital reserves, dominate the market, particularly in high-demand corridors such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Smaller agencies often act as sub-agents or brokers, limiting their revenue potential and increasing regulatory risks.

A significant competitive disadvantage for Ugandan PrEAs is the higher cost of deploying labour migrants compared to neighbouring countries. For instance, deploying a worker from Uganda to Gulf countries costs approximately $1,100, whereas the cost from Ethiopia, is around USD 700. This disparity is largely attributable to higher airfare costs from Uganda, as Ethiopia benefits from its state-owned carrier, Ethiopian Airlines, which offers more competitive and direct flight options to the Gulf region[14].

Informal Intermediaries and Brokers

Uganda's labour migration sector is heavily influenced by informal intermediaries, commonly referred to as brokers, who operate outside the regulatory framework established by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). While Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) are legally mandated to facilitate the recruitment of Ugandan workers for foreign employment, many migrant workers continue to rely on informal intermediaries due to ease of access, lower costs, and a lack of awareness of formal recruitment processes. Brokers, who often operate through word-of-mouth networks, frequently make misleading promises regarding job placements abroad, bypass formal recruitment procedures and expose migrant workers to a high risk of exploitation.

In addition to facilitating irregular migration, brokers charge exorbitant and undocumented recruitment fees, further indebting migrants prior to departure. In some cases, brokers operate in collaboration with licensed PrEAs, referring workers and receiving a share of recruitment fees. However, this informal structure creates significant monitoring gaps, making it difficult for authorities to hold actors accountable when abuses occur.

A growing concern is the involvement of travel and tourism agencies in unethical recruitment. Some agencies falsely advertise services as tour packages while facilitating labour migration. The Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) licenses travel agencies; however, many are not vetted for recruitment-related activities. The MGLSD has identified numerous unlicensed travel agencies engaging in illegal recruitment and has initiated collaboration with the Uganda Tourism Board to strengthen oversight. Nonetheless, the scale of unlicensed actors continues to pose enforcement challenges.

14 "Who is benefiting from maids export?" *Daily Monitor*, April 2023

Procedural Overview of Migrant Worker Deployment

Uganda's labour migration process is a multi-step procedure involving government ministries, private recruitment agencies, and regulatory frameworks designed to ensure that migrant workers are deployed legally and under safe and fair conditions. The process aims to minimize risks, prevent exploitation and ensure that workers are placed in decent jobs abroad. However, challenges remain in ensuring full compliance with fair recruitment standards.

The migration process begins with job order approval and accreditation of foreign employers. Before a recruitment agency in Uganda can facilitate labour migration, the foreign employer must be registered and licensed in the destination country. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, this process is conducted through platforms like Musaned, which was initially designed for domestic workers but has recently expanded to cover multiple job categories[15]. The foreign employer must partner with a Private Employment Agency (PrEA) in Uganda. The PrEA is responsible for submitting accreditation documents, including a partnership agreement, an employer license, and a demand note specifying the number of workers required. The job order is verified by the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) and the Ugandan Embassy in the destination country. Upon meeting all regulatory requirements, the employer is issued a certificate of accreditation, allowing recruitment to proceed.

Once a foreign employer is accredited, the recruitment and pre-departure process is initiated. PrEAs select candidates in line with the employer's specifications, ensuring that they meet required qualifications, experience and health standards. Selected workers must provide valid identification, medical clearance certificates, and police background checks before proceeding. One of the key steps in the process is mandatory pre-departure training, which varies depending on the type of employment.

After training, the final job order processing takes place through the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS). The PrEA submits the list of selected workers, and a departure fee of $30 per worker is paid to the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA). Following this, four-party contracts are signed between the worker, the foreign employer, the Ugandan PrEA, and the foreign PrEA (where applicable). Once the employment contracts are verified, work visas are processed by the foreign employer, completing the documentation necessary for departure.

The exit process is coordinated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA), which verifies migrant workers at Uganda's main international airports. Immigration officers at airport departure points check EEMIS records to confirm whether a worker is properly registered. Only individuals listed in EEMIS are permitted to travel, reducing the risk of human trafficking and unauthorized recruitment. However, there have been cases of collusion between brokers and airport staff, allowing undocumented workers to leave without proper clearance.[16]

The removal of the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development's (MGLSD) desk at Entebbe International Airport has raised concerns about increased risks of human trafficking. Previously, this desk played a crucial role in verifying and clearing Ugandan migrant workers prior to departure. Its removal, as part of efforts to streamline airport operations, has led to concerns that the absence of this dedicated oversight may create vulnerabilities that traffickers could exploit. While the Immigration Department has assumed responsibility for these functions, stakeholders emphasize the importance of specialized oversight of labour migration processes. The Government has recognized these concerns and has taken steps to strengthen anti-trafficking measures, including specialized training for airport officials. Additionally, partnering with several NGOs to provide temporary shelter and support to trafficking victims.[17]

Repatriation is often complicated by exit visa restrictions in some destination countries. Migrant workers seeking to return home may face legal and financial obstacles, particularly where passports have been

---

15 Saudi Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSD), Musaned: A Unified Platform for Domestic Worker Recruitment, accessed February 2024, https://musaned.com.sa.

16 Labour Officer, MGLSD, Interviewed January 2025

17 Uganda Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (UCATIP). *Directory of Service Providers for Victims of Trafficking in Persons in Uganda*. Developed in partnership with the Coordinating Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP), Ministry of Internal Affairs. A full list of shelter providers, including locations and services offered, is available at: https://directory.ucatip.org/listing_category/shelters/

confiscated or where contractual disputes arise. In Saudi Arabia, an employer must pay a fine of UGX 5 million if a worker's passport[18] is withheld beyond the agreed employment period. In severe cases involving mistreatment or trafficking, diplomatic intervention may be required, including emergency evacuation coordinated by Ugandan authorities. While Uganda has established a structured migration process, several gaps remain, including delays in job order approvals, logistical inefficiencies, and weak support systems in destination countries.

Case Study: Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia remains the largest destination for Ugandan migrant workers, particularly in domestic work, cleaning services and hospitality. While Uganda has established a formal recruitment process through Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), a significant number of workers continue to migrate without formal proper contracts, exposing them to exploitation, abuse and wage theft.

The recruitment process in Saudi Arabia operates through multiple channels, including large recruitment companies, smaller agencies, and informal intermediaries, each offering varying levels of oversight and worker protection.

In many cases, particularly for domestic workers, migrants are first housed in recruitment company accommodation before being assigned to a household. Large recruitment companies in Saudi Arabia operate worker housing facilities where workers may remain for days or weeks pending placement. While these facilities serve as transitional spaces, workers frequently report overcrowding, prolonged waiting periods, and unclear placement procedures. It was reported that some facilities can accommodate up to 300 workers awaiting placement, particularly during peak periods such as Ramadan[19].

A significant challenge arises when workers migrate outside formal recruitment channels. Many migrants rely on brokers who facilitate travel under misleading promises of better wages or improved working conditions. These workers arrive on visit visas or under unverified contracts, making them highly vulnerable to exploitation, contract substitution and trafficking. Once in Saudi Arabia, they are frequently absorbed into informal recruitment systems, where oversight is minimal. Without legal protections, these workers face heightened risks of abuse, non-payment of wages, and limited access to support services.

Uganda has limited monitoring mechanisms to protect its workers in Saudi Arabia. While the Ugandan Embassy operates a complaints call centre known as Esafe, its capacity is constrained by the high number of migrant workers and limited diplomatic staff. Additionally, Uganda has only one labour attaché based in Saudi Arabia, limiting its ability to provide effective intervention and support to the thousands of Ugandan workers in distress. The Esafe platform, managed by Uganda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), enables workers to report grievances online. However, its effectiveness is constrained by limited awareness among migrants and barriers to digital access.

Pre-departure Training

Pre-departure training is a mandatory requirement for all Ugandan workers migrating abroad through licensed Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs). The training is intended to equip workers with essential job skills, knowledge of labour laws, workplace rights, and cultural adaptation strategies for their destination countries. Under the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021, pre-departure training is required to last for 14 days, ensuring that workers receive adequate preparation prior to departure. However, several critical gaps undermine its effectiveness.

One of the key issues is the conflict of interest in the management of training centres. According to MGLSD, there are 65 accredited centres; however, many are directly owned and operated by recruitment agencies, resulting in limited independent oversight and quality assurance. PrEAs, whose primary objective is to facilitate recruitment and placement, may prioritize cost-cutting and rapid deployment over training quality. This arrangement compromises the integrity of the training process, as agencies effectively regulate their own training process, as agencies effectively regulate their own training

18 Ugandan Labour Attache, Saudi Arabia, Interviewed on 6 February 2025

19 Ugandan Labour Attache, Saudi Arabia, Interviewed on 6 February 2025

provision. Although the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) is responsible for inspection and accreditation, limited resources and capacity constraints restrict effective oversight. Consequently, many training centres operate with inconsistent curricula, inadequate facilities and insufficient instructional quality.

While the Regulations permit recruitment agencies to operate accredited training centres, oversight remains fragmented across departments within MGLSD, resulting in inconsistent enforcement. The primary challenge is therefore operational, relating to curriculum standardization, inspection frequency and certification, rather than a policy gap.

Another major issue concerns the cost of pre-departure training. Stakeholders indicate that training costs between UGX 100,000 and 120,000 per worker. Given the 14-day requirement, this amount is insufficient to cover quality training delivery. As a result, many centres reduce the training duration to two or three days while still charging the full fee. This practice significantly undermines training quality and leaves workers inadequately prepared. Workers who lack proper orientation are more vulnerable to contract violations, exploitative working conditions and cultural misunderstandings in destination countries.

Additionally, there is no standardised monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with the 14-day requirement. The absence of routine inspections by the MGLSD allows agencies to shorten training duration and compromise content quality. Many workers report receiving rushed and inadequate training, with limited coverage of critical topics such as workers' rights, contractual obligations, and grievance mechanisms.

Costs of Recruitment

The recruitment process for Ugandan migrant workers has undergone significant changes, particularly in relation to the financial costs borne by Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) and workers. Historically, PrEAs received approximately USD 1,100 per recruited worker from foreign employers. This amount covered expenses such as medical examinations, passport processing, airfare and other deployment-related costs. However, due to increased competition from other labour-sending countries, this fee has declined to approximately USD 700. This reduction has placed financial pressure on PrEAs, resulting in a shift of costs onto migrant workers, who often rely on loans or asset sales to finance migration.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) stipulates, under its General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, that workers should not be charged directly or indirectly for recruitment-related costs. This principle is designed to prevent exploitation and protect workers from falling into debt bondage.

Despite this standard, many Ugandan migrant workers continue to incur significant expenses, including costs for medical tests, training, visa processing, and travel. As a result, workers frequently incur debt prior to departure, increasing vulnerability to exploitation and forced labour.

The Government of Uganda has recognized these challenges. Under the 2021 Regulations, migrant domestic workers are exempted from paying recruitment fees, with costs to be covered by foreign recruitment agencies. However, a prior directive continues to permit a standard fee of UGX 50,000 (approximately USD 13).

What the 2021 Regulations say

Under the 2021 Regulations, where a Ugandan recruitment agency is paid fees by a foreign recruitment agency, the Ugandan agency shall not charge any migrant worker any fee. In other words, if the foreign employer covers costs, the worker pays nothing.

What the older directive still permits

A directive that predates the updated recruitment regulations still allows domestic workers to be charged a standard fee of UGX 50,000 (approximately USD 13). This older directive was never formally revoked when the 2021 Regulations came into force, creating a direct conflict.

A further complication within the 2021 Regulations themselves

The 2021 Regulations allow agencies to charge a standard administrative fee of up to UGX 20,000 (USD 6), or "recruitment and placement" fees with no ceiling, but these should be approved by the Ministry and not paid by the worker until the employment contract is signed. This vagueness compounds the problem.

The ILO's Global Study on Recruitment Fees and Related Costs highlights that about 20 per cent of forced labour cases stem from debt bondage, often linked to recruitment fees and related costs. Migrant workers reported that they often sell assets like land or borrow funds to finance migration. In some cases, workers also pay for travel costs and subsequently repay recruitment agencies through deductions from their earnings. One respondent reported:

"I have so far paid UGX 10,000,000 (USD 2500) to someone who was helping me get a job in Dubai, and yet I am still in Uganda one year later."

Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements: Uganda has made significant strides in formalizing labour migration through Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs). As of November 2024, the country has signed agreements with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The agreement with Jordan was previously suspended due to complaints and reported mismanagement of migrant workers, but was reinstated in 2022, although it remains non-operational.

Uganda has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Arab Emirates. In addition, draft agreements are currently under preparation with the governments of Oman and Kuwait.

Additionally, efforts are underway to explore employment opportunities for skilled Ugandan workers in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Poland, and Germany.

In Uganda, the development of Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) has involved varying degrees of stakeholder engagement. During negotiations for the BLA with Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) engaged key stakeholders, including the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE), the National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU), the Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA), and the Platform for Labour Action (PLA) in reviewing and providing input on the draft agreement. However, stakeholders reported that, despite their participation in the drafting phase, they often do not receive access to the finalized agreements. This lack of transparency limits their ability to monitor implementation effectively and advocate for the rights and welfare of Ugandan migrant workers.

