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Integrating Programmes
FAIR
on Fair Recruitment

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International Training Centre

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Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

- ▶ **Beyond the desk:**
Empowering consular officials,
diaspora desk officers, and labour
attachés in the Arab States
to champion migrant
workers' protection
Practical guide



► Foreword

Beyond the Desk: Empowering Consular Officials, Diaspora Desk Officers, and Labour Attachés in the Arab States to Champion Migrant Workers' Protection is a practical guide developed within the framework of the Ghana component of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Integrated Programme on Fair Recruitment (FAIR II). FAIR, a global programme established in 2015 to support the implementation of the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative Strategy, promotes fair recruitment practices in selected countries of origin and destination and across key labour migration corridors.

In its current phase, implemented with the support of GIZ, FAIR II seeks to strengthen stakeholder ownership and facilitate the replication and scaling up of promising practices in migration corridors where partners are committed to improving recruitment systems and outcomes. This guide has been developed specifically to support Ghanaian consular officials, labour attachés, and diaspora desk officers posted in the Arab States in protecting the rights of migrant workers in contexts shaped by Kafala and other sponsorship-based systems, while promoting respect for the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRWs).

While grounded in the experiences and institutional context of the Ghana–Arab States labour migration corridor, the approaches, tools, and guidance presented in this publication address challenges common to many countries of origin in the region. As such, the guide is intended not only as a resource for Ghana but also as a reference that can be adapted, expanded, and applied by other countries seeking to strengthen the capacity of their diplomatic and consular missions to support and protect migrant workers abroad.

The work undertaken under the Ghana corridor reflects the four pillars of the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative Strategy by strengthening knowledge and policy guidance on recruitment processes, supporting improvements in laws, policies and enforcement mechanisms, promoting fair business practices, and enhancing migrant workers' access to reliable information and services throughout the recruitment process.

Designed for use in day-to-day mission practice, briefings, training programmes, and coordinated case management with partners in countries of origin and destination, this guide aims to support informed and practical decision-making while reinforcing a consistent and rights-based approach to migrant worker protection. It is hoped that the experiences and lessons generated through its use will contribute to stronger institutional cooperation, enhanced capacity-building efforts, and continuous improvements to recruitment and employment systems across the region, ultimately making labour migration safer, fairer, and more firmly grounded in dignity and human rights.

This guide was developed by the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO).

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► Introduction to the guide

1. Background and context

In recent years, countries of origin and destination have taken important steps to improve labour migration governance. Bilateral labour agreements, memoranda of understanding and related dialogues have expanded, creating stronger links between governments and, in some cases, clearer channels for recruitment and dispute resolution.

Yet, for many migrant workers in countries where the kafala (sponsorship) system or similar arrangements are applied, day-to-day reality remains difficult. Sponsorship-based systems can limit workers' ability to change employers, move freely within the country, or leave abusive workplaces without risking arrest, deportation, or being pushed into irregularity. These structural constraints heighten the risk of forced labour and other forms of exploitation.

Within this wider context, African migrant workers, including a growing number of women employed in domestic work and care jobs, are especially vulnerable to decent work deficits. In some migration corridors, including those with large numbers of workers from Ghana, migrants face additional layers of risk linked to language barriers, racism and xenophobia, gender-based violence and harassment, and limited access to information, support, and essential services. These intersecting challenges further constrain their ability to secure safe, equitable, and dignified working conditions.

Diplomatic missions in destination countries play a vital role in protecting migrant workers. Labour attachés, diaspora officers, and consular staff are often among the first officials migrant workers turn to, but this depends on the trust, accessibility, and proactivity of these services. When equipped with the necessary skills and outreach capacity, these officials can effectively monitor working and living conditions, provide advice and support, facilitate knowledge-sharing, and report on patterns of abuse. Building this trust and capability is central to ensuring that migrant workers can safely seek assistance and exercise their rights.

By engaging with host-country authorities, employers, recruitment agencies, workers' and employers' organisations and civil society, diplomatic missions can help promote compliance with bilateral labour agreements, improve access to justice and strengthen protection mechanisms. Building the capacity of these officials is therefore essential to promoting and protecting the fundamental principles and rights of migrant workers.

2. Purpose and objectives of the guide

This guide is a self-directed, rights-based tool for diplomatic missions in destination countries. It is designed to be practical and forward-looking, supporting officers who wish to deepen both their technical understanding and their day-to-day capacity to protect migrant workers and influence policy and practice.

The guide combines clear simplified explanations of key concepts with applied tools, including examples, checklists and reflection questions. It brings together insights from international labour standards, human rights law and labour migration governance to help users navigate complex and evolving labour mobility systems.

The overall objective of the guide is to strengthen the capacity of diplomatic officers, particularly labour attachés, consular staff and diaspora officers, to promote and protect migrant workers' rights in line with the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Particular attention is paid to contexts where sponsorship or kafala-type systems are in place, and where workers may face heightened risks of forced labour, unfair recruitment practices, discrimination or violence and harassment.

More specifically, the guide aims to:

- Equip users with a clear understanding of basic rights at work and the key international standards that protect migrant workers.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of labour attachés in protecting migrant workers.
- Provide practical tools for handling individual cases in a rights-based and gender-responsive manner.
- Enable informed contributions to policy dialogue and bilateral labour cooperation.
- Strengthen consistent documentation, knowledge-sharing and institutional continuity in supporting workers within missions.

3. Who this guide is for

The guide is intended primarily for:

- ▶ Labour attachés, labour counsellors, and diaspora desk officers from African countries serving abroad.
- ▶ Newly posted or future officers who need an introduction to labour migration and migrant worker protection.
- ▶ Staff of diplomatic missions seeking to better understand protection gaps and their responsibilities within the context of the kafala system.
- ▶ Other stakeholders who collaborate closely with diplomatic missions, such as officials from ministries of labour, foreign affairs and interior, as well as representatives of workers' and employers' organisations and civil society partners.

4. How to use this guide

The guide is designed to be flexible and adaptable. It can be used in several ways:

Individual self-study

Officers can work through the modules at their own pace, focusing on the topics that are most relevant to their current or expected duties.

Team learning

African ministries of labour and ministries of foreign affairs, embassies and consulates can use the modules for internal learning sessions, case discussions or peer-to-peer exchanges.

Induction training

The guide can support the induction of newly posted staff, providing a structured overview of key themes and tools.

Reference tool

Users can return to specific modules, checklists or annexes when dealing with particular cases or preparing for meetings and missions.

The modules move from core technical concepts to applied practice.

Each module includes:

- ▶ A clear aim and overview.
- ▶ Plain-language explanations of key concepts.
- ▶ Practical examples or short scenarios where possible.
- ▶ Applied tools such as checklists, templates or reflection questions.
- ▶ A short self-check quiz and/or frequently asked questions to consolidate learning.

Users are encouraged to adapt the content to their own context. Not all sections will be equally relevant in every country or posting. The guide can be used cover-to-cover or selectively, depending on time and priorities.



5. Core themes and skills

Across its modules, the guide covers core technical themes essential to the work of labour attachés, labour counsellors, and diaspora officers, alongside practical skills for effective consular practice.

Technical themes covered:

- FPRW, ILO conventions, UN and relevant regional instruments
- Labour migration trends, kafala sponsorship, vulnerabilities from a gender lens and sectoral approach
- Fair recruitment
- Bilateral labour agreements, and enforcement mechanisms
- Protection, consular assistance, dispute resolution, and access to justice

Practical Skills:

- Case management
- Data collection, knowledge sharing, and institutional continuity
- Coordination with governments, trade unions, civil society, and international partners
- Applying a human centred approach: prioritizing gender awareness, empathy, and respectful communication in consular practice.

6. Structure of the guide

The guide is structured as a series of interconnected modules that reflect the logic of labour migration governance and the typical tasks of labour officers and attachés in diplomatic missions. It advances a rights-based, gender-responsive, and intersection-sensitive approach, integrated into everyday decision-making and consular practices rather than treated as a separate or purely theoretical layer.

It also includes practical tools, templates, and checklists that users can adapt to their own missions. These resources are designed to save time, ensure continuity when staff rotate, and support a more systematic approach to protecting migrant workers.

Overview of the modules:

1. Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and International Legal Framework
2. Labour Migration Governance and Bilateral Cooperation
3. Labour Migration Trends, Migration Cycle and Vulnerabilities from a Gender Perspective and sectoral approach
4. Kafala (Sponsorship) Systems
5. Regulatory Frameworks and Fair Recruitment
6. Roles of Diplomatic Missions, Labour attachés and Diaspora Desk Officers
7. Supporting Migrant Workers' Access to Justice and Remedies
8. Case Management, Documentation and Institutional Continuity
9. Coordination, Networking and Collaboration for Sustainable Impact

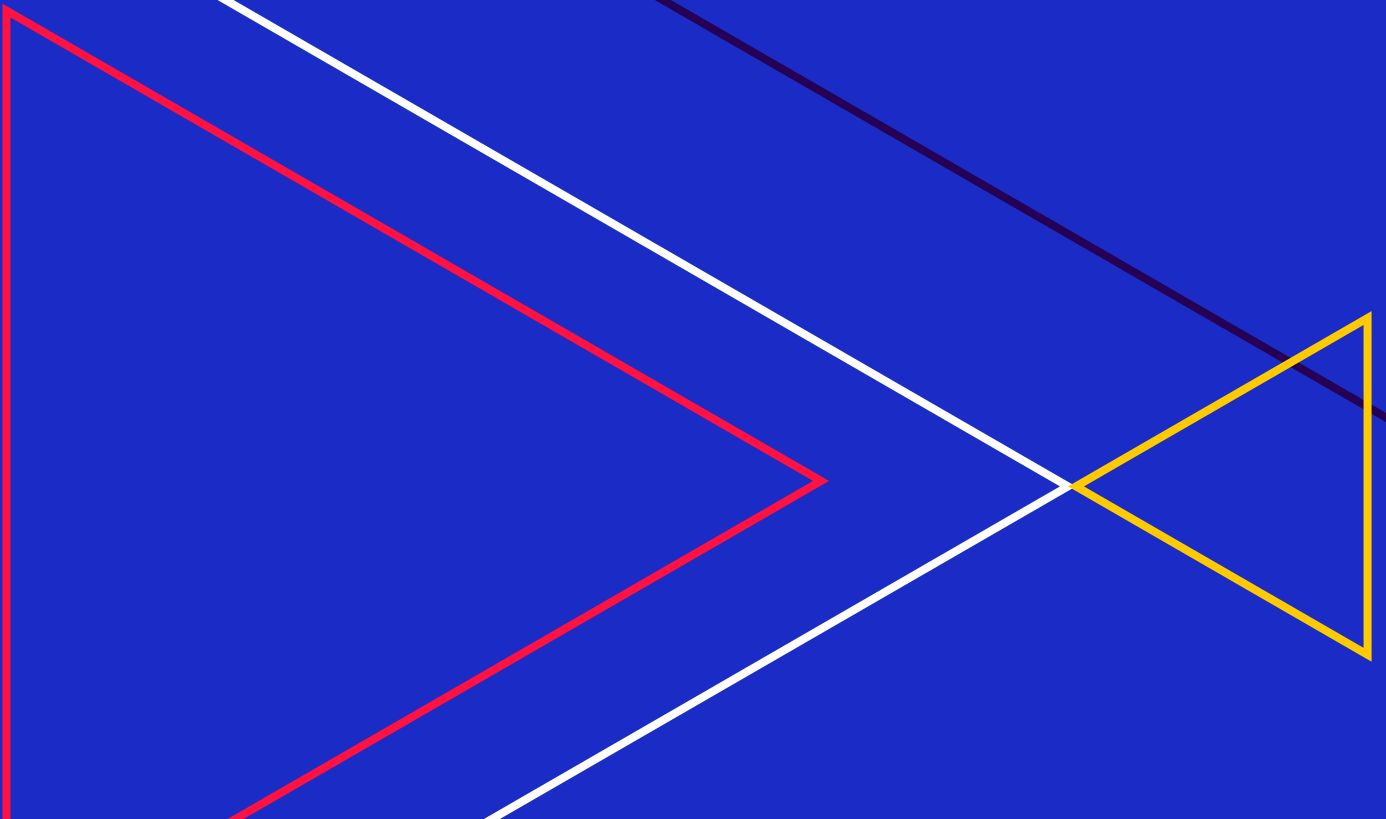
List of Practical Tools & Checklists

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Service Inventory
- Referral inventory
- Case Management template
- Case intake form
- Case record form
- Interview Guidelines (workers/ gender-responsive communication)
- Kafala through forced labour lenses (questions/ checkpoints)
- Protection Handover Notes (to support with ongoing cases, and continuity)
 - Handover note template
 - Check list for outgoing officers
- Do's and don'ts and reflection questions on ethics and self-care for staff.



1

Fundamental principles and rights at work and international legal framework



► Module 1: Fundamental principles and rights at work and international legal framework

Aim of this module

This module sets the baseline for the guide. It introduces the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the main international instruments that protect workers, including migrant workers.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand the main categories of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.
- Recognise common indicators of forced labour in migrant workers' situations.
- Identify key ILO Conventions and other international instruments that protect migrant workers.
- Refer to relevant regional frameworks for African countries of origin and Arab States of destination.
- Be inspired by these standards to inform your daily consular practice and dialogue with partners.

Why a rights-based approach matters for labour attachés and consular staff

In sponsorship-based contexts, labour migration often involves power imbalances. Employers may influence residence status, job mobility and, in practice, access to identity documents and freedom of movement.

For African migrant workers in destination countries where Kafala (sponsorship) is practiced such as Arab States, this can lead to:

- Long working hours with little or no rest.
- Confiscation of passports and restriction of movement.
- Wage withholding, non-payment of wages or illegal deductions linked to recruitment fees.
- Discrimination, racism or xenophobia in the workplace and beyond.
- Violence and harassment, including gender-based violence, particularly for women in domestic and care work.

A rights-based approach helps you assess situations against international standards, rather than relying on common practice or informal norms. It means:

- Seeing migrant workers as rights-holders, not only as beneficiaries of assistance.

- Paying attention to how different grounds of discrimination (such as race, gender, nationality, religion or migration status) interact.
- Ensuring that your actions do not unintentionally expose workers to further risk.

This approach guides day-to-day consular work: how you listen, how you record cases, how you engage with authorities and employers and recruitment agencies, and how you report trends back to your administration.

International labour standards (ILS) in simple terms

International labour standards are instruments adopted by ILO member States. Conventions and Protocols are binding for States that ratify them, while Recommendations provide guidance. ILS:

- Are negotiated by governments, workers' and employers' representatives in a tripartite process.
- Reflect a global consensus on minimum protections for workers.
- Are designed to be flexible and adaptable to different legal and institutional contexts.
- When a State ratifies a Convention, it commits to align law and practice with the Convention and to report regularly on progress. Even without ratification, a Convention can be used as a benchmark for dialogue and reform.

Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRWs)

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work commits all ILO member States to respect, promote and realize fundamental rights at work, even where the relevant Conventions have not been ratified. The FPRWs sit at the core of the international labour standards system. They reflect key ILO Conventions, guide how other labour standards are understood and applied, and provide a common baseline for decent work.

These principles apply to all workers, including migrant workers, regardless of status or sector. They set a minimum level of protection that can guide laws and practice, including where national frameworks are still evolving.

The five categories and their main ILO instruments are:

- Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
 - Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise
 - Convention No. 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining
 - Convention No. 154 on Collective Bargaining
- The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
 - Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour
 - Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labour
 - The 2014 Protocol to Convention No. 29 on prevention, protection and remedy in cases of forced labour
- The effective abolition of child labour
 - Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age
 - Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour
- The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation
 - Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration
 - Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)
- A safe and healthy working environment

- Convention No. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health
- Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health

You do not need to memorise these Conventions. In practice, remember that they:

- Set the global benchmark for decent work.
- Apply to all workers, including migrant workers, unless explicitly stated otherwise.
- Provide a reference point for your analysis of laws, policies, contracts and cases.
- Can be cited in diplomatic correspondence and dialogue with authorities or employers.