Furthermore, stakeholder engagement appears to have been limited primarily to the Saudi Arabia BLA. For other BLAs and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) entered into by Uganda, stakeholders have not been consistently involved in the review process. This inconsistent approach to participation may affect the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of these agreements in safeguarding migrant workers' rights.

Complaints Handling

Prior to recent reforms, the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) handled complaints from migrant workers primarily through in-person procedures. Aggrieved individuals were required to submit written complaints directly to the Ministry, as outlined in the Employment (Recruitment of Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021. Upon receiving a complaint, the Ministry would summon both the complainant and the implicated recruitment agency in an attempt to resolve the issue. If mediation failed, complainants were advised to seek redress through the courts.

While structured, this process was often cumbersome and time-consuming, potentially delaying timely interventions for distressed workers.

According to an official at the ministry, up to 50 complaints may be received in a single day, highlighting the pressure on existing complaint-handling mechanisms.

Recognizing these limitations, MGLSD has taken steps to modernize its complaints management system. In August 2024, the ministry launched a digital complaints mechanism, including a helpline and mobile platform. While operational, uptake remains limited due to low awareness and trust among migrant workers, highlighting the need for sustained outreach and regular multi-stakeholder review mechanisms. Despite these improvements, the system has not yet been sufficient to address the scale of complaints, partly due to limited coordination with other stakeholders and the absence of clear enforcement protocols. Uganda's missions in destination countries continue to receive more than 10 complaints daily, indicating ongoing systemic challenges. Summary of Gaps Identified

Identified Gaps	Description
Limited Oversight in PrEAs' Training Centers	Training centres are owned and operated by PrEAs, creating potential conflicts of interest and limiting independent oversight. This arrangement may reduce the quality and effectiveness of training provided to prospective migrant workers.
High Recruitment Costs for Migrant Workers	The reduction in recruitment fees paid to PrEAs by foreign employers has shifted costs to migrant workers. This has increased the financial burden on workers and may expose them to debt bondage and other forms of exploitation.
Weak Monitoring of Informal Intermediaries and Intermediaries	Informal intermediaries and travel agencies continue to facilitate irregular migration outside regulatory frameworks. This practice bypasses formal oversight mechanisms and increases the risk of exploitation and trafficking.
Inadequate Pre-Departure Training Quality	Although pre-departure training is intended to last 14 days, it is frequently shortened to two or three days due to cost constraints. As a result, migrant workers may depart without adequate preparation for employment and living conditions abroad.
Lack of Access and Consultation on BLAs for Stakeholders	Stakeholder consultation has largely been limited to the Bilateral Labour Agreement (BLA) with Saudi Arabia. In many cases, stakeholders are not provided with access to finalised agreements, reducing their ability to monitor implementation.
Limited Monitoring of Migrants in Destination Countries	Uganda has limited mechanisms to track and support migrant workers in key destination countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman, where reports of exploitation remain common.
Challenges in Complaint Resolution Mechanisms	The MGLSD's complaint-handling process has been slow and inefficient, but improvements like the helpline and mobile app are underway.
Lack of Standardised Recruitment Fees	Workers are often charged recruitment fees despite ILO guidelines prohibiting such practices, making them vulnerable to forced labour conditions.
Removal of MGLSD Airport Desk Increasing Trafficking Risk	The removal of the MGLSD desk at Entebbe Airport has reduced verification procedures, increasing the risk of human trafficking.
Limited Number of Labour Attachés in Destination Countries	Uganda currently has only one labour attaché posted in Saudi Arabia, which limits the country's capacity to effectively monitor labour conditions and intervene in cases involving migrant workers.
Inadequate Inspection of PrEAs Due to Limited Resources at MGLSD	MGLSD lacks sufficient resources and personnel (with only two officers mandated to carry out inspections) to conduct regular inspections of PrEAs, resulting in weak enforcement of recruitment regulations.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Description / Tasks	Responsible Stakeholder(s)	Timeframe
Amend Regulations to Institutionalize Digital Compliance	▶ Explicitly reference EEMIS in law ▶ Mandate use by PrEAs, Immigration, Police, Embassies, and COPTIP ▶ Establish SOPs for job orders, inspections, complaints, exits, and returns		
Strengthen Oversight and Enforcement of PrEAs through Structured Inspections	Develop a national inspection framework for Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) that includes a mandatory minimum of two unannounced inspections and one scheduled audit per year for each agency. Expansion of the External Employment Unit (EEU) with at least 12–15 dedicated compliance officers to meet international inspector-to-agency standards. Introduction of a digital inspection dashboard within EEMIS to track inspection dates, outcomes and follow-up actions. Implementation of graded enforcement measures, including suspension of licenses, financial penalties and mandatory corrective action plans for non-compliant PrEAs.	MGLSD, External Employment Unit (EEU)	Short-term
Crack Down on Tour and Travel Agencies Conducting Illegal Recruitment	Publish a blacklist of tour and travel companies identified as engaging in unlawful recruitment, using intelligence gathered from PrEAs and victims. Mandate the Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA) to report suspected illegal recruiters on a quarterly basis. Amend relevant regulations to criminalize unauthorized labour exportation under the Penal Code and the Employment Regulations. Additionally: ▶ Integrate reporting of brokers, tour agencies and informal intermediaries into EEMIS ▶ Enable public reporting mechanisms with whistle-blower protections ▶ Establish automatic referral of reported cases to the Police, DCIC and COPTIP through EEMIS.	MGLSD, COPTIP, UAERA, Parliament	Short-term
Institutionalize Multi-Stakeholder Review of Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)	Establish a standing BLA Technical Committee comprising representatives from MGLSD, PrEAs, trade unions, legal experts, civil society organisations (CSOs), and migrant returnee representatives. Require all new BLAs to undergo review by the committee prior to signature. Publish all finalized BLAs on the MGLSD website and through EEMIS for public accountability. Priortize the operationalization of existing BLAs, including those with Qatar and Jordan.	MGLSD, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Social Partners	Medium-term
Strengthen Labour Attaché Deployment and Formalize MGLSD–MOFA Coordination Mechanisms	Formalize inter-ministerial coordination between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) through jointly approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing referrals of migrant worker cases, case management procedures, information-sharing protocols, and escalation mechanisms for labour migration disputes. Clarify institutional roles whereby MGLSD formally requests the deployment of Labour Attachés, while MOFA oversees their posting, supervision and integration within Uganda's missions abroad. Deploy Labour Attachés to priority destination countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, in addition to the existing attaché in Saudi Arabia, subject to requests from MGLSD and approval by MOFA . Establish dedicated labour migration focal points or desks within embassies to coordinate contract monitoring, liaise with Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) on dispute resolution, and document embassy interventions. Ensure that embassies have structured access to the EEMIS Complaints Mechanism and Mobile Application (launched in August 2025) and that embassy-level case data are integrated into EEMIS to support coordinated follow-up, accountability and reporting.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MGLSD, Embassies	Medium-term

Recommendation	Description / Tasks	Responsible Stakeholder(s)	Timeframe
Standardise and Strengthen Quality Assurance of Pre-Departure Training	Enforce the government-accredited standard pre-departure training curriculum that all licensed PrEAs and independent providers must adopt. Introduce third-party assessment and certification of the 14-day training curriculum, supported by biometric attendance verification and digital training logs integrated into EEMIS. Clarify internal MGLSD responsibilities to ensure that a single accountable department overseas inspection and accreditation of training centres.	MGLSD, Accredited Training Providers	Short-term
Establish a Centralized Worker Complaints and Repatriation System	Replace ad hoc emergency funding with a structured protection framework combining: (i) mandatory migrant worker insurance covering repatriation, medical emergencies, and wage non-payment; (ii) ring-fencing a portion of existing PrEA bank guarantees for emergency repatriation; and (iii) clear governance arrangements under MGLSD with appropriate audit oversight.	MGLSD, PrEAs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Medium-term
Strengthen Joint Pre-Departure Screening at Entebbe Airport	Reintroduce the MGLSD migration desk to verify migrant worker documentation prior to departure, where feasible. Establish a joint task force of MGLSD, DCIC, and the Uganda Police Force to screen high-risk or unregistered passengers flagged in EEMIS.	MGLSD, DCIC, Police	Short-term
Introduce a Digital Wage Monitoring System for Deployed Workers	Partner with telecommunications such as MTN and Airtel to introduce a mobile wage payment and monitoring system. Require PrEAs to pre-enrol migrant workers on the platform to record wage payments, flag payment delays, and enable digital complaint submission.	MGLSD, MTN, Airtel, PrEAs	Medium-term
Diversify Migration Destinations and Build PrEA Capacity	Identify labour market opportunities in Europe and Asia and negotiate BLAs in semi-skilled and high-skilled sectors. Certify only PrEAs with demonstrated capacity and verified job orders to recruit for these sectors. Strengthen collaboration between Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions and PrEAs to create skills-to-employment pipelines.	MGLSD, TVET Institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Long-term
Launch National Public Awareness Campaigns and Broker Regulation	Conduct targeted national awareness campaigns highlighting the risks of unlicensed brokers, the importance of verifying PrEA registration through EEMIS, and migrant workers' rights. Require PrEAs to formally register brokers they engage with and submit quarterly updates to MGLSD. Establish a public EEMIS registry of authorized brokers, including real-time blacklisting for regulatory violations.	MGLSD, District Labour Officers, CSOs	Short-term

Stakeholders also highlighted ongoing policy discussions regarding whether Uganda should continue regulating labour externalization through subsidiary regulations or adopt a standalone labour migration law. Several stakeholders noted the need to establish a dedicated directorate or department within MGLSD to better reflect the scale and complexity of external employment governance.

Ethiopia

Contextual Background

Ethiopia has experienced significant growth in labour migration over the past decade, with many of its citizens seeking employment opportunities abroad, particularly in the Middle East. The primary destination countries for Ethiopian migrant workers include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait and Lebanon. Labour migration is largely driven by economic factors, including high unemployment, limited domestic employment opportunities, and aspirations for improved livelihoods.

Between 2018 and 2023, more than 839,000 Ethiopians migrated for employment abroad, with Saudi Arabia hosting approximately 31 per cent of these workers[20]. Most Ethiopian migrants are young, typically aged between 15 and 29 years, and are primarily employed in domestic work, security services and construction.[21] Remittances generated through labour migration form a significant component of Ethiopia's economy, with the country receiving over US$5 billion annually, representing approximately 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), according to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the National Bank of Ethiopia. Ethiopia is the largest recipient of remittances within the IGAD region, and the growth in these inflows has been substantial, increasing more than fifty-fold over the past two decades. These remittances provide critical support to household incomes and contribute to strengthening the country's foreign exchange reserves.

In response to these challenges, the Ethiopian government has taken steps to strengthen regulation of labour migration, including lifting previous migration bans, introducing revised licensing procedures for recruitment agencies, and implementing mandatory pre-departure training programmes.

The government has also introduced digital governance tools such as the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS)[22] to enhance transparency in recruitment and job placement processes. Despite these initiatives, significant gaps remain in enforcement capacity, monitoring mechanisms, and the protection of migrant workers' rights.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

The Ethiopian government has strengthened its legal framework governing overseas employment through the enactment of **Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1389/2025**[23] which repeals and replaces Proclamation No. 923/2016 and its subsequent amendments. The new proclamation consolidates regulatory provisions governing overseas employment, strengthens state oversight, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs), training institutions, and relevant government authorities.

Proclamation No. 1389/2025 introduces stricter compliance requirements, enhanced inspection powers, clearer sanctions for non-compliance, and strengthened safeguards for migrant workers, including provisions relating to contract verification, recruitment cost regulation and employer accountability. The proclamation also formally embeds digital systems, particularly the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS), as the primary platform for licensing, recruitment tracking and monitoring.

Complementing this framework, **Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019** provides general labour protections, although its applicability to overseas employment remains limited. Ethiopia also relies on **Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)** to extend protection to its workers abroad. However, implementation and enforcement challenges persist, particularly in destination countries with limited Ethiopian diplomatic and labour representation.

20 International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Over 800,000 Ethiopians Migrated Abroad Over The Past Five Years," August 2021

21 International Labour Organization (ILO), "Ethiopian Labour Migration Landscape: Trends, Challenges, and Approaches," July 2023.

22 Ministry of Labor and Skills, "Ethiopian Labor Market Information System (E-LMIS)," accessed February 5, 2025

23 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. "Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1389/2025." Federal Negarit Gazette, 2025

Despite the strengthened legal framework, gaps remain in enforcement capacity, inter-institutional coordination and outreach to rural areas, allowing informal recruitment channels to continue operating alongside the formal system.

The table below outlines key legal instruments governing labour migration in Ethiopia:

Legal Instrument	Key Provisions	Challenges & Gaps
Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1389/2025	Comprehensive regulation of overseas employment, including PrEA licensing, inspections, recruitment procedures, cost regulation and worker protection mechanisms.	Enforcement capacity remains constrained; informal recruitment persists.
Proclamation No. 923/2016	Regulates overseas employment, including PrEA licensing, recruitment procedures, and worker protections.	Weak enforcement mechanisms and ongoing review to address identified regulatory gaps.
Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019	Establishes general employment rights and workplace protections, including provisions on fair wages and working conditions.	Limited applicability to overseas migrant workers.
Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS)	Digitalizes job orders, recruitment agency moni-toring and worker tracking to ensure compliance.	Limited accessibility in rural areas and ongoing challenges related to data accuracy and fraud detection.
Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) with destination countries	Establish legal protections for Ethiopian workers abroad, employer responsibilities and dispute resolution mechanisms.	Limited transparency in negotia-tion processes and inadequate monitoring of implementation.

Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs)

Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) play a central role in Ethiopia's overseas labour migration system, facilitating recruitment, worker deployment, training coordination and employer engagement. **As of 2024, 1,252 licensed PrEAs are actively registered on the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS)** under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS).

This figure reflects the number of **active licenses** rather than the total number of historical registrations. However, it does not represent the actual number of distinct recruitment companies, as Ethiopian regulations require PrEAs to obtain **separate licenses for each destination country** in which they operate. Consequently, a single agency recruiting for multiple destinations may appear multiple times within the licensing system, inflating the apparent scale of the sector.

> The majority of licensed PrEAs remain concentrated in Addis Ababa, with limited presence in other regions. This geographical imbalance significantly constrains access to licenced recruitment services for prospective migrant workers outside the capital.

Registration and Licensing

The licensing process for PrEAs is governed by Proclamation No. 923/2016. Until recently, this process was largely manual, leading to inefficiencies, administrative delays and an increased risk of fraudulent documentation. In 2022, the Ethiopian government introduced the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS) to digitalize the licensing and monitoring of recruitment agencies. ELMIS functions as a centralized online platform that streamlines registration processes, tracks recruitment activities and enhances transparency in job placements.

To establish a legally recognized recruitment agency, businesses must first register as legal entities with the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, providing documentation such as tax registration certificates, articles of incorporation and business ownership details. Following this step, the agency must submit an online application through ELMIS, uploading supporting documentation including proof of business registration, audited financial statements, office lease agreements and details of company directors. The system assigns designated officers to verify and validate these documents, reducing opportunities for corruption and fraud.

One of the key requirements for obtaining a license is the provision of a security deposit of USD 100,000, which serves as a financial safeguard to cover liabilities such as unpaid wages, compensation claims, or emergency repatriation costs.

Inspection

After meeting these financial requirements, the agency undergoes a pre-licensing inspection conducted by MoLS. This inspection assesses whether the agency maintains an operational office with the required infrastructure, trained personnel, and appropriate digital record-keeping systems. Through ELMIS, inspectors are assigned to agencies, and their findings, including photographs and verification documents, are uploaded to the system in real time.

Once an agency successfully completes the inspection process, the Ministry of Labour and Skills reviews the application and issues a two-year renewable license. Each licensed agency is assigned a unique digital ID in the ELMIS database, enabling authorities to track its compliance record. Before recruitment activities may commence, foreign employers must also be accredited and verified through ELMIS. Agencies submit job orders detailing the number of workers required, employer credentials, and employment conditions. Ethiopian embassies in the destination countries play a key role in this process by reviewing and validating job orders to reduce the risk of fraudulent recruitment practices.

License renewal is required every two years, with agencies required to demonstrate continued compliance with applicable labour regulations. Renewal applications must include updated financial records, documentation of worker welfare monitoring, and evidence that complaints have been addressed or resolved. The introduction of ELMIS has strengthened regulatory oversight, enabling authorities to track agencies, monitor job placements and enforce compliance more effectively.

Type of Inspection	Purpose	Frequency	Scope
Pre-Licensing Inspection	To verify that agencies meet operational and regulatory requirements prior to license issuance.	One-time inspection conducted prior to license approval.	Office infrastructure, staffing, financial capacity, and compliance with licensing requirements.
Routine Inspection	To assess ongoing compli-ance with recruitment regulations and fair recruitment standards.	Conducted annually.	Review of recruitment practices, worker documentation, and compliance with applicable regulations.
Spot Inspection	To investigate complaints, suspected violations, or unregistered agencies.	Conducted as required based on reports or intelligence.	Investigation of allegations such as contract substitution, illegal recruitment fees, or non-compliance with worker protection standards.
License Renewal Inspection	To verify continued compliance before granting a license renewal.	Conducted every two years as part of the renewal process.	Review of recruitment records, worker monitoring systems, and compliance with licensing condi-tions.
Overseas Monitoring Inspection	To assess the working and living conditions of Ethiopian migrant workers in destination countries.	Conducted periodically, subject to embassy capacity and operational priorities.	Worker interviews, contract verification, and assessment of employer compliance.
Emergency/ Sanction Inspection	To respond to severe violations or reports of worker abuse.	Conducted immediately following receipt of a credible complaint.	Investigation of exploitation, fraud, or abuse cases that may result in license suspension or revocation.

Analysis of the Business Environment of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia

Operational Environment

Private recruitment companies in Ethiopia, particularly those engaged in facilitating overseas employment, operate under the regulatory framework of the Overseas Employment Amendment Proclamation No. 1246/2021. This law introduced notable changes, including the establishment of a formal code of conduct, strengthened inspection protocols, and clearer compliance expectations. However, despite these legal reforms, agencies report persistent operational inefficiencies within the recruitment and migration governance system. Bureaucratic processes remain burdensome, particularly in relation to job order verification, certification procedures, and inter-agency coordination. The Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) is mandated to provide oversight, yet limited staffing, inconsistent inspection practices, and inadequate digital infrastructure contribute to administrative delays that push both employers and migrant workers toward informal intermediaries operating outside the formal regulatory framework[24].

Geographical concentration is another operational challenge. The majority of licensed agencies are based in Addis Ababa, creating a gap in regional service delivery. Efforts to expand beyond the capital are constrained by financial limitations, lower levels of trust in regional agencies, and logistical setbacks, constraints that were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Informal recruiters continue to fill this gap by connecting rural job seekers with recruitment agencies, albeit often at significant financial and legal risk to workers.

Financial Environment

The financial context for PrEAs in Ethiopia is precarious. Licensing requirements, particularly the mandated USD 100,000 security deposit, pose a significant barrier to entry and continued operations, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. Agencies report difficulty accessing affordable credit, which hinders their ability to maintain regional offices or invest in staff training and infrastructure. Broader macroeconomic challenges in Ethiopia, such as currency depreciation, foreign exchange shortages, and rising inflation, further constrain agency operations and profitability[3].

While the 2021 Proclamation allows for agencies to collect fees from skilled workers, these potential revenue streams are tightly regulated and inconsistently enforced. Moreover, the cost of compliance, including inspections, training provision and maintaining records on the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS) adds further financial pressure on agencies. These challenges are compounded by the mandatory use of Ethiopian Airlines for worker travel, which, while intended to ensure safer migration, may impose higher travel costs compared to regional alternatives[4].

Competitive Environment

The competitive landscape of Ethiopia's recruitment sector is highly fragmented. Formal PrEAs compete with an extensive network of informal intermediaries, who are more embedded in rural communities and often perceived by job seekers as more accessible and responsive.

In response, the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF), established in 2020, seeks to professionalize the sector and advocate for improved standards. However, its influence remains limited due to capacity gaps and the entrenched role of informal actors. Agencies also face external competitive pressures from more established recruitment markets in countries such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka, which are widely recognized for their structured and ethical labour sending systems. Although research indicates that recruitment agencies can reduce hiring frictions and improve employer - worker matching, these benefits are not fully realized in Ethiopia due to persistent operational and financial constraints.

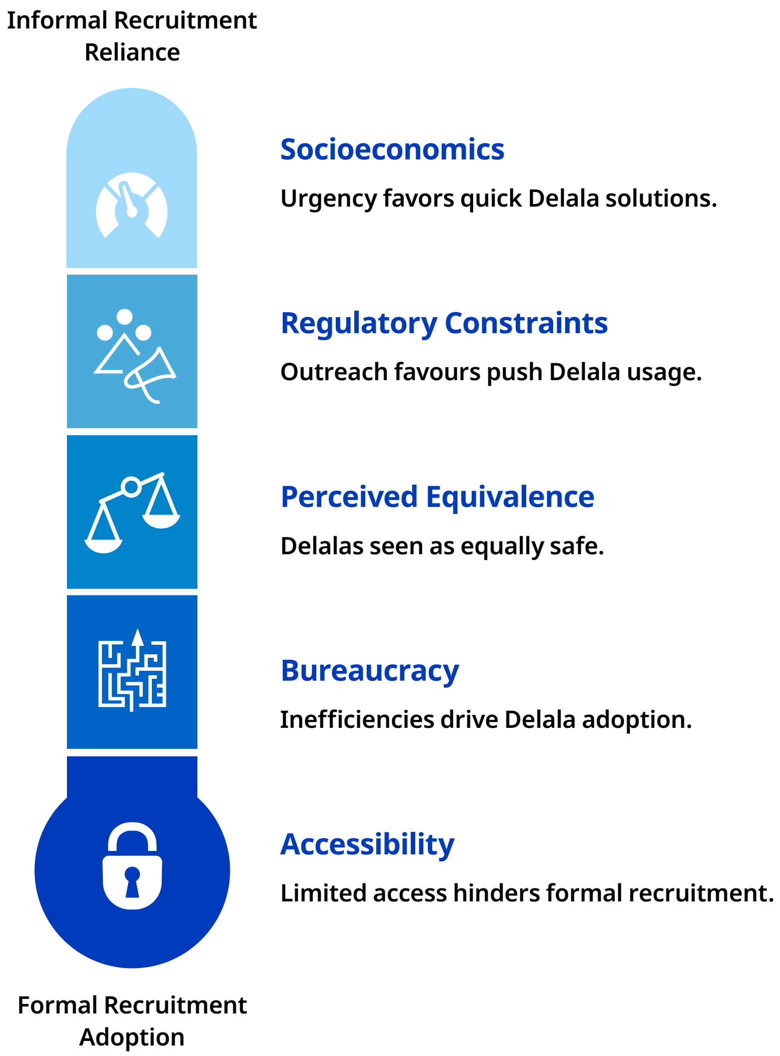
24 International Labour Organization (ILO), Assessment of the Capacity and Practices of Overseas Private Employment Agencies in Ethiopia, Samuel Hall, August 2022, pp. 12–15.

Informal Intermediaries – "Delala"

Informal recruitment remains a significant challenge in Ethiopia's labour migration system, with many migrant workers bypassing licensed Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) and relying instead on unregulated brokers. These brokers often operate through word-of-mouth networks, social media platforms, and village-level recruitment channels, promising legal protections or transparent employment contracts.

In rural and remote areas, licensed agencies often have little or no presence, whereas informal intermediaries, often members of the community or individuals known through social networks, are perceived as more accessible and trustworthy. These brokers promise faster, more convenient services and typically handle all logistics, including passports and travel arrangements, which appeals to prospective migrants eager for immediate opportunities. Additionally, many job seekers are unaware of the risks associated with informal recruitment or how to verify the legitimacy of licensed PrEAs. Some brokers offer seemingly flexible payment arrangements, allowing migrants to pay fees in instalments or after departure, which further incentivizes engagement with informal recruiters despite the associated risks of exploitation or debt bondage. As a result, many Ethiopian migrants find themselves trapped in exploitative conditions, subjected to debt bondage, contract substitution, and trafficking.

▶ Understanding factors influencing Delala usage in Ethiopian recruitment.



A stakeholder reported cases of severe deception and abuse occurring in some rural communities, where brokers exploit limited awareness and economic vulnerability among prospective migrants. In one reported case, young women were misled with false information about airport security procedures and coerced into sexual exploitation under the pretext of preparing them for travel.

Some victims subsequently faced health and social consequences, including pregnancy and deportation, further exacerbating their vulnerability.

The estimated market share between licensed and unlicensed recruitment agencies in Ethiopia shows a clear dominance of informal actors despite the presence of hundreds of licensed agencies. There are more than 1200 registered private employment agencies (PrEAs), most of which are concentrated in Addis Ababa, but many struggle to maintain regional offices or reach rural job seekers. Informal recruiters fill this critical gap by operating locally, bringing clients from rural areas to licensed agencies, and often charging fees themselves. As a result, although licensed agencies represent the formal sector, informal recruiters facilitate the majority of overseas labour migration, especially outside the capital. The ILO report Assessment of the Capacity and Practices of Overseas Private Employment Agencies in Ethiopia estimates that licensed agencies likely handle less than half of the total recruitment volume, with informal recruiters accounting for 50 per cent, reflecting their continued central role in the recruitment process

In an effort to combat these illegal recruitment practices, the Ethiopian government introduced the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS) to track job orders, verify recruitment agencies and strengthen regulatory oversight. While ELMIS has increased transparency, enforcement remains weak, and many migrant workers, particularly those in rural areas, continue to seek opportunities through unregulated channels due to limited access to formal recruitment services and limited awareness of their rights.

A Closer Look: PrEAs – Business Models

Private Employment Agencies (PEAs) in Ethiopia operate under different business models depending on whether they are licensed or unlicensed, with further variation within the licensed sector. Licensed PEAs, numbering more than 1200, and largely concentrated in Addis Ababa, operate as formal entities required to meet regulatory criteria such as obtaining business licenses, maintaining physical offices, employing qualified human resource personnel, and complying with government recruitment protocols. These agencies typically rely on digital platforms, social media, and formal advertising channels to disseminate job opportunities, but face operational challenges, including bureaucratic delays, limited regional reach, and financial constraints that restrict their ability to open and sustain offices outside the capital.