Forced labour indicators: what to look for?

Kafala-Sponsorship-based systems can create strong dependency, which increases forced labour risks. Early identification of forced labour allows consular officers to take action that can improve the worker's situation, for example by recognizing warning signs, ensuring immediate safety, connecting the worker to trusted support services, facilitating access to complaint mechanisms, and engaging with local authorities when appropriate.

Key forced labour indicators include:

- **Abuse of vulnerability** taking advantage of a worker's financial vulnerability, language barriers, irregular status or isolation to impose abusive conditions.
- **Deception** such as false promises about wages, working hours, tasks or accommodation, or contracts that differ from what was originally agreed.
- **Restriction of movement** including being locked in the workplace or accommodation, or being closely monitored to prevent contact with others.
- **Isolation** such as being sent to remote locations, having phones confiscated or being prevented from contacting family, community or authorities. This is particularly common in case of domestic work.
- **Physical or sexual violence** including beatings, sexual assault or threats of physical harm.
- **Intimidation and threats** for example, threats of deportation, arrest, loss of wages or harm to family members.

One indicator alone may not confirm forced labour. Under ILO Convention No. 29, forced labour involves both involuntariness and the menace of penalty. When several indicators appear together, and the worker cannot leave without serious repercussions, treat the situation as high risk and consider protective measures and referrals within your mandate.

► **Beyond the desk: Empowering consular officials, diaspora desk officers, and labour attachés in the Arab States to champion migrant workers' protection.**

- ▶ **Retention of identity documents** confiscation or destruction of passports or residence permits.
- ▶ **Withholding of wages** systematic non-payment or repeated delays of wages create financial pressure on the workers and prevent them from leaving the job even when conditions are abusive.
- ▶ **Debt bondage** requires workers to work to repay recruitment fees or loans under terms they cannot realistically meet.
- ▶ **Abusive working and living conditions** overcrowded or unsafe accommodation, denial of food or rest, lack of privacy or basic hygiene.
- ▶ **Excessive overtime** very long working hours without daily and weekly rest or the possibility to refuse overtime.

Key ILO instruments for migrant workers

Beyond the fundamental Conventions, several ILO instruments are especially relevant to migrant workers and to the work of diplomatic missions.

Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment (Revised)

Promotes fair and transparent recruitment and calls for equality of treatment between regular migrant workers and national workers in a number of areas.

Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions)

Addresses abusive migration situations and promotes equality of opportunity and treatment for migrant workers.

Convention No. 181 on Private Employment Agencies

Provides a framework for regulating private employment agencies, including provisions to prevent abuse and protect workers from being charged recruitment fees.

Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers

Recognises domestic work as work and sets standards on working time, rest, minimum wage coverage, social security and protection from violence and harassment.

Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment

Recognises the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence.

These instruments can help you to:

- ▶ Analyse standard employment contracts and recruitment arrangements.
- ▶ Identify abusive practices, such as charging recruitment fees to workers.
- ▶ Advocate for reforms that extend labour law coverage and protection to migrant workers, including domestic workers.

- ▶ Frame case discussions with authorities, employers and recruitment agencies around concrete obligations.

UN and regional frameworks relevant to migrant workers

UN and regional instruments complement ILO standards by reinforcing migrant workers' rights and non-discrimination. Globally, key treaties include the Migrant Workers Convention, which sets comprehensive protections and recognises the right to seek consular or diplomatic assistance, alongside the two International Covenants that anchor civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The CEDAW and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination further address gender- and race-based discrimination that migrant workers often face.

Regionally, instruments such as the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the African Union's Migration Policy Framework for Africa provide frameworks and practical guidance on labour migration governance, rights protection and cooperation with destination countries. Together, these standards help identify shared commitments between African countries of origin and Arab States of destination, and offer agreed language to support joint statements, bilateral labour agreements and implementation roadmaps.

Using standards in day-to-day consular practice

International standards including FPRWs are most useful when they guide daily decisions. The steps below offer a simple workflow:

Step 1: Start with the worker's story

Listen without interruption and use open questions. Note any indicators of forced labour, discrimination, unsafe working conditions or violence and harassment.

Step 2: Map the rights at stake

Identify which Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work may be affected. Consider which ILO, UN or regional instruments are most relevant.

Step 3: Check the legal framework

Review host country labour and migration rules on the issues raised, such as wages, working time, passport retention and complaint procedures. Check whether migrant workers, including domestic workers, are covered and what special rules apply.

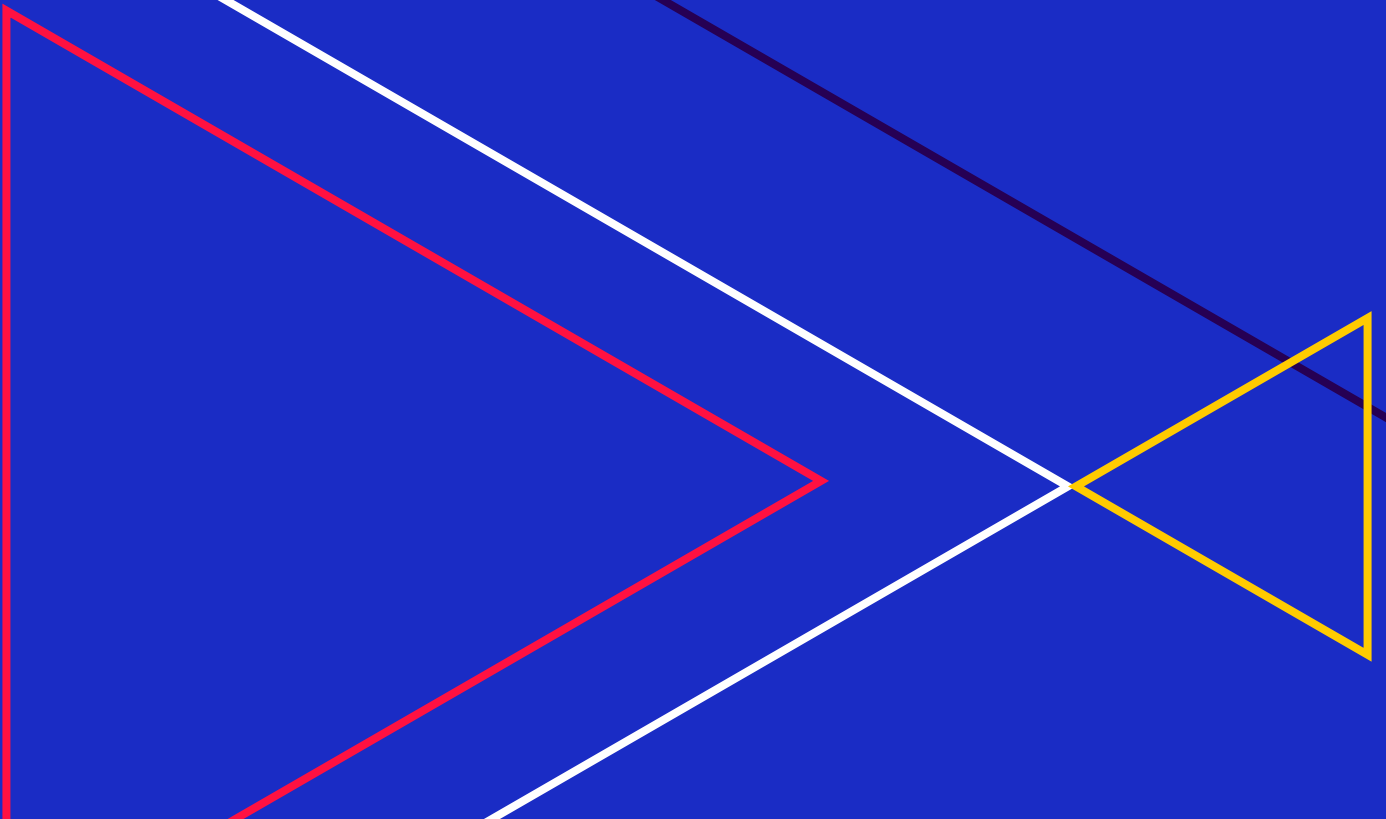
Step 4: Consider the worker's options

Within your mandate, identify realistic options and referrals, including labour authorities, national human rights institutions, trade unions, shelters, legal aid and civil society organisations. Prioritise immediate safety risks.



2

Labour migration
governance and
bilateral cooperation



► Module 2: Labour migration governance and bilateral cooperation

Aim of this module

This module explains how labour migration is governed and how bilateral cooperation between countries of origin and destination can be used to strengthen protection in practice. It focuses on what diplomatic missions can do with the tools that already exist, including bilateral labour agreements, implementation committees, focal points, and structured dialogue with competent authorities and service providers.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand the main elements of labour migration governance and why they matter for migrant worker protection.
- Recognise what bilateral labour agreements and related instruments can and cannot do.
- Identify practical entry points for missions to support implementation, monitor trends, and escalate protection concerns.
- Use rights-based language to support constructive dialogue with partners and competent authorities.

Why labour migration governance matters for labour and consular staff

Labour migration governance is the set of laws, policies, institutions, and practices that shape how workers are recruited, employed, and protected across borders. It covers what happens before departure, on arrival, during employment and at return. It also includes coordination between countries of origin and destination.

In sponsorship-based systems, labour migration often involves power imbalances. Employers may influence residence status, job mobility and, in practice, access to identity documents and freedom of movement.

Well-designed governance arrangements can reduce risks by clarifying responsibilities, improving oversight of recruitment and employment, and making dispute

resolution more accessible. For consular teams, governance becomes visible through cases: delayed wages, contract substitution, document retention, restrictions on mobility, violence and harassment, and barriers to remedies. A rights-based approach helps missions respond in a way that protects the individual while also identifying systemic gaps that can be raised through bilateral channels.

Bilateral cooperation is most useful when it helps move from isolated complaints to predictable procedures and stronger safeguards. It can clarify roles, establish focal points, create referral pathways, and provide a shared language for engagement grounded in international standards. It does not replace national enforcement, but it can support better implementation and accountability.

What makes bilateral agreements effective for protection

Experience across labour corridors shows that agreements are more protective when they are tailored to the real context and include clear objectives linked to migrant workers' rights, specific responsibilities for each party, practical procedures that can be followed by institutions, and measures that help address implementation gaps. Agreements work best when they are supported by complementary measures such as regulation of private recruitment, labour inspection, access to justice, and effective information to workers.

Typical core elements of rights that should be included

Most rights-based agreements cover a common set of elements. Authorities can use these elements as a checklist when reading an agreement or preparing for dialogue.

These elements often include objectives and definitions, applicable laws and standards, non discrimination and equality of treatment, division of responsibilities, exchange of information, organisation of recruitment and placement, information and assistance to workers, employment contracts and standard contract templates, wages and working time, occupational safety and health, access to complaint mechanisms and dispute resolution, facilitation of mobility and job change, protection of personal documents, repatriation and return, and institutional arrangements such as focal points and joint committees.

Recruitment governance as a prevention measure

Unfair recruitment is a major pathway into forced labour risk. Bilateral Agreements can strengthen prevention by clarifying how recruitment is organised, which actors are authorised, how costs are allocated, ensuring that workers pay no fees, and how abuses are sanctioned. Where agreements clearly prohibit worker paid recruitment fees, they should be paired with practical monitoring and complaint pathways so that prohibitions are enforceable in reality.

Implementation architecture and institutional cooperation

Agreements are implemented through institutions. Clear focal points, routine coordination, and a functioning joint committee can keep procedures active and responsive. In practice, weak follow up is common when roles are unclear, meetings are irregular, reports are not produced, or frontline actors are not informed of procedures. For diplomatic missions, the key question is whether there is a predictable pathway for raising issues and obtaining responses within a reasonable timeframe.

Monitoring and evaluation as part of protection

Monitoring BLAs is the routine tracking of implementation. Evaluation is a deeper review of what has changed and whether objectives are being met. A practical approach is to establish baseline information before an agreement is signed or renewed, then track changes over time. Useful data are factual and, where possible, disaggregated by sex, sector,

and recruitment channel. Evidence can support decisions on renewal, revision, or targeted corrective measures.

Applied practical action for consular officers and labour attachés

1. Use the agreement as a working reference in case follow up

When you raise an individual case with competent authorities or service providers, link the concern to the relevant procedure or safeguard in the agreement or standard contract. Frame requests in terms of compliance and problem solving. Where an agreement is silent, name the gap clearly and record it for follow up through implementation dialogue.

2. Turn individual cases into anonymised trend reporting

A simple internal routine can help you identify patterns without exposing workers. Track recurring issues such as wage delays, unexplained deductions, passport retention, barriers to job change, unsafe accommodation, and violence and harassment. Record how cases were resolved, how long they took, and which step created the greatest barrier. Over time, this becomes evidence that can inform bilateral discussions and practical improvements.

3. Engage safely in sponsorship related risk situations

When workers fear retaliation linked to sponsorship rules, include a basic safety assessment in your first response. Clarify what the worker wants, what they fear, what immediate risks exist, and what steps might increase exposure. Choose complaint pathways that minimise retaliation risk where possible, and consider phased engagement, referrals to trusted support services, and careful documentation. Use the language of the agreement and international standards to support constructive engagement with authorities.

4. Strengthen internal coordination so bilateral cooperation is consistent

Agree internally on roles and referral pathways within the mission and with the administration at home. Set clear practices for confidentiality, case notes, handover, and communication with partners. This reduces inconsistency and supports institutional continuity, especially when staff rotate.

Short scenario

Self/reflection or Group Discussion

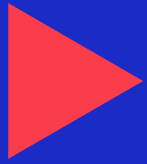
A group of migrant workers contacts the mission about repeated wage delays and unexplained deductions. They report that their sponsor or employer is also responsible for key administrative steps linked to their legal stay, including residence permit renewal or cancellation. The workers fear that if they complain, they may lose their job, become

irregular, or face restrictions on changing employers. They also worry about retaliation, including termination, eviction from housing which is provided by the employer, or being reported to the authorities.