In contrast, unlicensed (informal) recruiters operate primarily in rural and peri-urban areas, filling the geographic and informational gaps left by licensed agencies. They engage directly with job seekers, often leveraging personal networks and local knowledge to identify candidates. Informal recruiters frequently act as intermediaries, bringing clients to licensed agencies in Addis Ababa and extracting fees from workers, agencies, or both. Their business model is less constrained by formal regulations, allowing greater flexibility and responsiveness to local demand, but often at the cost of transparency and worker protections.

Within the licensed sector, a typology emerges:

- Large or Established Licensed Agencies: These agencies typically maintain physical offices, employ professional HR staff, and invest in digital marketing and formal partnerships. They tend to serve skilled or semi-skilled labour markets and have some capacity for regional outreach, though limited.
- Small and Medium-sized Licensed Agencies: These agencies often struggle with financial and administrative burdens and rely heavily on informal recruiters to source candidates.
- Outsourcing and Specialized Agencies: Some licensed entities focus on niche markets or provide outsourcing services for low-skill occupations within Ethiopia, distinct from overseas recruitment but part of the broader labour intermediation ecosystem.

Analysis of the recruitment value chain indicates that informal recruiters dominate initial candidate sourcing and mobilization, while licensed agencies manage formal processing, documentation and placement. The reliance of licensed agencies on informal recruiters for client acquisition highlights a

▶ **Comparison of Licensed and Unlicensed Private Employment Agencies in Ethiopia**

Licensed PEAS	Characteristic	Unlicensed Recruiters
Formal	Formality	Informal
Addis Ababa	Location	Rural/Peri-urban
Regulated	Regulation	Unregulated
Formal	Recruitment	Informal
Transparent	Transparency	Less Transparent
Limited	Reach	Extensive
Constrained	Resources	Flexible
Protected	Worker Protection	Vulnerable

hybrid operational model where formal and informal actors coexist and interact closely. This dynamic underscores the need for regulatory and capacity-building interventions that address both formal agency strengthening and the integration or regulation of informal intermediaries to improve transparency, worker protection, and efficiency in the recruitment process.

Procedural Overview of Migrant Worker Deployment

Once a Private Recruitment Agency (PrEA) receives a job order from an overseas employer, it must first verify the legitimacy of the request to ensure compliance with Ethiopian regulations and any applicable bilateral labour agreements with the destination country. The verification process involves coordination with the relevant foreign embassies, which play a critical role in confirming the authenticity of the job order.

Following verification, the PrEA advertises the vacancy and screens applicants according to the employer's specifications. Successful candidates are registered in the Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS) and issued a unique Labour ID, which serves as their digital identity throughout the recruitment process.

Prior to deployment, candidates must secure a valid passport from the Ministry of Interior, a process that can take up to six weeks. They must also undergo a medical examination at an authorised health facility to meet the requirements of the destination country. The PrEA then facilitates the issuance of work permits and visas, liaising with the relevant embassies and government authorities.

All prospective migrant workers are required to complete mandatory pre-departure training assigned through ELMIS. Training is delivered by government-accredited centres and follows a standardized curriculum covering legal rights, workplace expectations, cultural adaptation and financial literacy. Upon completion, candidates must pass the Competency Development Certification (CDC) assessment. Their CDC certificate is then uploaded to ELMIS and forms part of the clearance process for deployment.

Once all requirements have been fulfilled, the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) reviews and approves the employment contract to ensure compliance with Ethiopian labour laws and to safeguard the worker's interests. Before departure, workers receive a final briefing covering travel arrangements and key reminders. The PrEA then arranges transport, ensuring all logistical requirements are met.

Role and Functionality of ELMIS

The Ethiopian Labour Migrant Information System (ELMIS) is a centralised, biometric-based digital platform designed to enhance transparency, efficiency and accountability in Ethiopia's overseas recruitment system. Prior to its introduction, migration processes were largely paper-based, fragmented and vulnerable to exploitation by informal intermediaries. ELMIS consolidates all recruitment activities into a single, traceable digital pathway.

Key functions include:

- **Centralised Registration and Tracking:** Each candidate's journey—from job order verification to contract approval—is recorded in ELMIS under a unique Labour ID.
- **Biometric Identification:** Job seekers' biometric data are captured at registration, reducing the risk of impersonation and fraudulent applications.
- **Training and Certification Management:** The system assigns workers to accredited training centres, tracks completion of CDC, and ensures that only certified candidates proceed to deployment.
- **Contract Review and QR Code Issuance:** Every employment contract submitted by PrEAs is reviewed by MoLS. Approved cases are issued with a QR code linked to the worker's digital record, enabling verification by immigration and labour officials.
- **Grievance Handling:** ELMIS includes a complaints mechanism for reporting issues such as bribery, document withholding, or contract delays. Complaints are logged and addressed by a compliance unit within MoLS.

- **Financial Oversight:** Licensed PrEAs must submit financial records, including bank statements, via ELMIS. This enables the government to monitor recruitment fees, support tax compliance and estimate recruitment volumes.
- **Decentralised Access via One-Stop Service Centres (OSSCs):** Approximately 375 OSSCs nationwide register around 9,375 workers daily (an average of 25 per centre), bringing services closer to job seekers and reducing reliance on intermediaries.
- **Multi-Language Accessibility:** The platform is available in Amharic, Oromo, Tigrigna, Afar, and Somali, with voice-assisted options for visually impaired users.

Pre-Departure Training

Pre-departure training is a mandatory requirement for Ethiopian migrant workers intended to ensure that they are adequately prepared for employment abroad. The training curriculum covers legal rights, financial literacy, workplace expectations and cultural adaptation to help workers adjust to their new environments. First-time workers are required to undergo a 21-day training programme, while returning migrants receive a condensed five-day training programme prior to redeployment.

Currently, there are over 154 private migrant training centres and 143 government-operated training centres, bringing the total to 297 accredited centres across Ethiopia. These centres play a crucial role in equipping workers with the necessary skills and information before migration. However, serious challenges continue to undermine the effectiveness of pre-departure training programmes.

One major concern is that many training centres are owned and operated by recruitment agencies (PrEAs), creating a potential conflict of interest. Since these agencies prioritize rapid deployment and profit, there is a risk that training quality is compromised. In some cases, PrEAs reportedly bypass mandatory training requirements or provide incomplete training in order to expedite recruitment, leaving workers insufficiently prepared for the legal, social and professional challenges they may face abroad.

Another issue is the limited alignment between training programmes and actual labour market demands. Many training curricula are outdated or fail to address specific skill requirements, particularly for semi-skilled and skilled occupations. In addition, trainer capacity remains limited, with some trainers lacking expertise in critical areas such as workers' rights, dispute resolution, and financial management[25]. Reports indicate that training centres in rural areas face resource constraints, making it difficult to deliver high-quality instruction.

Corruption in the CDC Certification Process

A particularly concerning issue is the fraudulent acquisition of the Certificate of Competence (CDC), which is required to verify that migrant workers have completed pre-departure training. Instead of undergoing proper assessment, some workers reportedly obtain the certificate without completing the required training. This practice undermines the integrity of the certification process and exposes workers to greater risks abroad, as some depart without the knowledge or skills needed to navigate their new work environments.

The fraudulent acquisition of CDC certificates appears to be facilitated by weak oversight and insufficient monitoring mechanisms. Training centres that engage in these practices do so to expedite recruitment and increase profit margins, in some cases in collaboration with recruitment agents. This can result in workers being deployed without adequate preparation, thereby increasing their vulnerability to contract violations, abuse and financial exploitation.

Despite efforts by the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) to regulate and monitor training centres, enforcement remains a significant challenge.

25 Senior Training Officer, Training Department, MoLS, Ethiopia, Interviewed on 8 December 2024

Costs of Recruitment for Ethiopian Migrant Workers

The financial burden associated with recruitment remains a significant challenge for Ethiopian migrant workers, despite international standards set by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that demand a zero-fee recruitment model for workers throughout the recruitment process. Although Ethiopian law prohibits recruitment agencies from charging workers placement fees, many migrant workers still incur high costs during the migration process due to informal payments and hidden charges imposed by recruitment agents and brokers.

Studies indicate that Ethiopian migrants pay an average of USD 1,000 in total migration costs, with some workers spending as much as USD 3,780 to secure employment abroad. A significant portion of these expenses—approximately USD 440 on average—is paid directly to recruitment agents, often under the guise of "processing fees" or "service charges".[26] Additional costs include medical examinations, visa processing, travel expenses, and administrative fees, which should legally be covered by foreign employers but are frequently shifted onto migrant workers.

In some cases, workers are forced to cover the cost of their own airfare and visa fees, placing them in a cycle of debt even before reaching their destination. The requirement that Ethiopian migrant workers travel exclusively via Ethiopian Airlines is intended to strengthen oversight of labour migration and reduce the risk of human trafficking and unauthorized departures. However, this policy may limit competition and contribute to higher airfare costs for migrant workers, thereby increasing their financial burden. Many migrants take high-interest loans to finance recruitment-related costs, making them vulnerable to debt bondage and financial exploitation once employment begins. This practice violates fair recruitment principles and increases the risk of contract substitution, wage deductions, and other forms of labour exploitation.

Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)

Ethiopia has actively pursued Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) with key destination countries in order to establish legal frameworks aimed at protecting Ethiopian migrant workers.

As of the most recent records, Ethiopia has concluded formal BLAs or MoUs with the following countries:

- **Qatar (2012)** – regulating employment conditions for Ethiopian workers
- **Jordan (2012)** – covering recruitment and labour protections
- **Saudi Arabia (2017)** – focused on the rights and welfare of domestic workers'
- **United Arab Emirates (2018)** – governing recruitment and employment conditions
- **Kuwait** – BLA/MoU signed to regulate the recruitment and employment of Ethiopian workers
- **Lebanon (2023)** – marking the lifting of a 15-year ban and the re-establishment of regulated labour migration pathways

These agreements aim to define employer obligations, standard employment contract provisions, wage protections and dispute resolution mechanisms. However, Ethiopia faces significant enforcement challenges due to limited institutional capacity, weak coordination with destination countries, and under-resourced consular services. Many migrant workers remain unaware of their rights under these agreements, and the lack of accessible complaint mechanisms both in Ethiopia and in destination countries further weakens accountability. Moreover, the prevalence of informal recruitment channels means that many workers migrate outside formal recruitment systems and therefore fall outside protection frameworks established under BLAs, leaving them vulnerable to contract violations and abuse.

26 Migration Data Portal, "Migrant Recruitment Costs," 2021

Complaints Handling

Ethiopian migrant workers often face significant challenges abroad, leading to a range of grievances. Common complaints include non-payment or delayed payment of wages, physical or psychological abuse, poor working conditions, restrictions on movement and communication, and contract violations. To address these issues, the Ethiopian government has introduced mechanisms such as the Ethiopian Labour Market Information System (ELMIS), which includes a digital complaints module designed to facilitate the reporting and resolution of grievances. However, comprehensive data on the number of complaints submitted, processed, or resolved through the system is not currently available. While the platform provides a mechanism for documenting complaints, its overall effectiveness remains difficult to assess. Despite these efforts, several challenges persist, including limited awareness among migrant workers of available reporting platforms, slow case resolution processes and insufficient staffing within Ethiopian embassies and consulates to manage complaints effectively. Strengthening diplomatic support, enhancing embassy oversight and conducting targeted awareness campaigns are therefore important steps toward improving the responsiveness and effectiveness of migrant worker grievance mechanisms.

▶ Summary of Gaps Identified

Area	Challenges & Gaps
Legal and Regulatory Framework	▶ Weak Enforcement: Despite the existence of regulatory frameworks, enforcement mechanisms remain limited, allowing exploitative practices and labour rights violations to persist. ▶ Limited Regulatory Coverage: Existing regulations may not comprehensively address all dimensions of labour migration governance, leaving certain areas insufficiently regulated. ▶ Stronger legal provisions have been introduced under Proclamation No. 1389/2025, although enforcement capacity is constrained.
Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs)	▶ Multiple Licensing: Agencies must obtain separate licenses for each destination country, which may complicate regulatory oversight and create administrative inefficiencies. ▶ Fraudulent Practices: Some agencies reportedly engage in document falsification or other irregular practices to circumvent requirements.
Informal Intermediaries and Brokers	▶ Prevalence of Unregulated Brokers: Many migrant workers rely on unregulated intermediaries operating outside the formal legal framework, increasing the risk of exploitation and trafficking. ▶ Misinformation and Abuse: Informal intermediaries may provide misleading information regarding employment conditions and recruitment procedures, exposing migrants to abuse and exploitation.
Pre-Departure Training	▶ Training quality and Relevance: Training programmes may not adequately reflect the skills and competencies required in destination labour markets, resulting in a mismatch between training content and employment demands. ▶ Conflict of Interest: Training centres owned or operated by recruitment agencies may create incentives to prioritise rapid deployment over training quality.
Recruitment Costs	▶ High Financial Burden: Migrant workers frequently incur high recruitment-related costs, increasing their exposure to debt and financial vulnerability. ▶ Informal and Illegal Fees: Despite legal prohibitions, some recruitment actors reportedly continue to charge unauthorised fees.
Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)	▶ Enforcement Challenges: Ensuring compliance with BLAs and protecting workers' rights in destination countries remains difficult. ▶ The absence of Labour Attachés in key destination countries may weaken monitoring and protection. ▶ Limited Worker Awareness: Many migrant workers appear to have limited awareness of the protections provided under BLAs.
Complaints Handling Mechanisms	▶ Limited Accessibility: Existing grievance mechanisms may not be easily accessible to all migrant workers, particularly those in remote areas or working in isolated employment settings. ▶ Slow Case Resolution: Administrative and procedural delays may slow the resolution of complaints, reducing the effectiveness of grievance mechanisms.