Questions for reflection or discussion

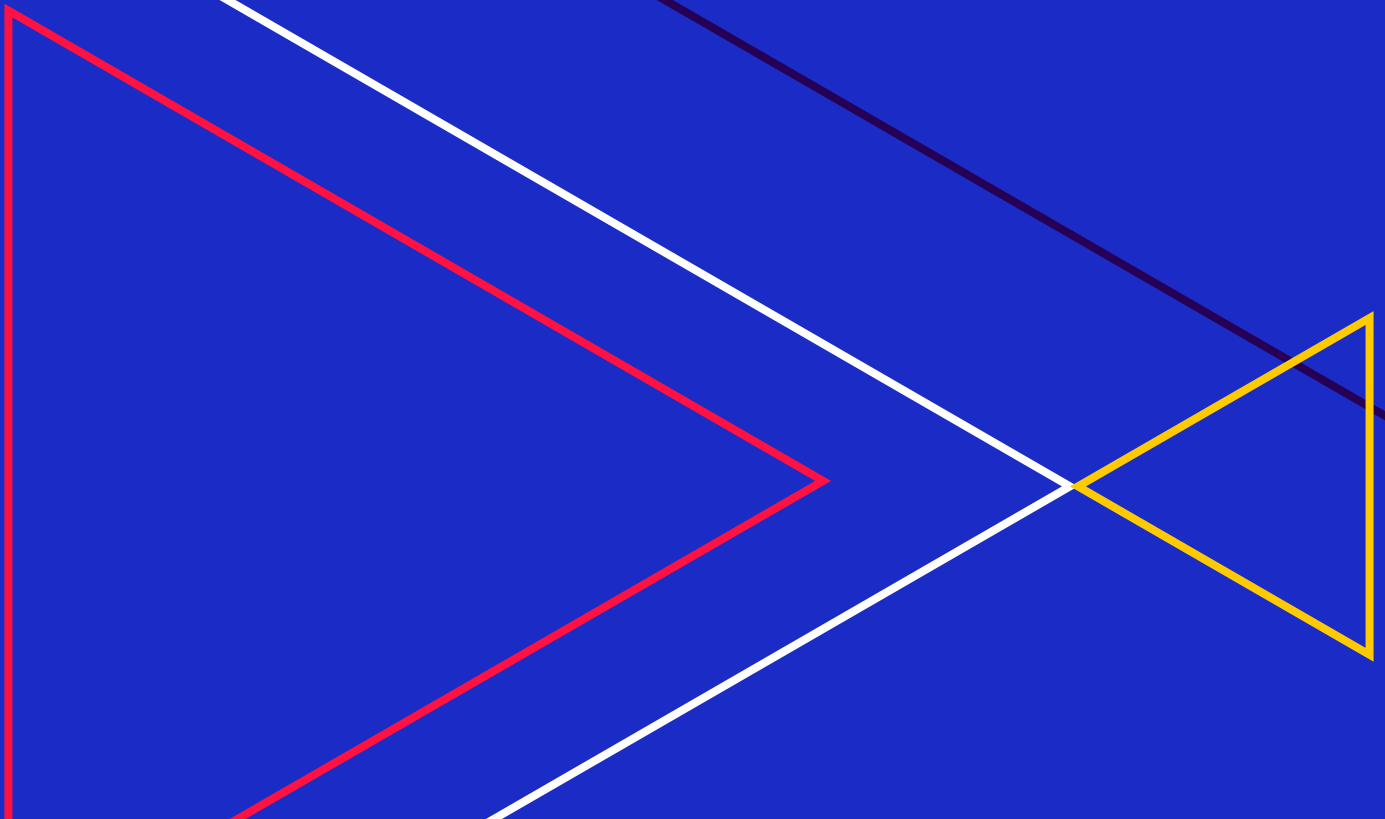
- ▶ What immediate steps do you take to ensure safety and reduce risk of retaliation?
- ▶ What information do you need to document the case in a way that supports follow-up and evidence-based engagement?
- ▶ What complaint pathways are available, and how do you help workers use them safely without increasing their exposure?
- ▶ How do you engage the competent authorities and relevant institutions in a way that is constructive, lawful and consistent with a rights-based approach?
- ▶ What is one improvement you can make in your team's routine practice to support safer reporting and stronger follow-up?

Answer these questions alone or discuss them with your team



3

Labour migration trends, migration cycle and vulnerabilities from a gender perspective and sectoral approach



► Module 3: Labour migration trends, migration cycle and vulnerabilities from a gender perspective and sectoral approach

Aim of this module

This module helps you understand the migration cycle and how risks change across phases and sectors. It highlights gendered and intersecting vulnerabilities that affect African migrant workers, including domestic workers and care workers.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe the main stages of the migration cycle and typical risks at each stage.
- Recognise how gender, sector, status, language and discrimination interact to increase vulnerability.
- Use a sectoral approach to identify practical protection priorities.
- Apply a do no harm approach when assessing options and referrals.

Migration trends and corridors in practical terms

Labour migration is shaped by labour demand in destination countries and by limited decent work opportunities in countries of origin. It can be regular or irregular and can shift quickly in response to policy changes and labour market needs.

For missions, the objective is not to map every trend in detail. It is to understand which groups of workers are most exposed and what risks are most frequent in the corridor you cover.

The migration cycle and typical risks

Labour migration is best understood as a dynamic, cyclical process rather than a single linear stage. Risks may arise at any point in the migration cycle and often compound or reinforce one another over time. Early setbacks such as misinformation, illegal costs, or isolation can reduce a worker's options later and increase dependency on intermediaries or employers. In contexts where a worker's lawful stay and job opportunities are closely tied to one employer, these dynamics can intensify, especially when workers fear retaliation, job loss, or loss of status if they seek help.

► Planning and preparation for labour migration

This stage shapes expectations, costs, and readiness. Common risks include misleading information about wages, job tasks, working time, living conditions, or wage deductions. Contract substitution is a major risk and it can occur when the terms presented later differ from what the worker accepted before departure. Recruitment fees and unexpected costs imposed on workers can lead to debt, which may increase pressure to accept abusive conditions. Another frequent risk is limited understanding of rights at work, workplace norms, and practical procedures, including what to do if conditions differ from what was promised or if the worker needs help soon after arrival to the destination country

► Transit

Transit is often treated as logistical, but it can be a distinct risk point, especially for workers travelling in groups, routed through multiple airports, or relying on intermediaries to manage tickets, documents, and movement. Typical risks include sudden rerouting, disruption of travel plans, and workers being separated from travel documents "for safekeeping". Workers may lose access to phones, SIM cards, or money, and may not know who will meet them, where to go, or what to do if delays occur. Language barriers can prevent workers from understanding

instructions or seeking help. Transit can also be a moment when workers are pressured to accept changed terms, sign papers they do not understand, or agree to arrangements that limit their options upon arrival.

► **Arrival and reception**

This stage can set the tone for the entire employment relationship. Risks include reliance on intermediaries for procedures and interpretation, pressure to sign new documents, and being placed in accommodation without clear information about conditions, rules, or costs. Document retention may occur early and can limit mobility and access to services. Workers may also be discouraged from contacting others, including family, consular services or support services, increasing isolation. Where job mobility is restricted in practice, workers can feel compelled to accept changes in job tasks, wages, or conditions because leaving may risk lawful stay, housing, or income.

This stage presents an opportunity for consular services to engage early, acting proactively to prevent issues and support migrant workers going forward.

► **Employment and stay**

This stage is where many risks and violations of fundamental rights become visible and measurable. Common risks include delayed wages, wage withholding, unexplained deductions, and denial of payslips or proof of payment. Excessive hours, lack of rest, and unsafe or unhealthy work are frequently reported, particularly where oversight is weak. Restriction of movement may occur through document retention, control over transport, surveillance, or threats. Violence and harassment can occur in the workplace or in employer provided accommodation, with particular impacts on women and groups facing discrimination. Barriers to changing jobs can trap workers in harmful situations, especially when workers fear losing status by leaving an employer. Access to remedies may be limited by costs, time, language, lack of information, intimidation, or mistrust that reporting will lead to retaliation rather than protection.

► **Return and reintegration**

Risks often continue at the point of exit and after return. Workers may leave without receiving final wages, end of service benefits, or compensation for injuries. Complaints may remain unresolved, and workers may lack the documents needed to pursue a claim later, such as contracts, payslips, identity documents, medical reports, or written decisions. Some return under pressure, after termination, or

with limited time to gather evidence or seek advice. After return, debt, unemployment, and limited access to cross border follow up can make remedies difficult to pursue, even when serious violations occurred.

At this stage, labour attachés can play a critical role by engaging proactively before departure and at the point of exit, providing timely advice, supporting documentation collection, facilitating access to remedies, and coordinating follow-up.

Which stage of the cycle is least visible in your mission's current work, and what practical signals could help you detect risks earlier?

What documents or information do workers most often lack when they seek help, and how does that affect their options for protection and remedies?

A gender responsive and intersection sensitive lens

A gender responsive and intersection sensitive lens helps missions understand how labour migration risks are not experienced in the same way by all workers. Gender shapes who migrates, into which sectors, and how dependency and exploitation may arise in practice. Women migrant workers are often concentrated in domestic work, care work, and some service jobs, where isolation can be common and labour protections may be weaker in practice.

An intersection sensitive approach recognizes that multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination can deepen vulnerability. A worker may face discrimination linked to gender, race, nationality, religion, language, occupation, and migration status. These factors can reduce access to information and justice and increase fear of retaliation, especially where residence status is tied to the employer.

This lens also helps labour attachés to check and understand structural barriers that may undermining equality and non discrimination.

In practice, it supports simple safeguards such as confidential communication, informed consent before outreach to employers or sponsors, accessible information in languages workers understand, and referral pathways that are safe for those facing retaliation risks. The objective is not to apply a complex framework. It is to identify which groups are most exposed and which risks are most frequent in the corridor you cover, and to adjust outreach, communication, and referrals accordingly.

A glance at risks from a sectoral lens

Risks and protection needs can look different across sectors, so a simple sectoral lens helps labour attachés anticipate common issues and tailor outreach, referrals, and case handling accordingly.

- Domestic work and care work can involve isolation in private households, long hours, limited rest, retention of identity documents, and exposure to violence and harassment.
- Construction and manual work can involve unsafe worksites, weak occupational safety and health measures, limited safety training, contract substitution, excessive overtime, wage delays, and inadequate accommodation.
- Hospitality and retail can involve irregular or unpredictable hours, wage deductions that are not clearly explained, harassment, and dependence on the employer for residence renewal.

- Security work can involve long shifts and night work, delayed wages, limited freedom to leave the workplace during duty, restrictions linked to uniforms and controlled movement, exposure to violence, and limited access to complaint channels when the employer or site management controls accommodation and transport.
- Delivery and platform-based work can involve piece rate pay and unstable income, penalties that reduce wages, pressure to work excessive hours, road safety risks, weak access to occupational safety and health protection, and dependence on the sponsor or company for residence renewal, which can deter workers from reporting abuse or changing jobs.

Labour attachés can tailor outreach and case handling by sector in the countries where they are stationed. This helps prioritize the most relevant information, referrals, options for skills recognition and training, and priorities for dialogue with competent authorities and social partners.

What this means for case assessment

When a worker seeks help, it is useful to locate the problem in the migration cycle. This can point to where solutions are most likely to be found and which authorities or actors need to be engaged across borders.

A gender responsive and intersection sensitive lens adds a second step: identify how legal status, dependency on the sponsor, language, disability, age, occupation, and social isolation may be shaping the risk of harm and the ability to seek remedies. This helps you assess urgency and safety, including risks of retaliation, and choose communication and referral options that are confidential, accessible, and appropriate to the worker's circumstances.

A sectoral lens adds a third step: understand how the sector and work setting influence evidence, likely violations, and practical pathways. For example, domestic work may require strategies that address isolation in private households, while construction, security, or delivery work may require attention to occupational safety and health, accommodation arrangements, and worksite controls.

Recruitment related harm often requires engagement with recruiters, agencies, or competent authorities in the origin country as well as the destination country. Employment related harm often requires engagement with labour authorities, complaint mechanisms and, where applicable, justice actors in the destination country. Return related issues require attention to cross border follow up, including recovery of wages and access to remedies after departure.

Short scenario

Self/reflection or Group Discussion

The mission received complaints from linked by the same sponsor. One worker in delivery work reports that his pay is calculated per task and that penalties and unexplained charges have reduced his income below what was promised. A second worker in private security reports repeated twelve hour shifts with no weekly rest, and that his identity

documents are held by the company. A third worker, a young woman in cleaning services, reports "feeling unsafe" and says she is afraid to remain in her job but don't know what to do. Each of the workers said that the contract they signed before departure differs from what they received on arrival.

Questions for reflection or discussion

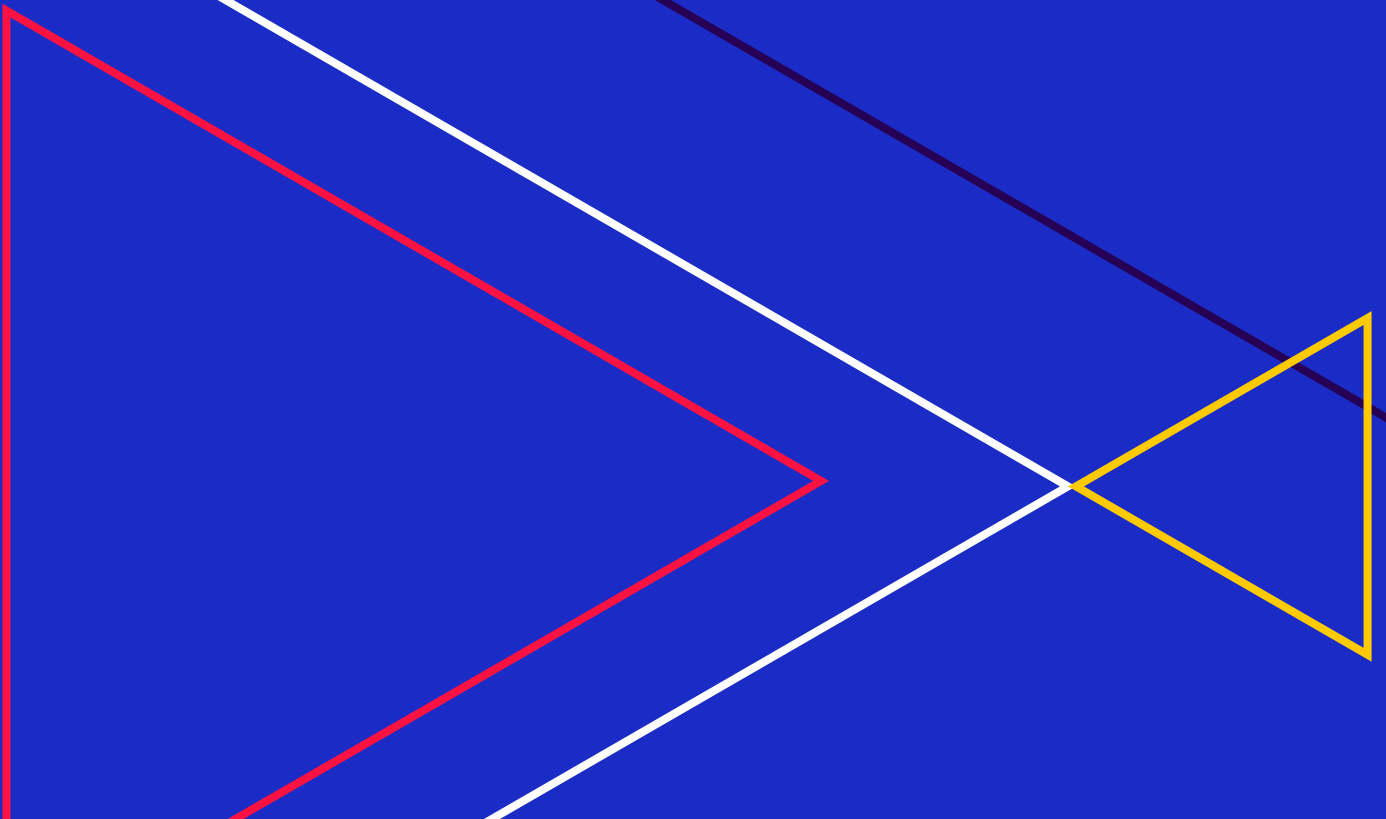
- At which stages do the main problems in this scenario arise, and what does each stage suggest about where remedies may sit in the destination country and in the country of origin, including for the worker who has already returned?
- Which factors in this case may increase exposure or reduce access to support, such as gender, age, language, disability, occupation, and dependency on the sponsor, and how do these factors change your approach to safe communication and referrals?
- How do the risks, evidence, and practical entry points differ between delivery work, private security, and cleaning services, and what would you prioritize in each sector when documenting the case?
- What are the actions you can take directly, what requires referral or escalation to competent authorities?
- What constraints could limit effective assistance and what practical steps can your team take to reduce these constraints in future cases?

Answer these questions alone or discuss them with your team.