Case Study: Competitive Shift in Migrant Deployment Costs – Uganda vs. Ethiopia

Uganda's traditional position in the labour migration market was based on a model in which recruitment agencies remitted approximately US$1,100 per worker to foreign employers. This bundled fee covered airfare, visa processing, medical examinations, passport and document assistance and related logistics. From this arrangement, agencies and affiliated entities realised profits of approximately US$ 400–500 per worker.

Leveraging its state-owned airline (Ethiopian Airlines) and stronger negotiating leverage, Ethiopia altered this pricing structure. Through bilateral negotiations and streamlined logistics, Ethiopia reduced the average placement cost to approximately USD 700 per worker, while maintaining agency profitability at roughly US$ 100–200 per worker.

As a result, many hiring companies–particularly in Gulf destination countries –have reportedly shifted their preference toward Ethiopian recruitment services in order to reduce expenditure. While agencies continue to earn modest profits per placement, employers appear to value the lower placement costs. Consequently, Uganda has experienced a decline in demand for its migrant recruitment services.

Broader Implications and Strategic Takeaways

- Downward Cost Pressure: Ethiopia's competitive advantage is placing downward pressure on recruitment costs in the region. Ugandan agencies may therefore need to reconsider their pricing models in order to remain competitive while maintaining operational sustainability. Efficiency and Logistics: Air transport costs, logistics systems and bilateral agreements can significantly influence the competitiveness of recruitment markets, highlighting the importance of system-level coordination between migration governance and transport infrastructure.
- Potential Trade-offs: While Ugandan agencies previously realized higher profit margins per worker, reduced cost competitiveness may lead to declining recruitment volumes, potentially affecting overall agency sustainability.

Policy Considerations: Uganda may consider exploring policy measures such as negotiated airfare discounts, charter flight arrangements, or improved visa facilitation mechanisms in the regional recruitment market.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Description/Tasks	Responsible Stakeholder	Timeframe
Deploy Labour Attachés in Priority Destination Countries	Appoint at least four labour attachés in countries with high worker deployment and reported grievances (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman and Qatar). Responsibilities should include monitoring worker welfare, verifying employer compliance and employment contracts, facilitating dispute resolution and collecting field-level information to inform domestic policies.	Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)	Long-term
Strengthen and Operationalise the National Migration Governance Coordination Framework	Formalise and adequately resource the existing **National Partnership Coalition (NPC)** and its **Technical Working Groups (TWGs)** to serve as the primary national coordination mechanism for labour migration governance. Clarify institutional mandates, reporting lines and accountability arrangements between federal and regional structures (RPCs), institutionalise quarterly coordination meetings and strengthen the secretariat's capacity to facilitate data sharing, joint planning and performance monitoring among stakeholders. Integrate labour migration indicators and PrEA oversight into existing monitoring and reporting frameworks rather than creating parallel coordination mechanisms.	MoLS, MoFA, PrEAs, Trade Unions, Civil Society	Short-term

Recommendation	Description/Tasks	Responsible Stakeholder	Timeframe
Strengthen Monitoring of Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)	Establish dedicated technical units within embassies to validate PrEA contracts prior to worker deployment, assess employer compliance with contractual obligations, and monitor worker grievances through an embassy-linked ELMIS dashboard.	MoFA, MoLS, Ethiopian Embassies, Labour Attaches	Short-term
Upgrade ELMIS for Accessibility and Data Provision	Enhance the ELMIS to provide public, role-based access for key stakeholders, providing aggregated data on recruitment trends, agency performance and destination-country deployment patterns. Integrate mobile-friendly interfaces for rural users.	MoLS ELMIS Unit, ICT Ministry	Short-term
Introduce a Digital Reporting and Grievance Redress System	Develop a digital reporting and grievance redress mechanism enabling migrant workers to report recruitment-related experiences electronically and track the status of complaint resolution. Require licenced PrEAs to declare all intermediaries involved in recruitment processes and integrate their details into ELMIS to enhance transparency and accountability.	MoLS, Licensed PrEAs, ICT Ministry	Short-term
Integrate Post-Deployment Monitoring into ESMIS	Integrate post-deployment monitoring modules into ELMIS, including embassy-based worker check-ins, employer review mechanisms, and mobile complaint forms available in local languages. Require PrEAs to update post-deployment worker status as part of ongoing licensing compliance.	MoLS, MoFA, Ethiopian Embassies, Licensed PrEAs	Long-term
Launch Public Awareness Campaigns on Fair Migration	Educate communities on the risks of informal intermediaries, promote licensed PrEAs registered in ELMIS, and showcase One-Stop Centres as trusted migration support resources. Coordinate campaigns with CSOs and local governments.	MoLS, CSOs, Local Governments	Short-term
Standardise and Enforce Pre-Departure and Skills Training	Develop and implement a unified mandatory pre-departure training curriculum. Require all recruits to attend accredited centres, and record training completion in ELMIS. Enforce penalties for agencies skipping training.	MoLS, Licensed PrEAs, Accredited Training Centres	Short-term
Align TVET Programs with PrEA Recruitment for Semi-Skilled Migration	Conduct labour market assessments to map sectoral demand in destination countries, develop tailored curricula, and recruit only from accredited TVET programs for sector-specific job orders. Partner with international certification bodies.	MoLS, TVET Institutions, Licensed PrEAs	Long-term
Expand and Strengthen One-Stop Centres	Integrate PrEA services into One-Stop Service Centres (OSSCs) to facilitate real-time job matching, contract vetting and training validation. Expand OSC presence in high-migration zones using a hub-and-spoke model.	MoLS, Local Governments, Licensed PrEAs	Long-term
Leverage Ethio Telecom for Wage Monitoring and Worker Communication	Pre-register migrant workers in Telebirr digital wallets to enable wage monitoring and embed a helpline for grievance routing. Automate alerts for missed salary payments.	MoLS, Ethio Telecom, Licensed PrEAs	Short-term

Tanzania

Contextual Background

Over the past decade, the Government of Tanzania has undertaken deliberate policy and institutional reforms to expand employment opportunities for Tanzanian workers both domestically and internationally. These efforts include the negotiation and signing of bilateral labour agreements and memoranda of understanding with destination countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Japan, as well as ongoing diplomatic engagement with Oman. These initiatives aim to facilitate orderly labour migration, respond to labour market demand abroad, and safeguard the rights and welfare of Tanzanian workers deployed overseas. Tanzanian migrants are often motivated by the prospect of earning higher wages abroad, enabling them to support their families and contribute to national economic development through remittances[27].

One of the unique aspects of Tanzania's migration landscape is its deep-rooted historical and cultural ties with Oman, particularly in Zanzibar. These ties date back to the 19th century when the Sultan of Oman, Said bin Sultan, moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1832, making it a major trading hub in the Indian Ocean. This long-standing connection has resulted in a shared cultural heritage, familial links, and sustained socio-economic interactions between Zanzibar and Oman. Due to these historical ties, Oman remains one of the primary destinations for Tanzanian migrant workers, particularly for those from Zanzibar, who often migrate for domestic work, construction, and other low-skilled employment.[28]

Zanzibar vs Mainland Tanzania: Differences in Labour Migration Governance

Unlike mainland Tanzania, which is governed by the central government in Dodoma, Zanzibar has its own semi-autonomous government, legal system, and labour policies. While both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar operate within the framework of the Union Government, Zanzibar has greater control over its migration-related policies, particularly concerning recruitment agencies and labour migration. This institutional arrangement has resulted in variations in labour migration governance, with Zanzibar sometimes negotiating its own agreements or enforcing different regulatory measures from mainland Tanzania.

Zanzibar also has a distinct migration pattern, with a higher percentage of its labour force seeking employment in Oman compared to mainland Tanzania. However, the semi-autonomous nature of Zanzibar's government has sometimes resulted in regulatory gaps, where enforcement mechanisms differ between the two jurisdictions.

The majority of Tanzanian migrants are employed in:

- Domestic Work: Many Tanzanians migrate to the Middle East, particularly Oman and Saudi Arabia, to work as domestic workers.
- Construction: Male migrant workers frequently obtain employment in construction sectors in Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia.
- Security Services: Some Tanzanian migrants work as private security guards in Gulf countries.
- Agriculture: Tanzanians also engage in seasonal agricultural work in countries such as Denmark and Norway. Intra-regional migration within the East African Community (EAC) also includes employment in farming and agro-processing.

27 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Regional Study on Remittances and Their Potential Use in Migrant Remittances-Receiving Households*, 2023. Available at: IOM Report

28 Lodhi, A. Y. (1994). *The Arabs in Zanzibar: From the Sultanate to the People's Republic*. Nordic Journal of African Studies, 3(1), 83-100. Available at: JSTOR

Legal Framework

Tanzania has established a legal framework to regulate Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), aiming to ensure fair recruitment practices and safeguard the rights of job seekers. The primary legislation governing PrEAs is the National Employment Promotion Services Act No. 9 of 1999,[29] which mandates that all PrEAs must register with the Commissioner for Labour and adhere to specific operational guidelines. These provisions require transparency in recruitment processes, the provision of accurate job information, and the prohibition of unauthorised fees charged to job seekers. The Act also emphasizes the importance of monitoring and evaluation to ensure compliance and protect workers from exploitation.

In addition to this foundational legislation, the Non-Citizens (Employment Regulation) Act No. 1 of 2015[30] plays a crucial role in overseeing the employment of non-citizens and ensuring that PrEAs do not engage in malpractice related to foreign employment. This Act requires that any employment of non-citizens be justified by the unavailability of qualified Tanzanians and mandates the acquisition of work permits through proper channels. By enforcing these provisions, the Government aims to balance protection of the local labour market with the facilitation of necessary foreign expertise.

To further strengthen the regulatory environment, the Tanzanian government has launched additional guidelines specifically tailored for private recruitment companies.

These guidelines provide more detailed procedures for the registration, monitoring and evaluation of PrEAs, thereby strengthening compliance and ensuring that recruitment practices align with both national and international labour standards. The guidelines aim to address existing challenges in the recruitment industry, such as unauthorized fees and misinformation, by establishing clearer standards and stricter enforcement mechanisms.

Labour and employment matters are not classified as Union matters under the constitutional arrangement of the United Republic of Tanzania. Under the Constitution of Zanzibar, the Zanzibar Government exercises autonomous authority over labour and employment regulation within its jurisdiction. Consequently, labour migration governance in Zanzibar is administered under its own legal and policy framework, principally the Zanzibar Employment Policy (2009) and the Zanzibar Employment Act (2005), which provide the statutory basis for labour administration, including regulation of recruitment activities conducted by Private Employment Agencies. Recruitment and migration-related abuses in Zanzibar fall under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008), which criminalises trafficking, forced labour, deception in recruitment and exploitation of vulnerable populations. This legal framework is particularly relevant given the overlap between informal recruitment practices and trafficking risks, especially among women and youth migrating for overseas employment. In recognition of evolving institutional arrangements, the Government of Zanzibar is currently reviewing the Employment Act to reflect recent administrative changes, including the relocation of the Employment Department to the Ministry of Youth, Employment and Empowerment. This legislative review aims to strengthen regulatory clarity, enhance institutional coherence, and align labour and recruitment oversight with constitutional mandates and anti-trafficking obligations, thereby improving protection mechanisms for migrant workers within Zanzibar's jurisdiction.

Review of the 2025 Guidelines for Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs)

The **Guidelines for Private Employment Agencies (August 2025)** issued by the Prime Minister's Office – Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons with Disabilities represent a significant regulatory advancement in Tanzania's employment services and labour migration governance framework. The Guidelines provide comprehensive operational direction on the registration, licensing, oversight, and conduct of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), covering both domestic and international labour placement processes.

Overall, the Guidelines demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting fair recruitment, protecting jobseekers' rights and aligning national practice with international labour standards, including those promoted by the ILO. However, analysis of the Guidelines also reveals a number of **implementation and structural gaps** that may affect their effectiveness in practice.

29 National Employment Promotion Services Act No. 9 of 1999, Government of Tanzania. Available at: Parliament of Tanzania

30 Non-Citizens (Employment Regulation) Act No. 1 of 2015, Government of Tanzania. Available at: Parliament of Tanzania

Key Strengths

The Guidelines introduce clear procedures for:

- Registration and licensing requirements for PrEAs, including documentation, staffing and office infrastructure requirements.
- Mandatory use of the Employment Services Management Information System (ESMIS) for registration, reporting and tracking of jobseekers and vacancies.
- Standardized pre-departure training content, covering workers' rights, destination-country laws, cultural orientation, safety, and financial literacy.
- Defined roles and responsibilities across government institutions, PrEAs, employers, training institutions, and financial institutions.
- A multi-tier coordination and oversight structure, including a Leadership Committee, Joint Implementation Committee, and Secretariat, supported by a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Identified Gaps and Limitations

1. Limited Enforcement and Sanctions Mechanisms

While the Guidelines clearly outline obligations and standards for PrEAs, they provide limited detail on enforcement tools, graduated sanctions, or remedial actions for non-compliance.

2. Absence of a Financial Security or Bond Requirement

The Guidelines do not introduce a mandatory security bond or financial guarantee for PrEAs. As a result, there is no dedicated financial mechanism to compensate workers in cases of agency default, contract breach, wage non-payment, or emergency repatriation. This gap limits worker protection and places greater reliance on administrative remedies rather than financial safeguards.

3. Operationalization of Monitoring and Evaluation

Although the Guidelines establish a monitoring and evaluation framework, including reporting indicators and committees, they do not specify dedicated budget allocations, staffing levels, or digital enforcement tools required to operationalise these functions effectively. Without adequate resourcing, routine inspections and data-driven oversight may remain constrained.

4. Limited Provisions on Overseas Worker Protection and Follow-Up

The Guidelines focus strongly on pre-deployment processes but provide limited guidance on post-deployment monitoring, employer compliance abroad, or coordination with embassies once workers are in destination countries. The absence of clear referral pathways, grievance escalation procedures, or labour attaché-linked protection mechanisms may limit protection for workers facing abuse or contract violations overseas.

5. Mainland–Zanzibar Coordination Not Fully Elaborated

While the Guidelines apply nationally, they do not sufficiently address the specific governance complexities arising from Zanzibar's semi-autonomous labour administration framework. Clearer procedures for coordination, data-sharing, and joint enforcement between Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar would strengthen consistency in licensing, inspections, and deployment practices.

Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs)

Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) play a crucial role in Tanzania's labour migration sector by facilitating job placements for Tanzanian workers seeking employment abroad. However, despite their significance, the industry remains largely fragmented, with numerous challenges in compliance, oversight, and enforcement.

As of 2025, a total of 116 Private Employment Agencies were officially registered in Mainland Tanzania, reflecting a gradual consolidation of the recruitment sector under strengthened regulatory oversight. This represents a decline from 164 agencies registered in 2024, attributable to enhanced compliance requirements and regulatory enforcement measures aimed at formalizing the sector and eliminating non-compliant operators.

In Zanzibar, a total of 21 Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) are currently registered, all of which are located in Unguja. These agencies serve job seekers from both Unguja and Pemba; however, migrant workers from Pemba are required to travel to Unguja to complete recruitment and deployment procedures when they secure employment opportunities outside Tanzania. Labour migration from Zanzibar remains particularly dynamic due to long-standing historical and cultural ties with Oman, which has traditionally been a major destination for Zanzibari migrant workers, especially in domestic work, hospitality, and other service-sector occupations.

Despite the existence of formal PrEAs, informal recruitment remains a significant challenge, with many Tanzanian job seekers bypassing licensed agencies in favour of informal intermediaries, known as "Bubu" agents. These unregistered recruiters promise quick job placements but frequently exploit migrant workers through high recruitment fees, fraudulent contracts, and even trafficking networks. The lack of structured enforcement mechanisms has enabled these informal networks to thrive, making it difficult for authorities to regulate the sector effectively.

While formal Private Employment Agencies operate in Tanzania, the sector still faces challenges in ensuring broad access and compliance. Individuals may seek alternative pathways to employment due to factors such as convenience, or limited awareness of licensed agencies. Strengthening regulatory oversight and support can help enhance transparency, protect workers, and ensure fair recruitment practices across the sector.

In Zanzibar, an Employment Desk has been established with a mandate that includes facilitating the smooth departure of migrant workers at the airport and providing support to workers who may bypass registered Private Employment Agencies.

Regulatory consideration frequently raised by stakeholders relates to the dual role of the Employment Services Unit (ESU) in both overseeing private recruitment agencies and, in certain circumstances, directly facilitating employment placements. In situations where licensed private agencies are unable to respond to large or urgent labour demands, the Government has taken a proactive role to ensure that employment opportunities for Tanzanians are not missed. While such interventions are undertaken in collaboration with private agencies and in the national interest, the overlap between regulatory oversight and direct placement functions highlights the importance of clear role delineation and transparency to manage perceptions of unequal competition and to maintain confidence among private sector actors.[31].

Registration and Licensing

The registration process for recruitment agencies in Tanzania varies between Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, requiring agencies to follow different procedures to operate legally. In Mainland Tanzania, agencies must first register with the Business Registrations and Licensing Agency (BRELA) to obtain a Certificate of Incorporation. Additionally, they are required to acquire a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) and register for Value Added Tax (VAT) with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to ensure compliance with tax regulations. Employers must also enroll with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) to meet social security obligations for employees. Furthermore, agencies must create an account on ESU's Employment Services Management Information System (ESMIS), an online platform that facilitates job registration, work permit applications, and employment tracking. In Zanzibar, the registration process is managed by the Zanzibar Business and Property Registration Agency (BPRA), which issues business licenses to recruitment agencies.

While recruitment agencies are required to register as legal entities with the Business Registrations and Licensing Agency (BRELA) in Mainland Tanzania or the Zanzibar Business and Property Registration Agency (BPRA) in Zanzibar, licensing to operate as a Private Employment Agency is granted by the

31 Officer from Private Recruitment Company, Interviewed on 14 January 2025

Commissioner for Labour under the Employment Services Act (Cap. 243). This distinction separates general business registration from sector-specific authorization and oversight.

Once registered as a business, Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) must apply for a recruitment license from the Prime Minister's Office, Labour, Employment and Relations (PMO-LER) in Dodoma, which is responsible for issuing licenses in Mainland Tanzania. In Zanzibar, PrEAs apply for recruitment licenses through the Ministry of Labour and Investments, rather than the Prime Minister's Office in Dodoma. To obtain a license, agencies must submit a Certificate of Incorporation, tax compliance certificates from the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), and a detailed business plan outlining their recruitment procedures and expected job placements[32]. Additionally, agencies must provide proof of adequate office facilities, including a permanent address, and submit a bank guarantee intended to cover potential liabilities such as unpaid wages or worker repatriation. Unlike some East African countries, Tanzania does not currently require recruitment agencies to place a security bond, which reduces financial accountability for agencies that violate worker protection laws. Licences are issued for one year and must be renewed upon expiry, with agencies required to demonstrate continued compliance with labour laws and fair recruitment practices. The licensing fee in mainland Tanzania is approximately USD 200, compared with approximately USD 60 in Zanzibar, making it relatively affordable compared to other countries in the region. However, enforcement remains weak, and many agencies continue to operate informally, taking advantage of gaps in the regulatory framework.

In parallel, the Government has continued to strengthen oversight through regular inspections, compliance reviews, and increased use of digital reporting systems to curb informal operations and promote adherence to regulatory requirements.

Inspection

The inspection and monitoring of Private Employment Agencies in Tanzania is primarily overseen by the Employment Services Unit (ESU) within the Prime Minister's Office - Labour, Employment and Relations (PMO-LER) . Before issuing a license, pre-licensing inspections are conducted to verify whether an agency has met the required operational standards, including adequate office space, trained personnel, and proper documentation. Once licensed, agencies are subject to routine inspections to assess compliance with recruitment regulations and ethical labour practices. In Zanzibar, inspections are conducted by the Department of Employment within the Zanzibar administration.

Oversight of Private Employment Agencies is supported by a formal coordination architecture established under the 2025 Guidelines, comprising a Leadership Committee, a Joint Implementation Committee, and a Secretariat housed within the employment services function of PMO-LER. While these structures provide a clear mandate for inspection, monitoring, and follow-up, their effectiveness is constrained by resource and institutional capacity limitations, affecting the frequency and depth of inspections, particularly outside major urban centres.[33]

In cases where violations are suspected or complaints are raised, spot inspections are carried out without prior notice. Additionally, agencies seeking to renew their licenses must undergo license renewal inspections, ensuring that they have upheld fair recruitment practices and fulfilled their legal obligations to migrant workers. However, due to limited resources and weak enforcement mechanisms, many agencies evade inspections, operating in ways that violate worker protection laws.

Analysis of the Business Environment of Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) in Tanzania

Operational Environment

Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) in Tanzania operate in a hybrid labour market environment that blends both formal and informal recruitment practices. Larger, well-established, and legally registered firms tend to rely on structured recruitment methods such as public advertisements, job fairs, and

32 Labour Inspector, Prime Minister's Office, Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons with Disability, Interviewed on 6 January 2025.

33 Labour Officer, TAESA, Interviewed on 7 January 2025

institutional partnerships. In contrast, smaller and less-resourced agencies often resort to informal channels like personal referrals, which, while faster, may compromise quality and transparency.[34]

The recruitment process in Tanzania is hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies. Public sector recruitment, for instance, can take an average of 2.7 to 3.4 months due to lengthy permit approval procedures, a lag that is likely reflected in the private sector[35]. Operational hurdles also include lack of managerial competence, absence of structured cooperation among agencies, and weak differentiation in services offered. The agencies' capacity to deliver quality recruitment is further limited by insufficient training for both staff and job seekers[36].

Financial Environment

On the financial front, PrEAs generate revenue primarily through service fees paid by employers or jobseekers and often enhance their reputation by facilitating overseas employment. However, many struggle with sustainability due to high operational costs and limited start-up capital. Some agencies only manage to send one person in a month.[37]

On the financial front, Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) generate revenue by charging fees to employers and, in limited cases, jobseekers, and many seek to build their market credibility through successful overseas placements. While some agencies, particularly smaller or newly established ones, face challenges related to high operational costs and limited start-up capital, financial performance across the sector is uneven, with a number of agencies operating at modest but sustainable scales.

The broader business environment continues to shape these financial dynamics. Regulatory compliance requirements, taxation obligations, and licensing procedures entail costs that can be more burdensome for smaller agencies. At the same time, the Government, in collaboration with financial institutions and sector associations, has introduced targeted measures to improve access to finance. The establishment of the Ughaibuni Fund, coordinated with CRDB Bank and supported through guarantees by the Tanzania Recruitment Agencies Association (TRAA), is intended to enable licensed agencies to access credit to support their operations. These initiatives reflect ongoing efforts to strengthen the operating environment, improve financial inclusion, and enhance the capacity of Private Employment Agencies to operate sustainably, particularly as formalisation and compliance continue to be promoted.[38]

Competitive Environment

The Tanzanian recruitment sector is highly fragmented and competitive. A few well-established agencies—typically those with international networks or partnerships capture most overseas recruitment contracts. Meanwhile, a proliferation of smaller agencies with limited operational capacity and low market visibility struggles to compete effectively[39]. Recruitment sources for these agencies vary and include direct employers, consulting firms, online platforms, and educational institutions. While this diversity fosters market dynamism, it also contributes to service duplication and inconsistent quality.

Moreover, the Government plays both a regulatory and, in limited circumstances, an operational role in facilitating employment opportunities through entities such as the Employment Services Unit (ESU). Government stakeholders emphasize that this role is undertaken collaboratively with licensed Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) to ensure Tanzanians are effectively connected to employment opportunities both domestically and abroad. In situations where designated agencies are unable to mobilize or respond to available opportunities, the Government may intervene to prevent the loss of employment prospects in the public interest.

34 Atlantis Press. Analysis of Recruitment Practices in Tanzania. https://atlantis-press.com/article/125917

35 CORE. The Case of Public and Private Sectors in Tanzania. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234616894.pdf

36 Mzumbe University. The Contribution of Private Recruitment Agencies (PREAs) in Assisting Jobseekers in Tanzania. https://repository.costech.or.tz/handle/11192/663

37 Interview with Tanzanian Recruitment Company, Zanzibar, January 2025.

38 REPOA. The State of Business Environment in Tanzania. https://repoa.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/The-State-of-Business-Environment-in-Tanzania.pdf

39 ILO. Decent Work Country Programme – Tanzania. https://www.ilo.org

While this arrangement reflects a proactive approach to safeguarding national employment opportunities, continued efforts to strengthen transparency, clarify operational boundaries, and promote structured coordination between public and private actors would further enhance confidence and support a level and predictable operating environment across the sector.

Agent Bubus

In Tanzania, informal intermediaries who facilitate employment opportunities abroad are commonly referred to as "Agent Bubu." These individuals operate outside the formal regulatory framework, connecting job seekers with potential employers, particularly in the Middle East. The term "Agent Bubu" is widely recognized within the Tanzanian context to describe these unregistered intermediaries.

The services provided by Agent Bubus typically include arranging travel documents, securing employment contracts, and organizing transportation for migrant workers. However, due to their informal status, these brokers often operate without proper oversight, leading to potential risks for the individuals they assist. The lack of regulation means that the practices of Agent Bubus can vary widely, and in some cases, they may engage in exploitative practices, such as charging exorbitant fees or providing misleading information about job conditions.

The prevalence of Agent Bubus highlights significant challenges in Tanzania's labor migration system. Many prospective migrant workers resort to these informal intermediaries due to limited access to formal recruitment agencies or a lack of awareness about official migration channels. This reliance on unregulated intermediaries increases the vulnerability of migrant workers to exploitation and abuse in destination countries.

While isolated cases of informal intermediaries ("Agent Bubu") have been reported, labour recruitment in Tanzania is predominantly conducted through licensed Private Employment Agencies operating within an established legal and institutional framework, supported by ongoing government efforts to strengthen oversight, enforcement, and public awareness of lawful recruitment channels.