4

Kafala (sponsorship)
systems



► Module 4: Kafala (sponsorship) systems

Aim of this module

This module explains how sponsorship-based systems operate in practice and why they can increase risks of exploitation and forced labour. It also provides practical guidance for missions on how to navigate these systems while protecting workers and maintaining a do no harm approach.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe core features of kafala or sponsorship-based systems and how they affect workers' rights in practice.
- Recognise how dependency on the employer can create or worsen forced labour risks.
- Identify practical steps a mission can take when sponsorship rules restrict job change, exit or access to complaint mechanisms.
- Use careful communication that reduces retaliation risks for workers.

What is meant by kafala or sponsorship-based systems

In many destination contexts, kafala or sponsorship-based systems refer to legal and administrative arrangements that link a migrant worker's immigration status and work authorization to a specific sponsor, often a private employer. While the rules differ across countries and can change over time, the common feature is that the worker's legal stay is closely connected to the sponsor's actions and decisions.

In practice, sponsorship can shape whether a worker can change jobs, renew residence and work permits, access own identity documents, leave the country, or remain in regular status if the employment relationship ends. Where these steps depend on employer approval or control, power imbalances can deepen and workers may hesitate to report abuse or seek help, especially when they fear retaliation or loss of status.

For missions, understanding sponsorship is about recognizing how dependency operates in the corridor you cover, so that case assessment and engagement with competent actors are realistic, safe, and consistent with a rights-based approach.

Why sponsorship can increase vulnerability

In sponsorship-based systems, the State often delegates key responsibilities to a private sponsor to oversee a migrant worker's immigration and employment status.

When residence and work permits are linked to the employment relationship, a worker's immigration status can depend on the sponsor, and termination can remove the legal basis to stay. This creates a power imbalance that can leave workers with little leverage to negotiate, resign, or raise concerns safely.

When an employer controls sponsorship related steps, workers may fear that speaking up will lead to job loss and loss of status, including arrest, detention, or deportation under practices linked to "absconding". This fear can discourage help seeking and allow abuse to continue, especially where delayed wages, document confiscation, restrictions on movement, and violence are reported together

Common protection issues linked to sponsorship-based systems

A major issue is restricted labour market mobility. Administrative procedures to transfer can place serious limits on a worker's mobility and freedom of movement, and make it difficult to leave an abusive job. Exit related restrictions can also apply, including where an exit permit or employer

approval is required, or where practical obstacles delay departure. While the type and level of these restrictions depend on national regulations, the principle is common across countries that adopt kafala.

Workers can also be pushed into irregularity through no fault of their own if the sponsor fails to renew or cancel residence steps on time, which can block travel and increase vulnerability. Document retention is another common pattern, including confiscation of passports and withholding of identity documents, alongside delayed or non-payment of wages, long hours, untreated medical needs, and violence. In

isolated sectors such as domestic work, these conditions can accumulate and increase the risk of forced labour.

Sponsorship/Kafala Case assessment checklist: the five questions

Use this as a quick check to understand the situation. The more answers are “Yes”, the higher the dependency and the greater the need for protective, step by step action.

- Is entry into the destination country tied to a specific employer through a work or residence visa?
- Is renewal of stay in the country the responsibility of the employer?
- Does termination of employment require the employer's approval in practice?
- Is transfer to a different employer restricted by employer consent or difficult procedures in practice?
- Does exit from the country require employer approval or cooperation in practice?

Multiple yes to the above questions lead to combined dependency and can raise the risk to forced labour.

Each element can contribute to an unequal relationship between the employer and the worker and, when combined, can limit mobility and expose workers to greater risk of exploitation and abuse.

Dependency can be sharpened when the worker can become undocumented through the sponsor's action or inaction, including failure to renew permits, which may lead to penalties such as detention or deportation.

Why this matters for labour attachés and consular staff

By understanding the structural challenges of kafala sponsorship systems, labour attachés and consular staff can tailor their approach when engaging authorities and employers, a step that is often necessary. Such engagement must never put workers at risk. Labour attachés should be clear about the purpose of any contact and avoid sharing identifying details without the worker's consent.

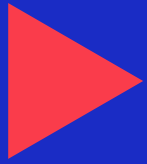
When raising issues, focus on concrete facts and the rights at stake, using calm, technical language that supports problem-solving. Where possible, cultivate relationships with focal points in labour ministries, complaint units, inspection bodies, and specialized protection services to strengthen coordinated support for workers.

Using Checklist Results to Guide Protective Action

Labour attachés and diaspora officers can use the checklist results to move from assessment to action in a structured and protective way. The more sponsorship related dependency you identify, the more important it becomes to sequence steps carefully, document well, and avoid actions that could expose the worker to retaliation or loss of status.

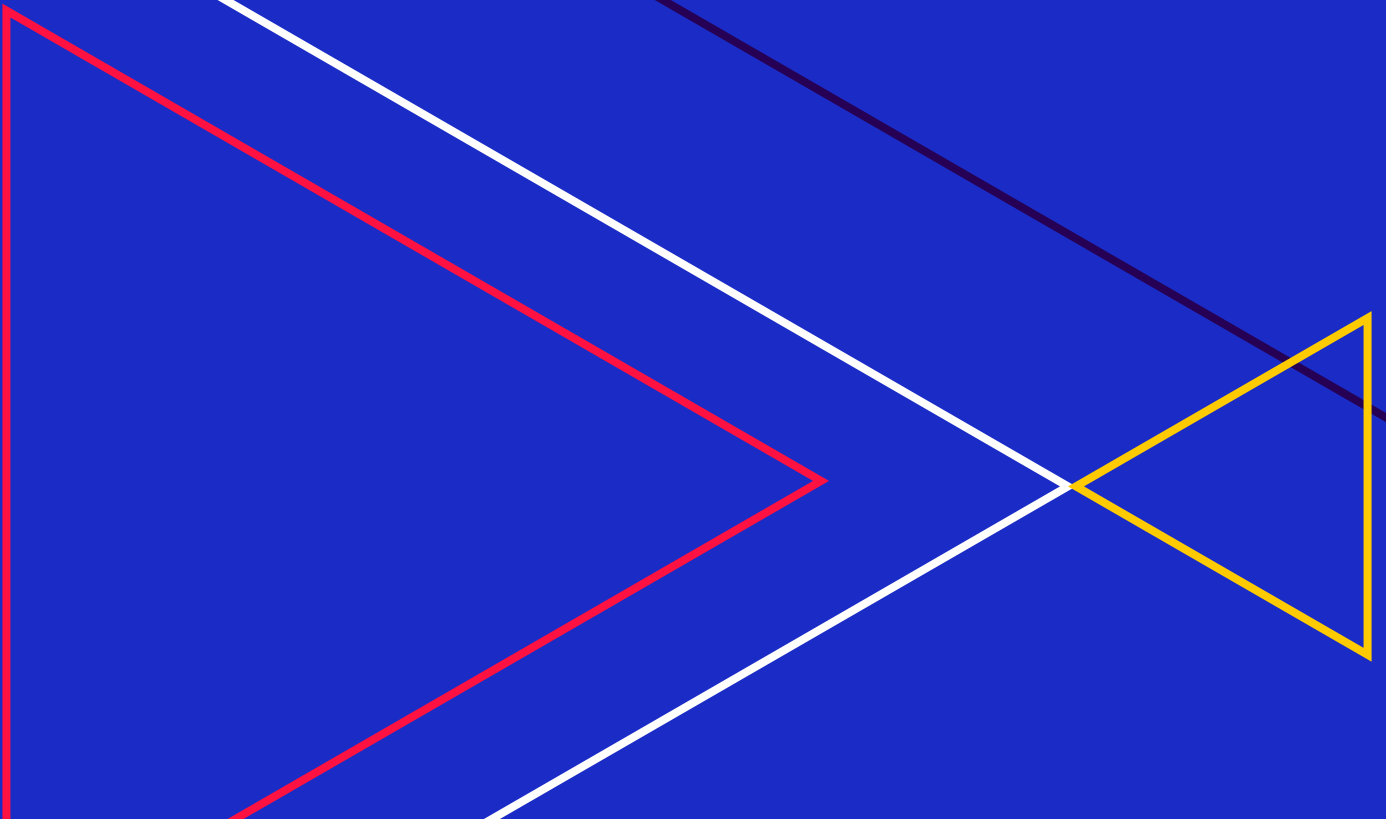
Start with immediate safety, confidentiality, and informed consent. Clarify what the worker wants to achieve, what risks they fear, and what they are comfortable with. Do not contact an employer, recruiter, sponsor, or any third party without the worker's informed consent, unless there is an urgent and credible risk to life or serious harm and the case requires immediate protective referral.

Prioritize documentation that supports status protection and access to remedies, focusing on what is realistic to obtain. This can include proof of identity and residence, work authorization or sponsorship related documents, wage and working time records, and medical reports where relevant. Note any indicators of coercion, document retention, or restriction of movement. Then map the rights at stake using the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and other relevant standards, and check the current rules and procedures in the destination context, including any reforms that allow transfer, exit, or specific complaint pathways. Where the risk of harm is high, begin with safer options such as referrals to shelters, legal aid, and protection-oriented complaint units, and only then consider employer engagement or other steps that could increase exposure.



5

Regulatory
frameworks and
fair recruitment



► Module 5: Regulatory frameworks and fair recruitment

Aim of this module

This module introduces fair recruitment as a practical protection entry point. It explains how recruitment practices, fees, contracts and private employment agencies shape risks of forced labour and other exploitation, and what diplomatic missions can do within their mandate to align with fair recruitment practices aligned with ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of fair recruitment and why it matters for forced labour prevention.
- Recognise common recruitment related abuses, including recruitment fees, deception and contract substitution.
- Identify practical questions to ask when reviewing contracts and recruitment arrangements.
- Engage with relevant actors to promote fair recruitment and reduce harm.

Fair recruitment in simple terms

Fair recruitment, in simple terms, means recruitment that is honest, transparent and respectful of workers' rights. Workers should receive clear and accurate information on the job, pay, working time, living arrangements where relevant, and the steps required for travel and employment. Recruitment should be free from discrimination and should not involve deception, threats or pressure.

A core principle is that workers should not pay recruitment fees or related costs, directly or indirectly, including through deductions from wages. When workers are charged, they may enter the job with debt, which can increase dependency and make it harder to leave an abusive situation.

Recruitment is relevant across the migration cycle. Recruitment practices can shape what happens during employment, including contract substitution, wage deductions and restrictions on mobility.

The 13 Principle General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment

1. Respect for international labour standards
2. Respond to labour market needs and decent work
3. Relevant legislations to align with the fair recruitment
4. Promotion of efficiency and transparency and accountability in the recruitment process
5. Effective law enforcement
6. Recruitment across borders with respect for human rights
7. Prohibition of recruitment fees charged to workers
8. Clear and transparent contracts
9. Migrants are freely without coercion to terms of employments
10. Free, comprehensive and accurate information
11. Identify documents, freedom of movement
12. Termination of employment and permission to change employer
13. Access to grievance and other dispute mechanisms

For labour attachés, asking a few basic questions early on about how the worker was recruited, what they paid, and whether the terms changed can help identify risk, choose safer remedies, engage the right actors across borders, and influence pre-departure actions and policies.

Common recruitment related risks in sponsorship contexts

The risks below include examples of common recruitment abuses and adhering to the principle that workers should not be charged recruitment fees or related costs.

- Charging recruitment fees or related costs to workers, which can lead to debt bondage.
- False promises about wages, working hours, tasks, job location, or accommodation.
- Contract substitution after arrival, including downgrading job title, pay, or conditions.
- Use of unlicensed intermediaries or informal brokers, including sub agents that are hard to trace and regulate.
- Retention of passports or identity documents during recruitment or on arrival, limiting freedom of movement and increasing control.
- Illegal wage deductions after placement, including deductions used to recover recruitment costs.
- Placement into non existing jobs, or arrival without a confirmed job and being pressured to accept any available work to avoid losing status.
- Threats, pressure, or intimidation when workers want to leave the employer, combined with fear of expulsion, which can deter reporting and seeking support.
- Lack of clear written contracts and understandable information, including failure to explain terms and complaint options in a language the worker understands.
- Hidden or inflated recruitment related charges and debt arrangements, including deposits or bonds, kickbacks, loans or salary advances, and wage deductions used to recover these costs, which can deepen dependency and restrict workers' ability to leave or seek support.

Practical steps for Labour attachés

- Provide clear information to workers on basic rights, common recruitment risks, and where to seek help. Where relevant, share information in languages workers understand.
- When a worker presents a case, check whether recruitment fees, debt, deception or contract substitution are involved. These issues can be central to forced labour risk.
- Engage with competent authorities and partners to support action against abusive recruiters. Where possible, coordinate with relevant institutions in the country of origin.
- Check contracts and recruitment terms by focus on a few essentials:
 - Wages and payment method.
 - Working hours and rest.
 - Job tasks.
 - Accommodation and food where relevant.
 - Freedom to keep identity documents.
 - Freedom to move outside the workplace.
 - Freedom to connect with others including trade unions, migrant workers associations, embassies, NGOs.
 - Conditions for termination, job change and return.
- Use consistent documentation. Over time, patterns related to specific recruiters or practices can inform dialogue and prevention.



Famara Dieng/ILO

Short scenario

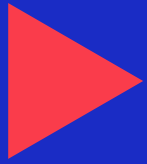
Self/reflection or Group Discussion

A group of African workers approaches the mission shortly after arrival. They report that a broker arranged their jobs and travel. Each worker paid different amounts, but none received receipts. On arrival, they were taken to employer provided housing and asked to hand over passports “for processing”. Their contracts now show different wages and longer hours than what was promised. Some are already facing deductions for “administration” and “transport”. They are worried that if they complain, the sponsor will cancel their papers or block them from changing jobs.

Questions for reflection or discussion

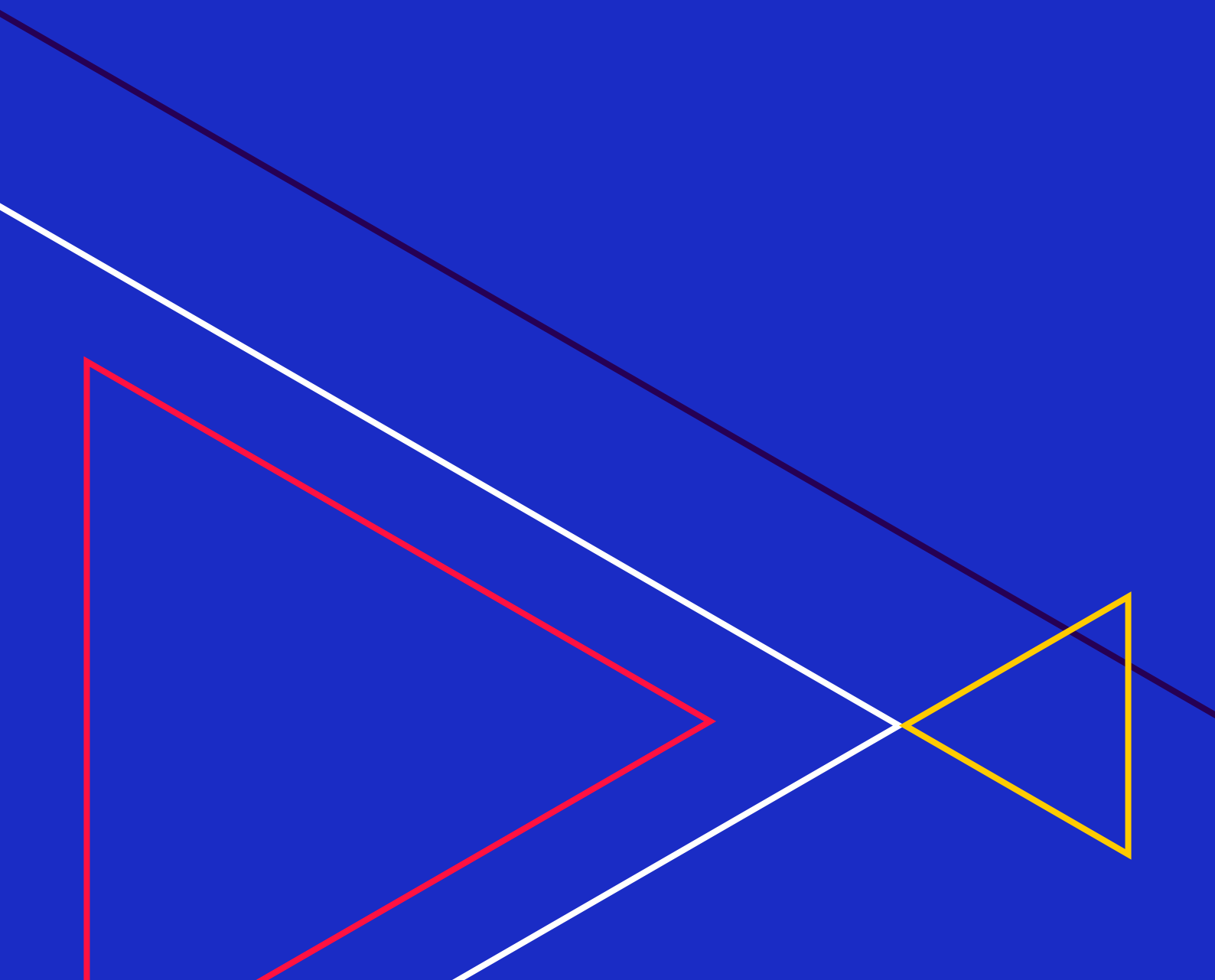
- ▶ Which elements in the scenario suggest whether recruitment was fair or not, for example transparency of information, written terms, costs charged to workers, changes to the contract after arrival, and any pressure or document retention?
- ▶ What are the first steps the mission can take to protect the workers without increasing their exposure?
- ▶ How can the mission use bilateral cooperation to trigger prevention and accountability, including information-sharing with competent authorities in the country of origin about brokers or agencies involved and patterns of fees, deception, or contract substitution?
- ▶ What practical improvements can be recommended for pre-departure planning and training in countries of origin based on this case?
- ▶ What policy or procedural change would prevention value in this scenario?

Answer these questions alone or discuss them with your team



6

Access to justice,
grievance
mechanisms and
case management



► Module 6: Access to justice, grievance mechanisms and case management

Aim of this module

This module supports labour attachés, consular staff and diaspora officers to respond to migrant workers' complaints in a way that is safe, practical and consistent with a rights-based approach. It explains what effective remedy means, why grievance mechanisms matter, and how to translate access to justice into day-to-day case management, focusing on destination contexts where sponsorship-based rules shape mobility and legal status.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain what remedy is and what makes it effective for migrant workers.
- Assess whether a grievance mechanism is likely to be safe and useful in a sponsorship context.
- Map available complaint and remedy pathways relevant to the country where you posted and choose a protective sequence.
- Document cases in a consistent way that supports follow up and learning.
- Engage competent authorities and, when needed, employers or recruiters to provide effective support to workers.

Why access to justice matters?

As described in previous modules, in many destinations where labour migration is organised through the kafala system, the worker's residence and work authorisation are linked in practice to a sponsor. When legal stay and job change depend on employer cooperation, workers may avoid reporting even serious abuses because they fear job loss, loss of status, loss of unpaid wages, detention, eviction from employer provided housing, or other retaliation. In this setting, access to justice is not only about formal laws. It is about whether a worker can seek help without being pushed into greater harm.

For diplomatic missions, the main objectives are prevention and protection. Safe and predictable complaint pathways can stop abuse earlier, reduce escalation, and create incentives for better practice. Weak pathways can leave workers isolated and can allow patterns of non-payment, coercion, discrimination, and violence and harassment to continue. Over time, case patterns also provide evidence for policy dialogue and bilateral cooperation, including prevention measures at recruitment and pre departure stages

Effective remedy

Remedy refers to both the process of addressing harm and the outcomes that put things right as far as possible. Remedies can include payment of wages owed, return of documents, medical care, compensation for injury, the ability to change employer lawfully, safe return, and measures that prevent the same harm from happening again. It is important to recognise that some harms can be fully corrected, for example unpaid wages can be paid, a passport can be returned, or a permit can be regularised. But other harm cannot be fully undone, for example an injury, trauma, or months of intimidation. In those cases, remedy focuses on what can still be done to restore rights, reduce ongoing harm, and prevent it from happening again. In practice, one

case often involves more than one problem, so remedy is rarely just one action. For example, a worker may need wage recovery and return of documents and a safe job transfer, or medical care and compensation and safe accommodation. If a worker is preparing to leave, remedy may include recovering wages and arranging exit procedures and follow-up after return.

An effective remedy is one that responds to the worker's situation and is realistic in the destination context. It should address the harm in a timely way, restore rights where possible, and reduce the risk of retaliation. A remedy can look complete on paper but still be ineffective if it is not safe to pursue, if it increases retaliation or loss of status, or if it is too slow to prevent further harm.

Grievance mechanisms

Grievance mechanisms include any structured way for workers to raise concerns and seek solutions. They can exist at workplace level, through public complaint bodies, or through judicial systems. They can also exist within supply chains, for example when a main contractor or lead company enables workers hired by subcontractors to report concerns through its own grievance channel.

When they work well, grievance mechanisms can resolve problems earlier, help prevent escalation, and provide an early warning signal that the risk of rights violations is increasing. They also make case handling more consistent, because complaints follow clear steps and timelines rather than depending mainly on individual judgement or personal connections.

In sponsorship-based settings, grievance mechanisms are crucial because workers may face practical barriers in accessing courts or official complaint routes. A credible workplace mechanism, a specialised complaint unit, or a trusted mediation pathway can be a bridge to remedy. At the same time, missions should not assume that any mechanism is safe simply because it exists. Confidentiality, retaliation risk and power imbalance must be assessed case by case.

Mapping pathways to remedy in the destination context

Most destination contexts offer more than one pathway to raise a complaint, but the options and their accessibility for migrant workers vary across countries and can differ in practice from what is written in law.

Some are judicial, through courts, including where specialised labour courts or labour tribunals handle employment disputes. Some are non-judicial, through labour complaint bodies, labour inspection, administrative dispute bodies, national human rights institutions, or specialised units. Some are organisation based, such as employer or contractor hotlines, worker committees, platform complaint systems, or grievance channels run by lead companies in subcontracting arrangements.

The mission should assess what exists locally, and its role is to help the worker understand options and choose the safest sequence. The mapping should include eligibility, required documents, expected timelines, language support, possible costs, and the practical risk that the employer may retaliate or cancel status. It should also consider cross border follow up. Some remedies, such as recovery of wages, can remain possible after the worker leaves the country, but the steps must be planned early.

A quick quality check for grievance mechanisms

A grievance mechanism is more likely to help if workers can use it without fear, if the steps are clear, and if the results are realistic and timely. It should operate in a balanced way in practice, protect privacy, and offer interpretation or other support so that language does not block access. Workers should also receive clear information on next steps, expected timelines, and how decisions are communicated.

Before referring a worker, labour attachés can use the questions below to test whether the mechanism can deliver remedy without increasing risk.

- Can the worker use the mechanism without losing legal status, shelter, or income?
- Does the worker have a safe way to participate, including for women workers and workers facing violence and harassment?
- Does the mechanism lead to concrete outcomes such as payment of owed wages, return of documents, safeguards against unfair termination, or support for a lawful transfer?

If the answer is unclear, consider safer alternatives or additional protection before referral.

What missions can do, and what they should avoid in supporting access to justice

There are local institutions responsible for enforcement and decision making, and missions do not replace those competent authorities. Their added value is in protection, advice and support that prioritises the worker's safety and rights while helping them pursue a solution. This includes providing workers with information to help them understand their options, supporting safe referrals, ensuring consistent documentation, and engaging authorities when needed to support lawful remedies.

Missions can also support prevention. Patterns in complaints can inform bilateral dialogue and be reflected in bilateral agreements, awareness campaigns, and pre departure planning in countries of origin. When labour attachés can demonstrate consistent facts across cases, it becomes easier to advocate for practical reforms such as clearer job transfer procedures, safer complaint routes, faster wage recovery, or stronger regulation of recruiters aligned with fair recruitment principles.

1. Safety, confidentiality and informed consent

In sponsorship settings, a simple call to verify employment can expose a worker if the employer reacts by restricting movement, withholding wages, or falsely reporting the worker as absent. Informed consent is therefore an important protection measure.

As labour attachés, start every case with the worker's immediate safety in mind and consult them on their preferences.

Practical guidance to follow:

- Ask what the worker wants to happen and what they fear may happen if the employer is contacted.
- Confirm what information can be shared, with whom, and for what purpose.
- If the worker reports violence, harassment, severe coercion, or urgent health risks, prioritise protective referrals and safety planning.
- Where possible, connect the worker with specialised services and explain any consequences that may arise from contacting authorities.
- If urgent action is needed to prevent serious harm, document the reasons clearly and keep information confidential and only shared to the minimum necessary.

2. Triage and urgency

Triage means deciding what needs to happen first. In sponsorship contexts, urgency may arise from detention risk, loss of documents, imminent eviction, medical needs, threats, or inability to access food and basic services, and in extreme cases threats of self-harm. It may also arise when the employer is about to cancel permits or when the worker's residence is close to expiry.

A practical triage approach is to identify whether the case requires immediate protection, rapid legal advice, or administrative action to stabilise status. Some cases can start with information and referral. Others require active coordination with protection services or complaint bodies. Triage should also consider gender related risks. Women workers in isolated sectors may have fewer safe spaces and may face higher stigma in reporting violence and harassment. Workers with disabilities may require adapted communication and accessible services.

3. Documentation

Good documentation of cases helps protect workers and supports evidence-based engagement. It also reduces repeated retelling of trauma.

Documentation should focus on facts, dates, locations, names of relevant organisations such as the employer, sponsor, recruitment agency, subcontractor or platform company, and any evidence the worker can provide or safely obtain, such as contracts, payslips, bank transfers, messages, receipts, medical reports, or photos.

Practical guidance to follow:

- Keep the worker's narrative true to their own words as much as possible and separate it from your analysis and assessment.
- Attach a copy of the statement to the file.
- Prioritise documents that support legal status and remedy.

This often includes proof of identity and residence, copies of work authorisation or sponsorship related documents, any written contract or offer letter, wage records such as payslips or bank statements, records of working time, and proof of deductions. If injury or violence is reported, medical documentation and any written messages or screenshots may be relevant. Where documents are withheld, record the worker's explanation and any evidence of requests to return them.

- Respect data protection by limiting access to case files to staff who need it. Store information securely. Avoid sharing identifying details through informal channels when possible. If information must be shared for referral, share only what is necessary, and confirm consent.
- Remember that clear case notes support institutional continuity when consular staff rotate.



Choosing a safe sequence of steps

Choosing a safe sequence means taking action in an order that reduces risk. In sponsorship settings, dependency can turn a normal complaint into a crisis if the employer reacts by cancelling permits, evicting the worker, or restricting movement. A safe sequence helps keep options open.

When the risk of retaliation is high, start with safer measures. This may include:

- a confidential referral to legal aid, a shelter, or a specialised complaint unit that can provide protection;
- support to gather documents and stabilise status;
- contacting a relevant public body that can request or require employer cooperation for wage payment or return of documents;
- advice on safely contacting family or trusted networks without exposing the worker.

Engagement with employers or recruiters can be necessary, but it should come after safety planning and documentation, and only with the worker's informed consent. Where the mission has a trusted focal point within relevant public bodies, engagement may be done through that channel to reduce confrontation and focus on lawful solutions.

Engaging competent authorities, employers and recruiters

Effective engagement is factual, calm and focused on problem solving. Use clear information on what happened, what documents support the facts, and what remedy the worker seeks. Avoid language that escalates tensions. Focus on rights and obligations, and on the practical steps needed to resolve the case.

- When engaging competent authorities, seek clarity on procedures and timelines. Ask how the worker can remain in regular status while a complaint is pending, and what measures exist to prevent retaliation. Where appropriate and permitted, ask whether employers can be reminded not to withhold wages, documents, or access to accommodation during the process. When the worker is in detention, prioritise rapid coordination and clear documentation.
- When engaging employers, be clear about the purpose of contact and confirm that you are acting with the worker's consent. Keep information shared to the minimum necessary. Where possible, propose concrete actions such as payment of wages owed, return of documents, access to medical care, and respect for rest time. If the employer proposes a settlement, check that it is voluntary, documented, and does not restrict the worker's future rights.
- Engagement with recruiters often requires cross-border coordination. Where patterns suggest unfair recruitment, document the names of intermediaries and the fees or costs charged. Share this information through official channels with competent authorities in countries of origin when appropriate. This

supports prevention, enforcement and better pre departure planning.

From grievances to case management

A grievance is an entry point. Case management is the structured way a mission records, assesses, follows up and closes cases. It supports consistency across staff and ensures that the mission can learn from patterns over time. Case management does not mean the mission solves every problem directly. It means the mission supports a safe pathway to remedy and documents what happens.

A practical case management approach includes a clear intake note, a risk and urgency assessment, a case plan, follow up actions, and a closure note. It also includes a simple system to track pending cases, deadlines, and referrals. In a high rotation environment, institutional continuity is as important as individual effort.

1. Case intake and the first interview

The first contact sets the tone. Use plain language. Explain confidentiality and any limits, including when information may need to be shared for referral. Confirm basic identity and safe contact details in a way that does not expose the worker if the phone is monitored. Ask what the worker wants most, and what they fear most.

Gather the essential facts. Identify the employer or sponsor, the sector, the worksite or household location if known, the date of arrival, the current residence status, and whether documents are held. Ask about wages, hours, accommodation, and any violence or threats. If recruitment fees were paid, record amounts, dates, and who received payment. Confirm what evidence exists and what can be obtained safely.

2. Risk assessment and case classification

In sponsorship contexts, always consider how the complaint may affect residence status and job mobility. But in all scenarios, cases must be classified by urgency and by type of harm.

Urgency may be high when there is detention risk, violence, homelessness, severe wage theft, medical needs, restriction of movement, or risk of self-harm.

Other type of harm may include non payment of wages, document retention, excessive hours, unsafe work, discrimination, violence and harassment, recruitment related debt, or other forced labour indicators.

Classification helps decide the lead pathway:

- ▶ Wage and hours disputes may use labour complaint bodies.
- ▶ Document retention may require administrative action depending on the context.
- ▶ Violence and harassment may require specialised protection and justice pathways.
- ▶ Recruitment debt may require cross border coordination.

3. Case planning and follow up

A case plan is a short internal note that records the worker's preferred outcomes, the agreed sequence of steps, and who will do what. It should include planned referrals and the timeline for follow-up. It should also note any red lines, such as not contacting the employer without further consent.

Follow up should be predictable, the worker should know what to expect after the first contact, instead of waiting with uncertainty.

Agree with the worker on the safest way to communicate, including time and channel.

Record each action taken, the response received, and next steps. If the worker stops responding, record the attempts made and any concerns about safety.

4. Case closure and learning

Close a case when the remedy is achieved, when the worker chooses to stop, when the worker leaves the country and follow up is transferred, or when options are exhausted. Closure should include a clear note on what was achieved and what remains pending, such as unpaid wages that may require cross-border follow-up.

Case closure should inform institutional learning and practical lessons learned. Each closed case is not only an outcome for one worker, it is also a data point about how the system functions in the corridor you cover. Periodically reviewing closed cases helps missions identify patterns, such as repeated wage delays in a sector, recurring recruiter names, common points where permits fail to renew, frequent document retention, or repeated barriers to job transfer and complaint filing.

This learning can be translated into action in three ways:

First, it supports prevention through targeted outreach, clearer worker guidance, and more realistic advice at intake on safe pathways and expected timelines.

Second, it strengthens engagement with relevant public bodies and social partners by grounding dialogue in consistent facts and documented trends rather than individual stories.

Third, it improves mission practice through updated referral lists, clearer internal procedures, staff training focused on recurring risks, and simple tools that improve continuity during staff rotation.

Where relevant, learning should also feed into bilateral labour cooperation and pre departure planning in countries of origin. Evidence of fee charging, deception, or contract substitution can support stronger recruitment oversight and better training content for workers before they depart, including what documents to keep, what costs they should not pay, and how to seek help early without losing status.

5. Institutional continuity and handover

Institutional continuity enhances the credibility of the labour department in diplomatic missions and increase chances of success in protecting workers. When staff rotate, cases can be delayed or lost, and workers may be asked to repeat difficult experiences. A simple handover system reduces these risks and supports accountability inside the mission.

Handover should include a short case summary, the worker's preferred outcomes, key risks, what has been done, what is pending, deadlines, and who the mission is in contact with. It should record consent choices, such as whether the employer can be contacted, and safe communication preferences.

Where a worker is returning home, plan cross-border follow-up early. Agree what documentation the worker will keep. Identify who will follow up in the country of origin and what information can be shared. Consider how to pursue wage recovery or other remedies after departure, where pathways allow it.

Short scenario

Self/reflection or Group Discussion

A domestic worker contacts the mission after filing a wage complaint. The worker reports that the employer has threatened to cancel the residence permit and has asked the worker to sign a paper stating that all wages have been paid. The worker is also told to leave employer housing within two

days. The worker is afraid that continuing the complaint will lead to detention or forced return. She has no safe place to stay, feels at risk, and cannot accept the loss of six months of wages.

Questions for reflection or discussion

- ▶ What are your first priorities in the next 24 hours to protect the worker and keep options open, including safe communication, informed consent, and emergency referrals?
- ▶ What are the minimum facts and evidence you need to document immediately to support wage recovery and protect her from retaliatory steps, including loss of status or forced departure?
- ▶ In what order would you take action to reduce harm, including how you would use legal advice, shelter or protection services, and complaint pathways before any employer contact?
- ▶ Which public bodies or protection services should be engaged to stabilise her residence status and accommodation, and how do you ensure engagement does not increase the worker's exposure?
- ▶ What does this case tell you about recurring risks in this corridor, and what preventive action could the mission take, such as outreach messages, stronger referral arrangements, or bilateral follow up?

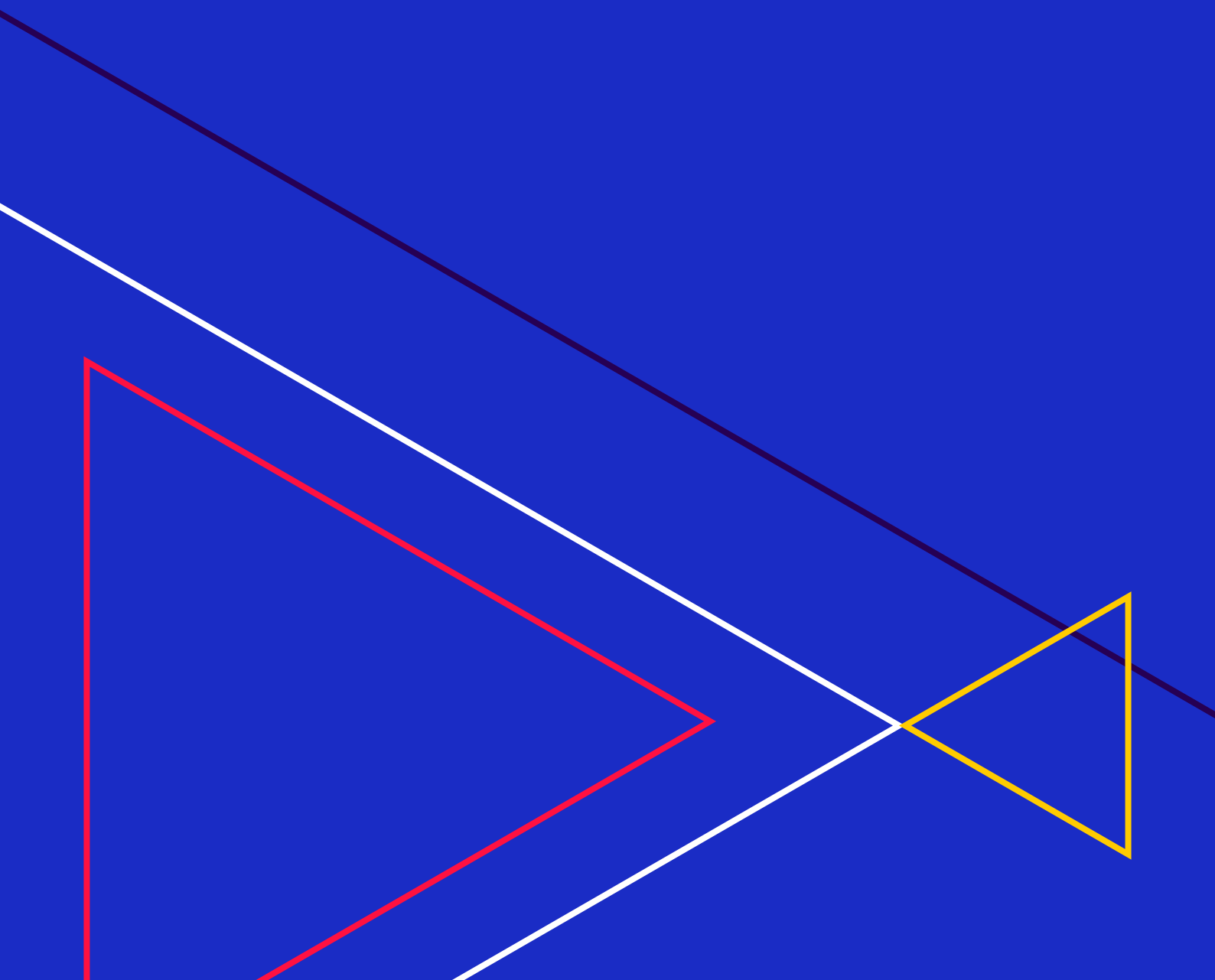
Answer these questions alone or discuss them with your team

If possible, conduct a short role play interview with a fictional character to practise safe, respectful questioning and to better understand the worker's fears, priorities, and constraints.



7

Roles of diplomatic missions, labour attachés and diaspora desk officers



► Module 7: Roles of diplomatic missions, labour attachés and diaspora desk officers

Aim of this module

This module clarifies the practical protection role of diplomatic missions in destination countries. It focuses on how labour attachés, consular staff and diaspora officers can support workers to access remedy safely, especially where residence and work authorisation depend in practice on employer cooperation. The module complements Module 6 by translating access to justice and case management concepts into day-to-day mission actions, including safe communication, documentation, and targeted engagement.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain the mission's added value in worker protection and the limits of the mandate.
- Apply worker-sensitive and gender-responsive communication at first contact and during follow up.
- Apply protection actions in daily work (safe communication, documentation, and engagement) while referring to Module 6 for triage, safe sequencing and referrals.
- Strengthen internal coordination, documentation, and handover to ensure continuity.
- Capture trends from cases to inform prevention and structured dialogue (see Module 8 for coordination mechanisms).

Key message to remember

Missions do not replace host-country institutions responsible for labour inspection, dispute resolution, immigration decisions or the courts. The mission's protection role is to reduce risk, improve access to information and pathways, and support the worker to pursue remedy through safe, informed choices. Consistent practice, good documentation and coordinated follow-up often determine whether a worker can maintain safety and agency while seeking remedy.

The mission's added value and the limits of the mandate

Workers often approach missions because they are uncertain about options, fear retaliation, or cannot safely navigate procedures alone. Missions add value when they help workers understand processes, document facts, connect to appropriate services, and engage competent authorities in a structured way, without increasing risk.

Mission added value in practice

- Provide a trusted first contact and calm problem assessment in plain language.
- Help the worker anticipate risks of retaliation, loss of work or residence authorisation, or escalation at the workplace.
- Explain complaint pathways and typical steps, and support the worker to prepare for appointments.
- Support documentation by helping the worker organise evidence, preserve a timeline, and keep coherent case notes for continuity.
- Engage relevant institutions to clarify procedures, request updates, and encourage timely, fair handling (with the worker's informed consent).
- Connect workers to trusted services such as shelters, hotlines, legal aid, medical and psychosocial support, and specialised services for survivors of violence.
- Identify recurring issues through anonymised trend capture to support prevention and bilateral or institutional dialogue.

Missions do not replace host-country institutions responsible for labour inspection, dispute resolution, immigration decisions or the courts. The mission's protection role is to

reduce risk, improve access to information and pathways, and support the worker to pursue remedy through safe, informed choices. Consistent practice, good documentation and coordinated follow-up often determine whether a worker can maintain safety and agency while seeking remedy.

What missions should not do

- Do not promise outcomes (for example, that wages will be recovered or a permit will be renewed).
- Do not pressure workers to settle, withdraw complaints, or accept unsafe arrangements.
- Do not act as investigator, judge, or labour inspector; avoid making determinations you are not mandated to make.
- Do not contact employers or third parties without the worker's informed consent and a clear safety rationale.
- Do not hold original documents unless absolutely necessary and documented; avoid practices that expose the worker to risk.
- Do not provide legal advice beyond your competence; facilitate referral to qualified legal support.

Mandate, discretion and 'do no harm'

Protection work requires clarity. Within your mandate, prioritise the worker's safety and choices, and keep actions proportionate. When limits exist (legal, operational or diplomatic), explain them transparently and focus on what you can do: information, referral, safe documentation and structured engagement.

Worker-sensitive and gender-responsive communication in daily practice

Communication is a protection intervention. The first interaction can reduce fear, clarify options and prevent risky steps. It can also unintentionally increase exposure if confidentiality, consent and safe contact are not managed carefully.

At first contact: practical standards

- Start with safety and consent: ask whether the worker can speak safely and whether someone is present.

- Use plain language; avoid legal jargon; check understanding.
- Explain confidentiality and its limits (for example, when information must be shared for referrals or official correspondence).
- Avoid blame or judgement; acknowledge stress and uncertainty without escalating emotions.
- Be attentive to gendered risks (including sexual harassment, workplace isolation, pregnancy-related discrimination, and stigma).
- Offer choices (communication channel, timing, interpreter preference where possible).
- Do not request unnecessary details; collect only what is needed for the next safe step.

Suggested opening script (adapt to context)

"Thank you for contacting us. Before we discuss details, are you safe to speak right now? If not, we can agree on a safer time or channel. I will take brief notes to help us follow up, and I will not contact anyone else without your agreement. I will explain the options and we can decide together on the next step."

Follow up communication: keep it predictable and safe

- Agree on a follow up plan: who will contact whom, by which channel and when.
- Limit sensitive details in messages; use neutral wording in SMS or WhatsApp where phones may be monitored.
- Avoid calling at times when the worker may be with the employer; ask for a safe contact window.
- Record each contact attempt and outcome in the case file to support continuity.
- If risk increases, pause and reassess using the approach in Module 6 (triage and safe sequencing).

Day-to-day mission actions that support protection

This section highlights how to apply guidance provided in earlier modules in daily work. It focuses on practical actions that reduce risk and help workers move forward safely, without duplicating the detailed triage, sequencing and referral steps set out in Module 6.

Safe information and options counselling

Workers often need clarity about practical options before they can make safe decisions. Your role is to provide accurate

information about procedures, typical timelines and possible outcomes, and to help the worker compare options against safety risks.

- Explain the complaint pathways relevant to the case and what evidence is usually required.
- Clarify what the mission can do (for example, letters, appointment support, referrals) and what it cannot do.
- Help the worker prepare questions for labour offices, dispute resolution bodies or legal aid.
- Where an agreement or bilateral arrangement exists, use its language to frame requests and follow up.

3.2 Documentation that protects (not exposes)

Good documentation supports remedy, continuity and accountability. Poor documentation can expose workers to retaliation or privacy harms. Document only what is necessary, store securely, and keep notes factual and proportionate.

- Record a clear timeline: dates, payments, key incidents, and steps already taken.
- Capture consent decisions (what can be shared, with whom, and for what purpose).
- Separate internal case notes from any documents intended for external sharing.
- Avoid storing unnecessary sensitive details; keep identifying data limited to what is required for follow up.
- Use secure storage and agreed access rules within the mission

Referrals and accompaniment

Referrals are often the most protective action a mission can take, particularly for shelter, urgent medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid and specialised services for survivors of violence. Apply the referral principles and sequencing steps in Module 6. This module focuses on how to make referrals predictable and safe in day-to-day practice; Module 8 covers how to build and maintain the mission's referral network.

- Confirm the worker's preferred safe contact method before initiating any referral.
- Share only the minimum information needed, in line with the worker's informed consent.
- Record the referral action (date, partner contacted, agreed next step) in the case file for continuity.

Targeted engagement with institutions (case-specific)

Engagement is most effective when it is targeted, factual and aligned with established procedures. It should support the worker's access to remedy while minimising exposure.

- Use concise, factual requests linked to procedure (for example, how to file, what documents are needed, status of a pending file).
- Where relevant, refer to the language of bilateral arrangements and applicable standards.
- Keep communication focused on access to procedure and timely handling, rather than negotiating outcomes.

Avoid engagement when:

- The worker has not consented to disclosure or engagement would reveal their location.
- Contact with the employer could trigger retaliation or loss of status.
- The worker is in immediate danger and needs urgent protection services first.

Internal coordination and continuity inside the mission

Protection outcomes depend on how well missions coordinate internally. Workers should not have to repeat traumatic details to multiple officers. Clear roles, shared documentation and predictable handover reduce errors and delays.

Role clarity and a shared service inventory

Define who does what at mission level. Even in small teams, a simple division of responsibilities reduces confusion.

- **Labour attaché:** technical assessment, engagement with labour institutions on case-specific issues, trend capture and prevention dialogue.
- **Consular officer:** documentation support (for example, travel documents), consular assistance within mandate, and coordination on urgent protection needs.
- **Diaspora or community officer:** safe outreach, trusted community links, and support to connect workers to services (without replacing formal referral pathways).
- **Case focal point:** case registry management, follow up reminders, and handover coordination.

Case notes, case meetings and handover

- Use a single case file (digital or physical) with a clear case ID and agreed access rules.
- Hold brief case check-ins for complex cases (10-15 minutes) to agree next steps and responsibilities.
- Use a standard handover note when officers rotate or go on leave, focusing on current status, risks, pending appointments, key contacts, and next actions.
- Document decisions and consent. Do not rely on informal memory or personal messaging.
- A good handover is a protection measure. It prevents missed deadlines, reduces repeated interviews, and maintains trust.

Information management and confidentiality (inside the mission)

Treat personal data and case information as sensitive. Limit access to staff who need it for the worker's case. Store files securely, and avoid sharing identifying details in group emails or informal messaging.

- Use password-protected folders or a secure registry, with back-up and controlled permissions.
- Keep separate: (1) internal case notes; (2) documents shared externally; (3) anonymised trend notes for reporting.
- If interpreters or community focal points are used, brief them on confidentiality and avoid unnecessary disclosure.

5. Trend capture for prevention and reporting

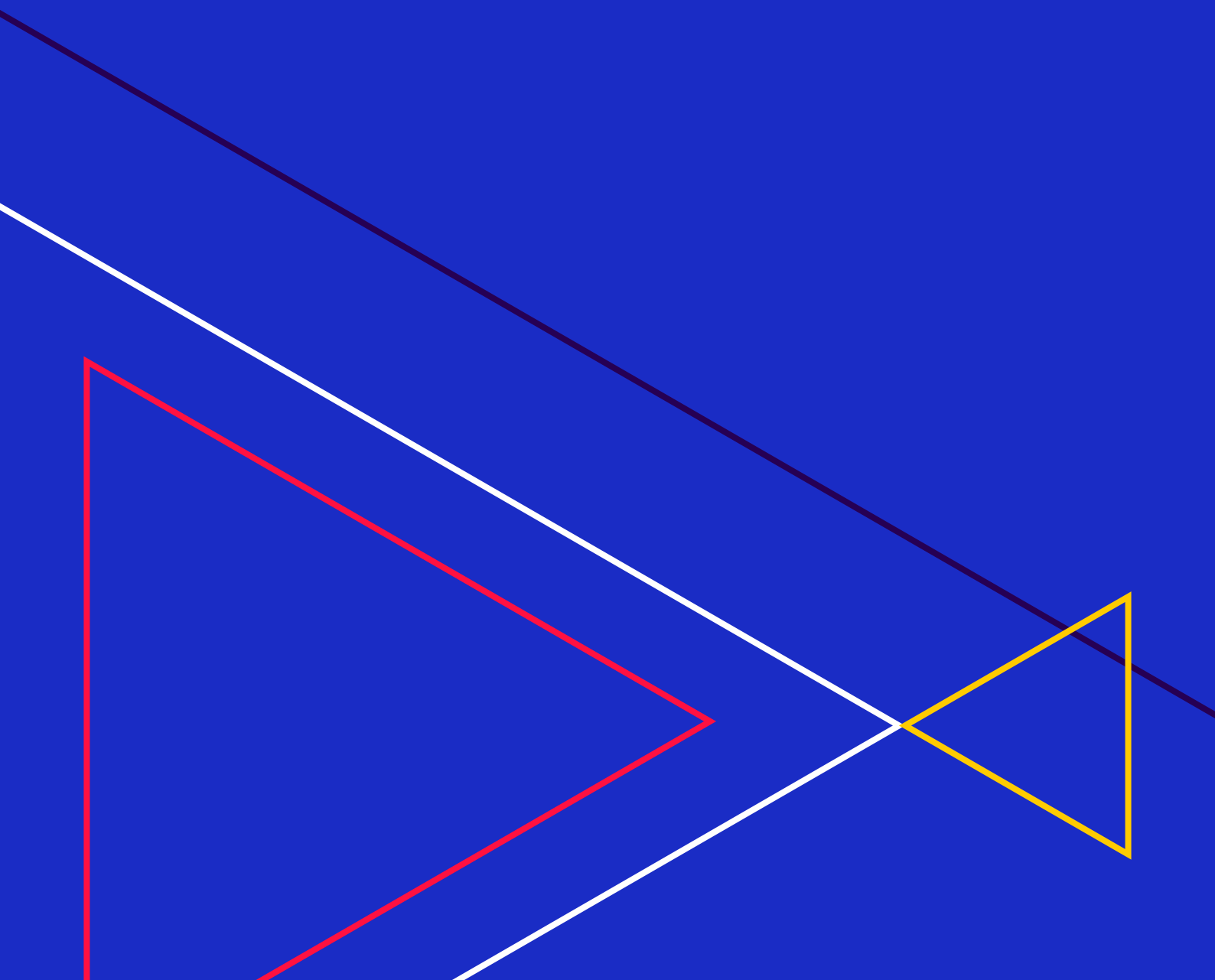
Individual cases provide signals about systemic issues such as delayed wages in a sector, repeated contract substitution, barriers to complaint filing, or patterns of violence and harassment. Missions can capture anonymised and aggregated information to support prevention and inform structured dialogue.

- Record trends consistently (sector, type of complaint, key barriers, outcomes) without identifying individuals.
- Prepare short periodic summaries for internal use and for headquarters, highlighting risks and proposed actions.
- Use safe formats for outreach and prevention messaging based on recurring issues (without exposing individuals).



8

Coordination,
networking and
collaboration for
sustainable impact



► Module 8: Coordination, networking and collaboration for sustainable impact

Aim of this module

This module explains how coordination can be used as a protection tool. It focuses on how missions can strengthen impact by building referral pathways, working with trusted partners, and engaging in structured cooperation with host-country institutions and other stakeholders. It links individual case support to prevention and systems improvement, without turning the mission into a service provider of last resort.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Map key actors and understand their roles in migrant worker protection and remedy.
- Build and maintain practical referral pathways that are safe, timely, and understandable for workers.
- Coordinate with relevant institutions to address patterns and prevent repeat harm.
- Manage information sharing in a way that protects confidentiality and consent.
- Maintain cooperation and partner knowledge through staff rotation and institutional continuity.

Key message to remember

Coordination is most protective when it is organised around the worker's safety and choices. It requires clear consent steps, careful selection of partners, and predictable procedures. Fast coordination that is unsafe is not good coordination.

1. Why coordination is a protection tool

Missions cannot deliver protection alone. Most remedies depend on host-country institutions, employers, contractors, service providers, and in some cases actors in countries of origin. Coordination helps workers reach the right pathway faster, reduces duplication across actors, and strengthens trust because workers experience more predictable support. Coordination also reduces risk because it clarifies who does what and prevents unplanned outreach that could expose a worker.

Coordination should be organised around the worker's safety and choices. It requires clear consent steps, consistent confidentiality practice, and careful selection of partners. A referral that is fast but unsafe is not a good referral. A partner that is available but linked to employers or recruiters is not a safe partner for sensitive cases.

Mapping actors and roles in the destination context

A simple stakeholder map helps missions act faster when cases arise. In most contexts, labour complaint units and labour inspection services are central for wage and working condition disputes. Status-related offices may influence whether a worker can stay lawfully while a complaint is pending. Courts or tribunals may be needed for complex claims, injuries, or unresolved disputes. National human rights institutions, where active, may support protection and complaint handling for vulnerable groups.

Service providers often fill protection gaps. Shelters may provide safe accommodation and basic services. Legal aid organisations may support filing, representation and negotiation. Health services and psychosocial support may be essential, especially where violence and harassment or risk of self-harm is present. Worker organisations and community groups may support outreach and interpretation, but they should be assessed for independence and confidentiality.

In some sectors, workers are employed through contractors and subcontractors. In these arrangements, the entity controlling the worksite and payments may differ from the direct employer. Where credible and safe channels exist to raise concerns through the lead company or main contractor, they can complement public complaint pathways. Such channels should be screened for safety, confidentiality and realistic outcomes.

Building and maintaining referral pathways that work in practice

Effective coordination is grounded in referral pathways that function reliably in practice and place worker protection at their centre. This module focuses on building and maintaining the mission's referral network. For case-level referral decision-making and safe sequencing, refer to Module 6.

- Start with a small number of trusted partners whose mandates, practices and capacity are well understood.
- Agree named contact points, working hours, after-hours options, and languages offered (including interpretation arrangements).
- Define what each partner can and cannot provide, so workers receive accurate information and expectations are managed responsibly.
- Confirm practical access steps (appointments, walk-in rules, documents required, costs, and timelines).
- Test pathways through routine cases and review them regularly; record what works and what does not.
- Update the referral map when partners change, procedures change, or safety risks are identified.

Information sharing and confidentiality across partners

Coordination across actors requires information sharing, yet unmanaged information sharing can generate risk. As a guiding principle, share only the minimum information necessary for a specific and agreed purpose, in line with the worker's informed consent. Identity details should not be shared unless required for access to a service or for an official procedure, and sensitive information should not be transmitted through unsecured channels.

- Use standardised referral notes and engagement records to keep information factual, proportionate and relevant.
- Confirm consent before each disclosure, especially when the situation changes or new actors are involved.

- Avoid forwarding full case files; extract only what is required for the agreed action.
- Maintain clear internal rules on who can communicate externally on behalf of the mission.

Structured cooperation to address patterns

Structured cooperation should translate case experience into concrete action. Missions can compile anonymised and aggregated trends and use them to inform engagement with relevant authorities and institutions. Trend capture methods are covered in Module 7; this section focuses on how to use trends within coordination mechanisms.

- Use evidence-informed talking points in meetings with competent authorities, focusing on solutions and procedures.
- Where operational coordination mechanisms exist (for example, focal point meetings or joint committees), present trends to support practical discussion on safeguards and process improvements.
- Seek achievable improvements such as clarifying job transfer procedures, accelerating wage recovery steps, strengthening complainant safeguards, improving worker information, and aligning migration status procedures with labour complaint handling.
- Operationalise cooperation through periodic technical meetings with complaint units, joint outreach with service providers, and routine review of referral maps.

Coordination with countries of origin

Some problems require cross-border follow up. Recruitment-related harm may require contact with actors or authorities in the country of origin. Wage claims may require follow up after a worker leaves the destination country. Coordination can include sharing anonymised patterns with origin institutions responsible for pre-departure information and training, or supporting referrals to services that assist returnees. This helps connect individual protection work to prevention and fair recruitment practice.

Preparedness for labour-related crisis situations

Some situations require rapid multi-actor coordination. Examples include mass layoffs, sudden closure of a contractor, workplace raids, large-scale accommodation eviction, or a serious incident at a worksite. Preparedness means having updated partner contact lists, clear internal escalation points, and agreed after-hours arrangements for urgent protection needs. It also means knowing which bodies can stabilise status and which services can provide immediate shelter or medical care.

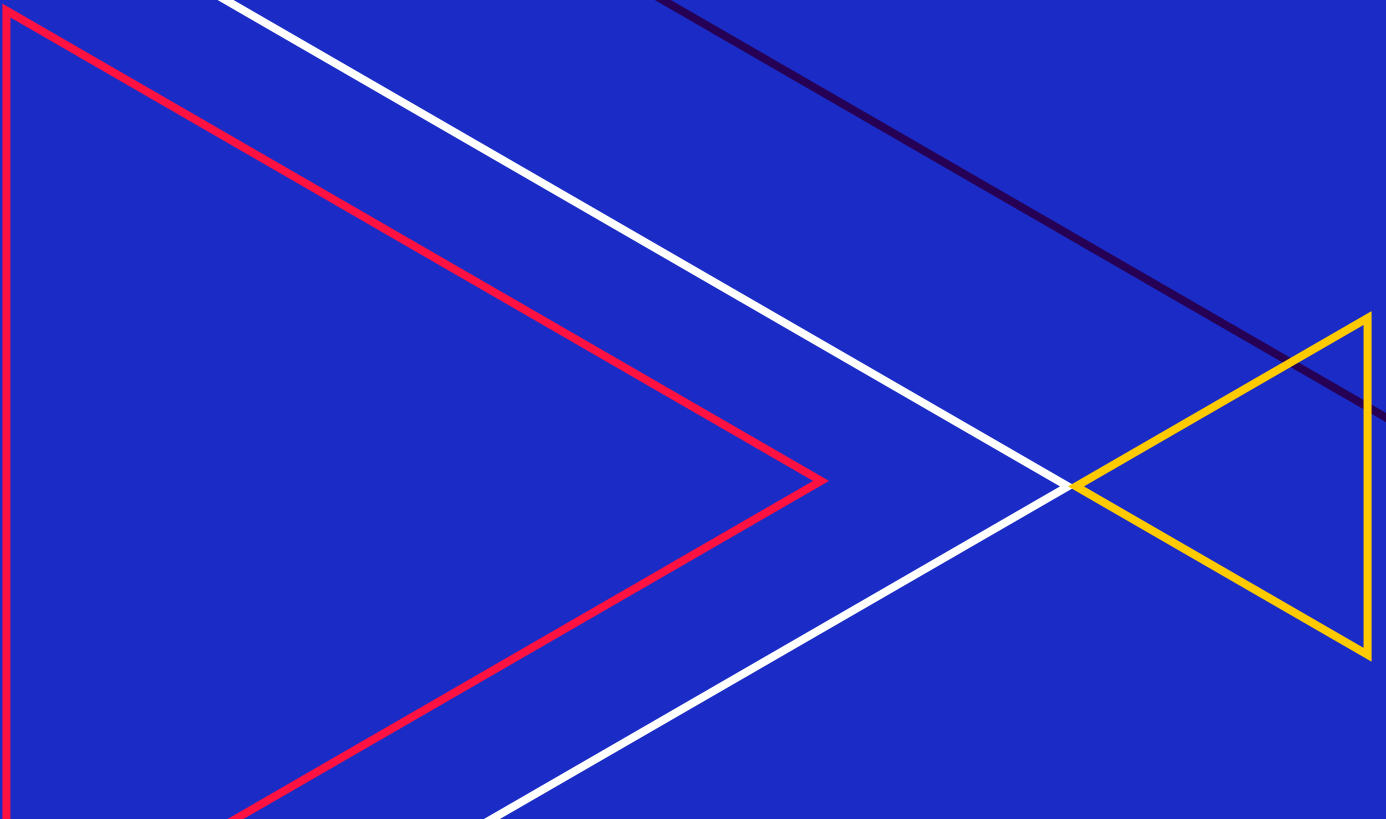
In crisis situations, communication must be calm and consistent. Provide clear messages on where workers can seek help, what documents to keep, and how to contact the mission safely. Where group risks are present, avoid messages that may expose individuals and avoid collecting sensitive information through insecure channels.

Institutional continuity and learning

Coordination improves when it is documented and reviewed. Maintain a referral inventory and review it periodically. Record which partners respond reliably and which do not. Document procedural changes in complaint pathways and update the stakeholder map accordingly. Ensure partner knowledge survives staff rotation by using outgoing officer continuity checks and handover notes that cover partner relationships, contact points, and verified procedures



9 Annexes



Annex

Case closure and lessons learned template

Complete this template when closing a case.
Use it to capture lessons that can improve mission practice and prevention efforts.

1. Case outcome

Case ID: _____

Closure date: _____

Remedy elements delivered. Tick all that apply.

Wages recovered

Documents returned

Status stabilised

Transfer supported

Compensation

Medical care

Safe accommodation

Safe return

Other: _____

Brief outcome summary:

2. What helped, what blocked progress

What helped achieve the outcome:

What blocked progress or increased risk:

Time to resolution and main delays:

3. Strategic lessons for the corridor

Recurring pattern identified:

Prevention implications. Outreach, referrals, or worker information to improve:

Policy dialogue or bilateral follow up implication:

Recruitment or pre departure planning implication in the country of origin:

4. Internal improvements

Change needed in mission procedures or tools:

Training need for staff:

Referral partnership to strengthen:

Annex

Case intake and consent checklist

Use this checklist at first contact. Keep notes factual.

Confirm consent before any outreach to an employer, sponsor, recruiter, or public body. Store information securely.

1. Basic case details

Case ID: _____

Date: _____

Officer: _____

Worker name as used in file: _____

Nationality: _____

Safest way to contact the worker: _____

Safe time to contact: _____

Language: _____

Interpreter needed: Yes No

If yes, preferred language: _____

2. Immediate safety and urgency

Tick all that apply. Add short notes only when needed.

- Risk of detention or arrest linked to status
- Threats or intimidation by employer, sponsor, or others
- Eviction or loss of accommodation within 72 hours
- Document retention or inability to access identity documents
- Medical emergency or urgent health needs
- Violence or harassment, including sexual violence
- Risk of self-harm or suicide
- No access to food, transport, or basic needs
- Other urgent risk: _____

Immediate protection action taken today: _____

Referral made today:

- Shelter
- Medical

Psychosocial support

Legal aid

Other: _____

3. Worker priorities and preferred outcomes

Main concern in the worker's words:

Worker's preferred outcomes. Tick up to three.

- Payment of wages owed
- Return of passport or identity documents
- Safe accommodation
- Job transfer or change of employer
- Safe exit and return
- Medical care and recovery
- Complaint filed and pursued
- Other: _____

Key fears or risks the worker wants to avoid: _____

Red lines. *For example, do not contact employer until further consent:*

4. Consent and confidentiality boundaries

Record what the worker agrees to now. Consent can change. Confirm again before action.

Consent to contact employer:

- Yes
- No
- Not now

Consent to contact sponsor or recruitment intermediary:

- Yes
- No
- Not now

Consent to contact relevant public bodies:

- Yes
- No
- Not now

Consent to share identity details for referral:

- Yes
- No
- Only if necessary

Preferred level of anonymity in outreach:

- No name used
- Initials only
- Full name if needed

Information that must not be shared:

5. Documents and evidence available

Tick what the worker can provide or safely obtain. If withheld, note by whom.

Passport copy or photo. Withheld by:

Residence card or permit details. Withheld by:

Contract or offer letter

Payslips or wage records

Type: cash bank transfer other

Working time evidence

Examples: roster, messages, screenshots

Proof of deductions or debt repayment

Medical report or injury documentation

Messages, audio, or screenshots relevant to threats or harassment

Other: _____

6. Next steps and follow up

Agreed next step 1:

Agreed next step 2:

Follow up date:

Responsible staff:

Safe communication plan for follow up:

Annex

Case plan and tracking sheet

Use this sheet to track progress and deadlines.
Keep it updated so cases remain visible during staff rotation.

1. Case identification

Case ID: _____

Date opened: _____

Worker name as used in file: _____

Sector: _____

Employer or sponsor: _____

Worksite or location: _____

2. Risk and priorities

Risk level: High Medium Low

Worker's preferred outcomes:

Consent boundaries:

3. Actions and deadlines

Action 1: _____ Date: _____

Result: _____

Action 2: _____ Date: _____

Result: _____

Action 3: _____ Date: _____

Result: _____

Next deadline or key date: _____

Notes:

4. Referrals and engagement

Referrals made:

Engagement conducted:

Next follow up date and safe contact plan:

5. Closure

Closure status:
 Open

Pending

Closed

Closure date: _____

Remedy achieved:

Follow up after return needed: Yes No

Notes: _____

Annex

Engagement note template

Use this template to prepare engagement with a relevant public body, an employer, or a recruiter. Keep the language factual and consistent with consent.

1. Purpose and recipient

Date: _____

Recipient organisation and contact: _____

Purpose of engagement: _____

Consent confirmed for this engagement:

Yes No Limited to: _____

2. Facts and documents

Key facts, dates, and location: _____

Documents supporting the facts: _____

Information withheld or not accessible: _____

3. Worker's request and protection needs

Worker's requested outcome: _____

Immediate risks and protection needs: _____

Information that must not be shared: _____

4. Specific action requested

Action requested and timeline: _____

Follow up contact point: _____

5. Record of response

Response received on: _____

Summary of response: _____

Next step and follow up date: _____

Annex

Evidence and documentation checklist

Use this checklist to record what evidence exists and what can be safely obtained. Do not pressure workers to produce documents that are unsafe to access.

1. Identity and status

Passport copy or photo

Withheld by: _____

Residence card or permit details

Withheld by: _____

Work authorisation or sponsorship related document

Entry or visa information

Notes:

2. Employment terms and work history

Contract or offer letter

Job description or messages confirming tasks

Employer or sponsor name and address

Worksite, household, or platform details

Notes:

3. Wages, hours, and deductions

Payslips or wage records

Type: cash bank transfer other

Bank statements or transfer receipts

Working time evidence such as roster, shift schedule, time sheets

Proof of deductions, penalties, or debt repayment

Notes:

4. Harm and protection needs

Medical report or injury documentation

Photos of injury or unsafe conditions, if safe to take

Messages, audio, or screenshots relevant to threats or harassment

Evidence of document retention or restricted movement

Notes:

5. Recruitment pathway information

Recruitment agency or intermediary name and contacts

Fees or related costs paid and proof of payment

Contract substitution details

Notes:

6. Storage and sharing

Consent to share documents for referral:

Yes No Only if necessary

Sensitive information that must not be shared:

File location and access control:

Annex

Grievance mechanism screening checklist

Use this checklist before referring a worker to a grievance mechanism. The aim is to confirm that it is safe, accessible, and likely to deliver a practical outcome.

1. Safety and retaliation risk

- Worker can use the mechanism without losing regular status in practice
- Worker can use the mechanism without losing accommodation or income
- Confidentiality is credible in practice
- The mechanism can connect the worker to protection services if needed

Notes:

2. Access and usability

- Clear entry point and contact details
- Steps are explained in a language the worker understands
- Interpretation is available if needed
- Costs are manageable or free
- Worker can participate safely, including women workers and those reporting violence and harassment

Notes:

3. Process quality

- Clear steps and expected timelines
- Clear decision making process and documentation of outcomes
- Option to request review if the worker disagrees
- The worker is kept informed of progress

Notes:

Annex

4. Likely outcomes

- The mechanism can realistically deliver the outcome sought
- It can address wages, deductions, documents, working time, or transfer issues as relevant
- It can coordinate with public bodies where needed

Notes:

5. Decision

Decision:

- Refer now
- Refer with additional protections
- Do not refer, use another pathway

Additional protection measures needed:

Follow up date: _____

Safe communication plan:

Annex

Handover note template

Use this note when transferring a case to another officer or when staff rotate. Keep it short and focused on risks, consent, and next steps.

1. Case summary

Case ID: _____

Date of handover: _____

Worker name as used in file: _____

Safest way to contact the worker: _____

One paragraph summary: _____

2. Key risks and protection measures

Key risks: _____

Protection measures in place: _____

Consent boundaries and red lines: _____

3. What has been done

Actions taken and dates: _____

Referrals made and contacts: _____

Engagement conducted and responses: _____

4. What is pending

Pending steps: _____

Deadlines or key dates: _____

Documents location and access control: _____

5. If the worker is returning home

Cross border follow up needed: Yes No

With whom: _____

Information that can be shared and consent status: _____

Remedy still pending after departure.

Wages or claims: _____

Annex

Interview guidelines for worker sensitive and gender responsive communication

Use these guidelines when speaking with workers who seek help.

The aim is to gather key facts while reducing risk, respecting dignity, and supporting informed choices.

Before the interview

- Confirm the safest way to contact the worker and whether anyone is nearby who could overhear
- Ask what language the worker prefers and whether interpretation is needed
- If an interpreter is used, confirm confidentiality and avoid anyone linked to the employer, sponsor, or recruiter
- Explain the mission's role in simple terms and clarify what you can and cannot do
- Explain confidentiality and its limits, and ask consent for note taking
- Check urgent safety needs first, including shelter, medical care, threats, detention risk, and risk of self harm

How to open the conversation

Start with simple questions that give the worker control over the pace.

- Ask what the worker wants help with today and what outcome they hope for
- Ask what they fear might happen if the employer, sponsor, or others find out they contacted the mission
- Agree on a safe way to continue if the call is interrupted

Core information to gather

Focus on facts that support protection and follow up. Avoid unnecessary detail.

- Identity and status. Name used in file, nationality, residence or permit situation, documents held or withheld
- Employer or sponsor. Name, address, sector, worksite or household, accommodation arrangement
- Recruitment pathway. Who arranged the job, any fees or debts, whether terms changed after arrival

- Work and pay. Start date, tasks, hours, rest days, wage amount, payment method, deductions, unpaid wages
- Harm and risk. Threats, violence or harassment, restriction of movement, unsafe work, health needs
- Evidence the worker can provide or safely obtain. Contract, payslips, bank transfers, messages, photos, medical reports

Gender responsive and intersection sensitive practice

Ask questions that identify barriers and risks without judgement.

- Ask whether the worker can move freely, access a phone, and contact family safely
- Ask whether the worker feels safe where they sleep and whether there is risk of violence or harassment
- Ask whether the worker faces barriers linked to language, disability, pregnancy, age, or isolation
- If the worker reports violence or harassment, avoid pressing for details at first. Prioritise safety, care, and referral options
- Offer choices where possible, including a preference for a woman officer or a woman interpreter

Questions to avoid or handle with care

Certain questions can feel blaming or can increase risk. If needed, explain why you are asking.

- Avoid Why did you go there or Why did you stay. Use What happened next and What options did you have
- Avoid asking the worker to confront the employer or sponsor as a first step
- Avoid asking for sensitive information that is not needed for protection or remedy
- Avoid asking the worker to retrieve documents from the employer's home or worksite if that would be unsafe

Closing the interview

- ▶ Summarise what you understood and ask the worker to correct anything that is wrong
- ▶ Confirm the worker's preferred outcome and consent boundaries, including whether the mission may contact any third party
- ▶ Agree on the next step and a predictable follow up time
- ▶ Provide referral information and explain what to do if risk escalates

Quick safety phrases

These short phrases can support safety and choice in a calm way.

If you need to stop speaking suddenly, you can hang up and we will not call back unless you ask us to.

Before we contact anyone, I will explain the options and you can decide what you want to do.

You do not need to share details that make you uncomfortable. We can focus first on what keeps you safe.

Officer notes

Worker's preferred outcome:

Key risks and urgent needs:

Consent boundaries. Do not contact:

Next step agreed:

Follow up date and safest way to contact:

Annex

Outgoing officer continuity checklist

Use this checklist in the final two weeks before departure to reduce case disruption and protect workers.

1. Open cases and risk review

- List all open and pending cases with case IDs and current status
- Flag high risk cases where there is detention risk, eviction risk, violence and harassment, urgent medical needs, or risk of self harm or suicide
- Confirm the safest way to contact each worker and any safe time windows
- Confirm consent boundaries for each case, including employer contact red lines

2. Deadlines and urgent actions

- Note key dates, including permit expiry, hearing dates, mediation appointments, and wage payment deadlines
- Identify actions that must happen before departure and assign a responsible person
- Record actions that must not be delayed and explain why

3. Documents and file integrity

- Ensure essential documents are saved in the agreed secure location
- Ensure notes are factual and complete, including dates, places, and names of relevant organisations
- Ensure sensitive information is labelled and access is limited to authorised staff
- Confirm that the file includes evidence already received and a list of evidence still missing

4. Referrals and partner coordination

- Record current referrals and the named contact person for each partner service
- Confirm whether the partner has the worker's consent and safe contact details
- Confirm after hours contact points for urgent protection services

5. Engagement and follow up with public bodies

- Record engagement already conducted, responses received, and next steps agreed
- Record focal points in relevant public bodies and the safest channel for follow up
- Record any pending requests and expected timelines

6. Worker communication and expectations

- Inform the worker of the change in officer where appropriate and safe
- Provide the worker with updated safe contact details for the mission
- Confirm the next follow up date and what the worker should do if risk escalates

7. Handover package

- Complete a handover note for each open case
- Prepare a short list of priority cases for the incoming officer
- Share a one page update on recurring trends and any sensitive risks in the corridor

Annex

Pathway mapping template

Use this template to map complaint and remedy options in the destination context. Update it regularly as procedures change.

Pathway name and type

Pathway name:

Type:

- Court or tribunal
- Labour complaint body
- Labour inspection
- Administrative body
- National human rights institution
- Organisation based mechanism
- Other: _____

How to access

Where to file or contact:

Eligibility:

Cost: Free Fee applies

Notes:

Language support available: Yes No

Details:

Process and timelines

Key steps in simple terms:

Expected timeline:

Documents required:

What it can deliver

Likely outcomes:

- Wage recovery
- Document return
- Transfer support
- Compensation
- Other: _____

Limits of the pathway:

Main risks for the worker:

Protection measures to reduce risk:

Can the worker remain in regular status while the case is pending:

Yes No Unclear

Notes:

Mission role and follow up

Mission support role:

Follow up point and contact person:

Next update date for this pathway:

Annex

Referral note template

Use this template when referring a worker to another service. Share only what is necessary and consistent with consent.

1. Referral details

Date: _____

Referred to: _____

Purpose of referral: _____

Urgency:

- Immediate
- Within 72 hours
- Routine

2. Consent and confidentiality

Worker consent for this referral:

- Yes
- No
- Limited to: _____

Identity details shared:

- None
- Initials only
- Full name if needed

Information that must not be shared: _____

3. Case summary for referral

Key facts in one paragraph: _____

Immediate risks: _____

Documents available or attached: _____

Support requested from the service: _____

4. Safe communication

Safest way to contact the worker. Phone, message, email, or trusted intermediary: _____

Safe time to contact: _____

5. Follow up

Mission follow up date: _____

Responsible staff: _____

Notes: _____

Annex

Safe sequence of steps plan

Use this template to agree an action sequence that reduces risk. Record the worker's choices and consent boundaries.

1. Risk summary

Main risks identified:

Retaliation risk level: High Medium Low

Notes:

2. Worker's preferred outcomes

Preferred outcomes:

Key fears to avoid:

3. Agreed sequence of steps

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

4. Consent boundaries

Do not contact employer until:

Information that must not be shared:

Consent status for outreach.

Employer: Yes No Not now

Recruiter: Yes No Not now

Public bodies Yes No Not now

5. Referrals and responsibilities

Referral 1: _____

Responsible: _____

Date: _____

Referral 2: _____

Responsible: _____

Date: _____

Other coordination: _____

6. Follow up

Follow up date: _____

Safe contact plan:

Contingency if risk escalates:

Annex

Triage and urgency checklist

Use this checklist to decide what needs to happen first. Tick what applies. Add short notes only when needed.

1. Immediate safety and crisis risks

- Risk of detention or arrest linked to status
- Risk of self harm or suicide
- Violence or harassment reported, including sexual violence
- Threats, intimidation, or stalking
- Restriction of movement or confinement
- Medical emergency or urgent health needs
- No safe accommodation or eviction within 72 hours
- No access to food, transport, or basic needs
- Other urgent risk:

Immediate action taken today:

Urgent referral made:

- Shelter
- Medical
- Psychosocial
- Legal aid
- Other: _____

2. Status and documentation risks

- Residence or work permit close to expiry
- Employer or sponsor threatened cancellation or non renewal
- Worker reports being treated as absent or runaway
- Passport or residence card withheld
- Worker cannot access key documents needed for complaint or transfer

Status stabilisation needed: Yes No

Notes:

3. Exploitation and labour rights concerns

- Unpaid wages or delayed wages
- Unexplained deductions or debt repayment deductions

- Excessive hours or no rest days
 - Unsafe work or injury risk
 - Discrimination
 - Indicators of coercion or inability to leave work
- Most urgent issue to address first:

4. Access and inclusion factors

- Language barrier or no interpretation available
- Disability related access needs
- Gender related risk factors, including isolation or stigma
- Fear of retaliation affecting ability to use complaint pathways
- Other barrier:

Support needed to enable access:

5. Triage decision and follow up

Urgency level:

- Immediate today
- Within 72 hours
- Within 7 days
- Routine follow up

Lead pathway to explore first:

- Protection referral
- Legal advice
- Administrative status action
- Labour complaint pathway
- Other: _____

Follow up date and safe contact plan:

Annex

Annex: partner contact template for referral

Use this template to document one referral pathway. Duplicate it for each partner and review it regularly.

Partner or service name:

Type of service:

- Shelter
- Legal aid
- Health
- Psychosocial
- Complaint unit
- Other: _____

Main contact person and phone or email:

Hours of operation and after hours contact:

Languages available and interpretation support:

Referral steps in simple terms

Consent required before referral:

Minimum information to share for referral:

How to share information safely:

Expected response time and next step:

Safety considerations

Risks to watch for, including retaliation or status consequences:

Measures that reduce risk, including safe transport and confidentiality:

Review date and notes:

The voices of practitioners

► **Neematu Adam**, Labour Attaché, Ghana