Procedural Overview of Migrant Worker Deployment

The migration process for Tanzanian workers seeking employment abroad involves multiple regulatory steps to ensure legal deployment. Prospective migrant workers must first secure a job offer, typically facilitated by a Private Employment Agency (PrEA) registered with PMO-LER or the Ministry of Youth, Employment and Empowerment (for Zanzibar). Once employment is confirmed, workers must obtain a work permit from the Employment Unit at PMO-LER, which requires submission of a verified employment contract, a valid visa, a passport, a letter from the local government (LG), and a police clearance certificate.

All migration procedures are tracked through the Employment Services Management Information System (ESMIS), under ESU, ensuring that all registered agencies and workers are documented. Licensed Private Employment Agencies are required to submit quarterly implementation and performance reports to PMO-LER through the Employment Services Management Information System (ESMIS). These reports are processed by the Secretariat and reviewed by the Joint Implementation Committee to inform oversight, policy guidance, and enforcement actions. While the reporting framework is clearly defined, compliance and data quality remain inconsistent across agencies.

Tanzania has **recently strengthened** its regulatory framework through the adoption of the **2025 Guidelines for Private Employment Agencies**, operationalizing the Employment Services Act (Cap. 243)." In addition, at Zanzibar's Terminal 3 International Airport, a labour desk manually verifies documentation before departure, serving as an additional checkpoint.

Employment contracts for Tanzanians working abroad are required to meet clearly defined minimum standards, including specification of contract duration, probation period, job responsibilities, wages and benefits, working hours, leave entitlements, termination clauses, and dispute resolution mechanisms. While these requirements are well articulated in policy, challenges persist in verifying enforcement and compliance in destination countries.

Furthermore, the system is currently undergoing integration with other key government institutions, including Tanzanian Embassies and relevant authorities, to strengthen information-sharing, improve follow-up mechanisms, and enhance overall coordination of migrant workers' welfare in destination countries. This ongoing integration reflects the Government's commitment to establishing a more coordinated, responsive, and accountable framework for supporting Tanzanian workers abroad.

Training

In Tanzania, the framework for pre-departure training of migrant workers is currently underdeveloped. ESU is tasked with organizing pre-departure training to better protect departing migrants. However, pre-departure training has been formally institutionalized under the 2025 Guidelines for Private Employment Agencies as a mandatory requirement for all Tanzanians deployed abroad through licensed agencies. The Guidelines outline comprehensive training content, including professional ethics, language and communication skills, cultural orientation, employment contract literacy, occupational health and safety, financial literacy, social protection, life skills, and reintegration preparedness.

In practice, many Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) have taken on the responsibility of providing pre-departure training to prospective migrant workers. Interviews with several PrEAs reveal that these training sessions are often conducted in-house, typically lasting between four and five hours, and cover only basic information. The brevity and limited scope of these sessions may not sufficiently prepare workers for the complexities and challenges they might face abroad.

Furthermore, it was also found that pre-departure training in Tanzania has been institutionalized for several years, with recent efforts since 2024 focusing on strengthening delivery through collaboration with COMHESWA and curriculum development partnerships with VETA and the National Institute of Transport (NIT), reflecting ongoing government efforts to enhance worker preparedness and procedural compliance.

However, the absence of a standardised pre-departure curriculum means that the quality and content of training can vary significantly between agencies. This inconsistency can leave migrant workers inadequately informed about their rights, the legal frameworks of destination countries, cultural differences, and strategies for coping with potential workplace challenges. Stakeholders indicated that a task force has been formed to standardise a pre-departure curriculum that will be launched in 2026.

Cost of Recruitment

The recruitment process for Tanzanian workers seeking employment abroad often involves high costs, leading to financial strain and increased vulnerability to exploitation. Despite regulations prohibiting the charging of recruitment fees to workers, reports indicate that some employers and recruitment intermediaries in destination countries such as Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), continue to impose such fees on Tanzanian domestic workers. This practice can result in workers accumulating substantial debt, making them susceptible to conditions akin to debt bondage.

In many cases, especially concerning employment in Oman, informal intermediaries independently identify employers and require workers to secure loans to cover expenses such as airfare. For instance, some workers have reported paying recruitment fees to agents in Tanzania for services like obtaining passports, only to face additional deductions from their salaries by agents in Oman to cover purported recruitment costs. This dual financial burden exacerbates the workers' indebtedness and vulnerability.

Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)

Tanzania has concluded several Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with key destination countries to regulate the employment of Tanzanian migrant workers and strengthen their protection abroad. These include agreements with Saudi Arabia (covering both domestic workers and other categories of workers), Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman, reflecting sustained government engagement with major labour-receiving countries.

The development and negotiation of these agreements have been led by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania through consultative processes involving relevant regulatory institutions, recruitment agencies, and other key actors within the labour migration ecosystem. While these consultations are documented, stakeholder awareness of the scope and outcomes of such engagements varies, particularly among newer institutional actors. As a result, some stakeholders perceive gaps in inclusivity and feedback mechanisms, pointing to the need for stronger communication and documentation-sharing mechanisms to enhance transparency and institutional memory.

From an implementation perspective, ongoing challenges relate less to the existence of agreements and more to their operationalisation and monitoring. Tanzania does not currently maintain dedicated labour attachés in all major destination countries, and coordination mechanisms to systematically track compliance with BLA provisions remain limited. Strengthening post-agreement implementation arrangements, including monitoring, reporting and grievance follow-up, would further enhance the effectiveness of BLAs in safeguarding migrant worker rights and ensuring a timely response to cases of contract non-compliance or abuse.

Complaints Handling

The handling of complaints from Tanzanian migrant workers remains a major challenge due to the lack of a centralised complaints management system and limited government oversight in destination countries. Complaints from migrant workers often involve contract violations, non-payment of wages, excessive working hours, confiscation of passports, physical abuse, and unsafe working conditions. However, there is no structured mechanism to systematically record, track, and resolve these grievances, leaving many migrant workers without adequate recourse.

Currently, Tanzanian embassies in key destination countries serve as the primary point of contact for distressed workers, but there are no dedicated labour attachés assigned to handle complaints. This severely limits the government’s ability to provide timely intervention. Migrant workers who face issues abroad often rely on social media, informal networks, or direct outreach to family members in Tanzania, who in turn contact the PMO-LER or ESU for assistance. However, the process is often slow and bureaucratic, with limited capacity to enforce solutions in destination countries.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Government has strengthened its monitoring mechanisms by:

- **Introducing mandatory contract attestation** to ensure that all employment terms meet minimum standards;
- **Strengthening coordination between Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar** to address irregular movements;
- **Increasing inspections of recruitment agencies** to curb unauthorized recruitment; and
- **Advancing negotiations with Oman** towards a comprehensive labour cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening worker protections and dispute resolution.

The Government acknowledges that isolated cases of abuse may occur, as is the case in many labour-receiving contexts. However, these incidents do not appear to reflect the experience of the majority of workers who migrate through official and regulated channels. Challenges persist primarily where recruitment occurs outside formal systems, particularly through unregulated intermediaries commonly referred to as “Agent Bubu,” whose activities fall largely beyond the scope of authorized government oversight. Strengthening awareness, regulation, and enforcement against such informal practices remains a priority to further enhance worker protection.

Case Study: Oman

The migration of Tanzanian workers, particularly from Zanzibar to Oman, is influenced by historical ties, cultural connections, and practical considerations. Zanzibar’s longstanding relationship with Oman dates back centuries, fostering shared cultural ties and linguistic familiarity that make Zanzibari workers particularly appealing to Omani employers. This preference is often based on the workers’ proficiency in the Swahili language and cultural similarities, which facilitate smoother integration into Omani households.

Due to bureaucratic delays and more stringent processing times on the Tanzanian mainland, many workers opt to migrate through Zanzibar, where the procedures are perceived to be more streamlined. This route is often seen as more efficient, allowing for quicker deployment to Oman.

However, this migration pattern is not without challenges. Some reports suggest that certain employers may demonstrate preferences based on physical appearance or linguistic familiarity. Such biases can lead to unequal treatment and limit opportunities for many qualified Tanzanian workers.

Furthermore, Tanzanian domestic workers in Oman have reported facing various forms of abuse, including excessive working hours, unpaid salaries, and physical and sexual abuse. The visa-sponsorship system in Oman ties workers to their employers, and the lack of labour law protections leaves workers exposed to a wide range of abuse. Gaps in Tanzania's laws and policies governing recruitment and migration may leave Tanzanian women vulnerable at the outset of the migration process and limit access to assistance for exploited workers[40].

Currently, there is a gap in the application and standardization of employment contracts in Tanzania's overseas recruitment process. Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) maintain that employment contracts should originate from the foreign employer to reflect agreed-upon terms and conditions. However, in practice, some Tanzanian embassies—particularly in Oman—require the use of contract templates issued or approved by the embassy rather than those provided directly by employers.

This divergence in approach has created inconsistencies in contract processing and underscores the need for clearer guidance and harmonized procedures between regulatory authorities, PrEAs, and diplomatic missions.

However, the Government, through the Prime Minister's Office (Labour, Employment and Relations), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has instituted the following measures for Tanzanians travelling to Oman for employment specifically house maids:

- **Developing a standard employment contract for domestic workers;**
- **Ensuring that all employment contracts are verified and stamped prior to travel;**
- **Preparing and submitting weekly lists of departing workers to the Department of Immigration, airport authorities and the relevant embassy offices;**
- **Establishing a dedicated desk to coordinate Tanzanians seeking overseas employment;**
- **Issuing work permits for overseas employment; and**
- **Registering and inspecting Private Employment Agencies.**

Furthermore, the Government is in the process of finalizing an MoU with the Government of Oman to formalize and strengthen the recruitment and placement of Tanzanian workers in that country. These ongoing reforms reflect the Government's efforts to strengthen oversight of recruitment practices and enhance protection mechanisms for Tanzanian citizens working abroad.

40 Human Rights Watch, *"Working Like a Robot: Abuse of Tanzanian Domestic Workers in Oman and the United Arab Emirates,"* November 14, 2017, https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/11/14/working-robot/abuse-tanzanian-domestic-workers-oman-and-united-arab-emirates.

Summary of Gaps Identified

Key Area	Identified Gaps
Regulation of PrEAs	Limited enforcement of licensing and compliance; Many agencies operate informally without oversight.
Informal Recruitment (Agent Bubu)	Widespread reliance on unregulated brokers; limited enforcement against illegal recruitment practices.
Registration & Licensing	Absence of security bond requirements; weak verification mechanisms for recruitment agencies.
Inspection & Monitoring	Limited institutional capacity to conduct routine inspections; the ESU and PMO-LER lack adequate resources for frequent oversight.
Pre-Departure Training	No standardised training curriculum; recruitment agencies provide inconsistent and inadequate training.
Migration Process & Documentation	Lack of a centralized coordination mechanism; manual verification at Zanzibar Airport is insufficient.
Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)	Weak enforcement mechanisms; no dedicated labor attachés assigned to monitor compliance in destination countries.
Complaints Handling	Absence of a structured complaints management system; Tanzanian embassies lack sufficient capacity to address migrant worker grievances.
Worker Protections & Legal Support	Many migrant workers remain unaware of their rights; limited access to legal aid or representation in destination countries.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Description / Tasks	Responsible Stakeholders	Timeframe
Strengthen Regulation and Oversight of PrEAs	Enforce the PrEAs regulatory guidelines introduced in 2025 ▶ Mandate annual license renewals based on performance audits. ▶ Introduce a risk-based inspection model (biannual for violators, annual for compliant agencies). ▶ Require all PrEAs to maintain digital worker and contract records linked to ESMIS for real-time monitoring.	Ministry of Labour (Mainland), Labour Department (Zanzibar), ESU, PMO-LER	Short term
Improve Mainland–Zanzibar Coordination	▶ Establish a joint Labour Migration Coordination Committee. ▶ Hold quarterly meetings. ▶ Create a shared digital portal. ▶ Harmonize licensing requirements and contract templates. ▶ Share worker and agency data. ▶ Jointly investigate and prosecute cross-jurisdiction fraud.	ESU, Zanzibar Labour Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PMO-LER	Medium term
Introduce Mandatory Security Bond for PrEAs	▶ Require licensed PrEAs to deposit a security bond of TZS 50 million (approximately USD 20,000) bond. ▶ Use bond to compensate workers in cases of breach, early repatriation, or wage theft. ▶ Link the security bond to the licensing database, allowing for automatic suspension if the bond is depleted. ▶ Establish grievance-linked claims process via ESU and local courts.	Ministry of Labour (Mainland), Labour Department (Zanzibar), ESU, Judiciary	Medium term

Standardise and Certify Pre-Departure Training	▶ Develop a joint 14-day curriculum covering rights, laws, coping strategies, cultural orientation, and financial literacy. ▶ Accredit and monitor training centres on a quarterly basis. ▶ Issue digital training certificates through the ESMIS platform. ▶ Require PrEAs to submit proof of completion before deployment.	Ministry of Labour (Mainland), Labour Department (Zanzibar), ESU	Short term
Establish Labour Focal Officers in Destination Countries	▶ Assign labour focal officers within embassies (Saudi Arabia, Omanand the United Arab Emirates). ▶ Maintain a digital database of deployed workers. ▶ Monthly reporting on grievances, contract breaches, and interventions. ▶ Support PrEAs with employer compliance verification. ▶ Develop a transition plan for full labour attaché positions in Riyadh and Muscat by 2026.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ESU Embassies	Medium–Long term
Upgrade the ESMIS system	▶ Add modules for real-time job order and deployment tracking. ▶ Enable digital contract submission and employer verification. ▶ Create mobile access for workers to submit grievances or request support. ▶ Require PrEAs to update deployment data within five days of any change in worker status or employment conditions.	ESU	Medium term
Crack Down on Informal Intermediaries (Agent Bubu)	▶ Establish a national task force (ESU, Immigration, TRAA, Police, and local government representatives`). ▶ Publish biannual blacklist of illegal brokers and traffickers. ▶ Launch SMS verification for recruiter licensing. ▶ Support local radio and community outreach campaigns in migration hotspots (For example, Mwanza, Mbeya and Zanzibar).	ESU, Immigration, TRAA, Police, Local Governments	Short term
Enhance Stakeholder Inclusion in BLAs	▶ Involve PrEAs, trade unions, CSOs, and returnees in BLA drafting. ▶ Include clauses on wage protection, grievance channels, and embassy facilitation. ▶ Conduct periodic reviews of BLAs every two to three years, drawing on ESMIS data and embassy reporting. ▶ Prioritize new BLAs with Oman and UAE.	Ministry of Labour (Mainland), Labour Department (Zanzibar), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ESU	Medium term

3

International Best Practices

Labour migration governance varies significantly across countries, with some nations implementing robust regulatory frameworks to oversee recruitment, protect migrant workers, and strengthen cooperation with destination countries. Best practices from countries like the Philippines and Sri Lanka, as well as regional initiatives such as Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, provide valuable lessons for Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. The following best international practices illustrate approaches that could help strengthen labour migration governance in these countries:

The Philippines: Comprehensive Labour Migration Governance and Welfare Systems

The Philippines is widely regarded as a global leader in labour migration management, with its Overseas Employment Programme often cited as a benchmark for worker protection. The government regulates Private Recruitment Agencies (PrEAs) through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), which licenses agencies, monitors recruitment activities and enforces fair recruitment standards. A key feature of the system is the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), which provides social security benefits, legal assistance and welfare programmes to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs)[41].

Key Lessons for Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania:

- Establish a centralized labour migration regulatory body with a strong enforcement mandate, specifically responsible for overseeing migrant worker recruitment and protection. Introduce a structured Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar (PEOS) and a mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) to ensure that migrant workers are adequately prepared prior to deployment. In Uganda, the Platform for Labour Action previously conducted “Pre-Decision” training sessions[42], which provided prospective migrants with information on migration processes, working conditions and labour rights, enabling them to make informed decisions before seeking employment abroad. This practice could be replicated in all countries.
- Introduce a welfare fund for migrant workers that provides insurance, legal assistance, and emergency support. Neighbouring country Kenya is in the process of implementing this. In addition, Uganda has established a Migrant Workers Support Centre, which is expected to become operational by June 2025.

Sri Lanka: Fair Recruitment and Zero Cost Migration Policy

Sri Lanka has implemented strict fair recruitment guidelines that prohibit the charging of recruitment fees to migrant workers. Under its Zero-Cost Migration Policy[43], all recruitment-related costs, including airfare, visa fees, and medical checks, are covered by employers rather than migrant workers. The country also mandates standardized employment contracts, specifying wages, working conditions and dispute resolution mechanisms[44].

Key Lessons for Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania:

- Develop policies that prevent workers from bearing recruitment costs, in line with the ILO Fair Recruitment Guidelines.
- Standardise employment contracts to ensure transparency in wages, working hours, and dispute resolution.
- Enforce penalties against recruitment agencies that charge excessive fees or engage in fraudulent recruitment practices.

41 Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), “Licensed Recruitment Agencies,” https://dmw.gov.ph/licensed-recruitment-agencies

42 Executive Director, Platform for Labour Action, Interviewed on 5 February 2025

43 The World Bank, “Sri Lanka’s Migrant Workers: Balancing Economic Gain and Worker Protection,”

44 Sri Lanka Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment, “National Policy and National Action Plan on Migration for Employment (2023-2027)

Mexico's Seasonal Work Program with the United States

Mexico has established a bilateral seasonal worker programme with the United States, enabling agricultural workers to migrate temporarily under legal conditions. The programme ensures that recruitment is government-regulated, wages meet fair labour standards, and workers have access to social protections[45].

In Mexico's case, recruitment is carried out under a government-regulated framework. For Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania, this suggests a model where PrEAs could work in partnership with government-mandated bilateral agreements to implement recruitment, rather than operating in fragmented or informal conditions. This would increase legitimacy, reduce malpractice, and align recruitment practices with international labour standards.

Similarly, seasonal labour programmes could be negotiated through Bilateral Labour Agreements to address high-demand periods in destination countries. For example, labour demand in GCC countries often increases during Ramadan, particularly for domestic work and hospitality services. PrEAs can serve as authorised intermediaries responsible for the following functions:

- Identifying and preparing qualified candidates for overseas employment
- Coordinating documentation and pre-departure orientation processes
- Ensuring employment contract verification and regulatory compliance

This approach would expand the role of PrEAs beyond ad-hoc recruitment and embed them within formal migration governance systems, thereby improving accountability and operational consistency. Importantly, it could also help reduce exploitative practices reported by Uganda's Labour Attaché in Saudi Arabia, who noted that, in the lead-up to Ramadan, some recruitment companies bring workers into the country on short-term or tourist visas, sometimes under misleading conditions. These workers are often housed in overcrowded accommodation and then dispatched to multiple households for temporary, informal work as labour demand increases during the month. Embedding PrEAs within structured, government-negotiated seasonal labour programmes, similar to the Mexico-United States model, could help curb such practices by ensuring clear employment contracts, proper documentation and enforceable legal protections for migrant workers.

Key Lessons for Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania:

- Negotiate seasonal labour programmes with European and Gulf destination countries to create structured migration pathways, particularly during periods of high labour demand such as Ramadan in GCC countries.
- Encourage GCC countries to introduce temporary worker visa schemes that include strong legal protections for migrant workers.
- Strengthen skills training programmes to better align worker competencies with labour market demand in destination countries.

Indonesia's One-Channel Placement System: A Model for Fair Recruitment

Indonesia developed the One-Channel Placement System (OCPS) as a government-to-government (G2G) recruitment mechanism designed to streamline overseas employment processes, reduce the role of exploitative intermediaries, and promote fair recruitment practices. This system, initially launched in 2021 to regulate the deployment of domestic workers to Malaysia, has since expanded to cover additional sectors and destination countries. Under OCPS, all recruitment, job placement and employer verification processes are conducted through a centralised digital platform, reducing the risk of fraudulent practices, contract substitution and excessive recruitment fees. The system also helps ensure that wages, working conditions and worker protections align with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards and national labour legislation.

45 U.S. Department of Labor, "The H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers Program," https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/agriculture/h2a.

A key feature of OCPS is the requirement for direct engagement between Indonesian and foreign employers, supported by strict government oversight to enhance transparency and accountability. The system also mandates that all employment contracts be verified prior to deployment, ensuring that migrant workers understand their rights and conditions of employment. Employers must meet pre-approved compliance standards, including clear job descriptions, minimum wage guarantees, and adequate accommodation provisions for workers[46].

Key Lessons for Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania:

- Strengthen Digital Labour Migration Systems: Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania should enhance their existing digital migration systems, such as Ethiopia's ELMIS, Uganda's EEMIS, and Tanzania's ESMIS, to promote a more transparent and integrated recruitment process. OCPS demonstrates the value of a well-integrated system, in which job placements, employer credentials, and recruitment agency activities are monitored through a single digital platform.

- Improve User-Friendliness of Digital Platforms: Stakeholders have observed that Saudi Arabia's Musaned platform is more user-friendly and operationally efficient than many existing digital labour migration systems currently used in African labour-sending countries. Governments should prioritise improving the accessibility and usability of their digital platforms to ensure that both migrant workers and recruitment agencies can navigate the system effectively without relying on intermediaries.

Doha Declaration: How Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania Can Benefit from it

The Doha Declaration presents a strategic opportunity for Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania to strengthen labour migration governance and enhance protections for their migrant workers. Given that all three countries deploy a significant number of workers to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, aligning with the principles of the Doha Declaration could help promote fair recruitment, reduce worker vulnerabilities, and strengthen regional cooperation.

One of the key features of the Doha Declaration is its emphasis on structured migration pathways and improved interregional cooperation. Currently, many African labour-sending countries negotiate BLAs and MoUs individually, which can limit their bargaining power in negotiations with destination countries.

Recommended Action:

Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania, together with other African labour-sending countries, should consider negotiating with GCC countries as a regional bloc. This would mirror the approach used by South Asian countries, which have leveraged their collective numbers to push for stronger worker protections.

The Doha Declaration promotes fair recruitment practices, including the elimination of recruitment fees charged to workers. However, in all three countries, migrant workers still face high recruitment costs, which may lead to indebtedness or debt bondage before departure.

Recommended Actions:

- Introduce and enforce zero-cost migration policies, similar to those implemented in Sri Lanka and Nepal, ensuring that recruitment fees, airfare and visa processing costs are covered by employers rather than migrant workers.

- Develop digital verification systems to monitor and regulate recruitment agencies, while expanding access to these systems in rural areas in order to reduce reliance on informal intermediaries (such as "Bubu" agents in Tanzania or "Delala" brokers in Ethiopia).

- Strengthen monitoring mechanisms and enforcement penalties for non-compliant recruitment agencies to address practices such as contract substitution and illegal fee-charging. practices.

46 United Nations Network on Migration, "Indonesia Voluntary GCM Survey Report," https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl416/files/docs/indonesia_voluntary_gcm_survey_report.pdf.

The Doha Declaration recognizes the importance of embassy oversight and migrant worker protection in destination countries. Currently, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania maintain limited labour attaché representation in destination countries, making it difficult to monitor abuse cases, contract violations and employer non-compliance.

Recommended Actions:

- Deploy additional labour attachés in key GCC countries (for example, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman and Qatar) to actively monitor working conditions and intervene in disputes.
- Expand digital grievance reporting mechanisms and ensure that migrant workers have access to embassy support through call centres and online complaint platforms.
- Collaborate with GCC governments to establish migrant worker welfare funds that provide emergency assistance, legal aid and repatriation support.

One of the major challenges facing Ethiopian, Ugandan and Tanzanian migrant workers is limited access to skills levels, particularly in semi-skilled and skilled labour categories. The Doha Declaration promotes human rights-based approaches, emphasizing that migrant workers should be both protected and economically empowered.

Recommended Actions:

- Develop targeted vocational training programmes to prepare workers for higher-paying, skilled employment opportunities in sectors such as construction, healthcare and hospitality in GCC countries.
- Collaborate with GCC employers to establish certified training centres in Africa that meet internationally recognized skill standards.
- Implement language and cultural orientation programmes to support migrant workers' integration into GCC workplaces and reduce misunderstandings and employment contract disputes.

Conclusion

Labour migration remains a significant economic driver for Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania, providing employment opportunities abroad and contributing substantially to household incomes through remittances. However, migrant workers from these countries continue to face numerous challenges, including high recruitment costs, weak regulatory enforcement, exploitation by informal intermediaries and inadequate protection in destination countries. These issues underscore the need for stronger governance, oversight and targeted reforms to ensure safe, regular, and orderly migration.

Governments in the region have taken steps to address these challenges by introducing licensing systems for recruitment agencies, developing digital migration management platforms and signing Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs). Despite these efforts, significant gaps remain in enforcement, monitoring and worker preparedness, leaving many migrants vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

This report highlights the importance of implementing comprehensive reforms to strengthen labour migration governance. Key measures include improved regulation of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), mandatory government-led pre-departure training programmes, stricter enforcement of recruitment standards, and enhanced diplomatic support in destination countries. Strengthening digital migration management systems such as Uganda's **EEMIS,** Ethiopia's **ELMIS**, and Tanzania's ESMIS will also be essential for improving transparency, accountability and the monitoring of migrant workers throughout the migration cycle.

Regional cooperation among labour-sending countries could also play a pivotal role in strengthening their collective bargaining power when negotiating fairer conditions with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states. Through coordinated engagement, these countries can advocate stronger worker protections, standardised employment contracts, and improved working conditions for their citizens abroad.

Adopting the best international practices offers a promising pathway for reform. For instance, **Indonesia's One-Channel Placement System, Sri Lanka's Zero-Cost Migration Policy,** and the **Philippines' centralised labour migration governance** model provide valuable examples for strengthening fair recruitment systems and improving protections for migrant workers. These models emphasise fair recruitment, worker empowerment and robust oversight mechanisms—principles that can be adapted to the contexts of Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania.

By closing regulatory loopholes, investing in worker education and strengthening enforcement mechanisms, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania can build a more structured, fair and rights-based labour migration system. Such reforms will not only enhance the protection of migrant workers but also maximise the economic benefits of labour migration for households and national economies.

ILO Country Office for Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan

Menelik II Avenue,
ECA Congo Building, 5th and 6th Floor
P.O Box 2788,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia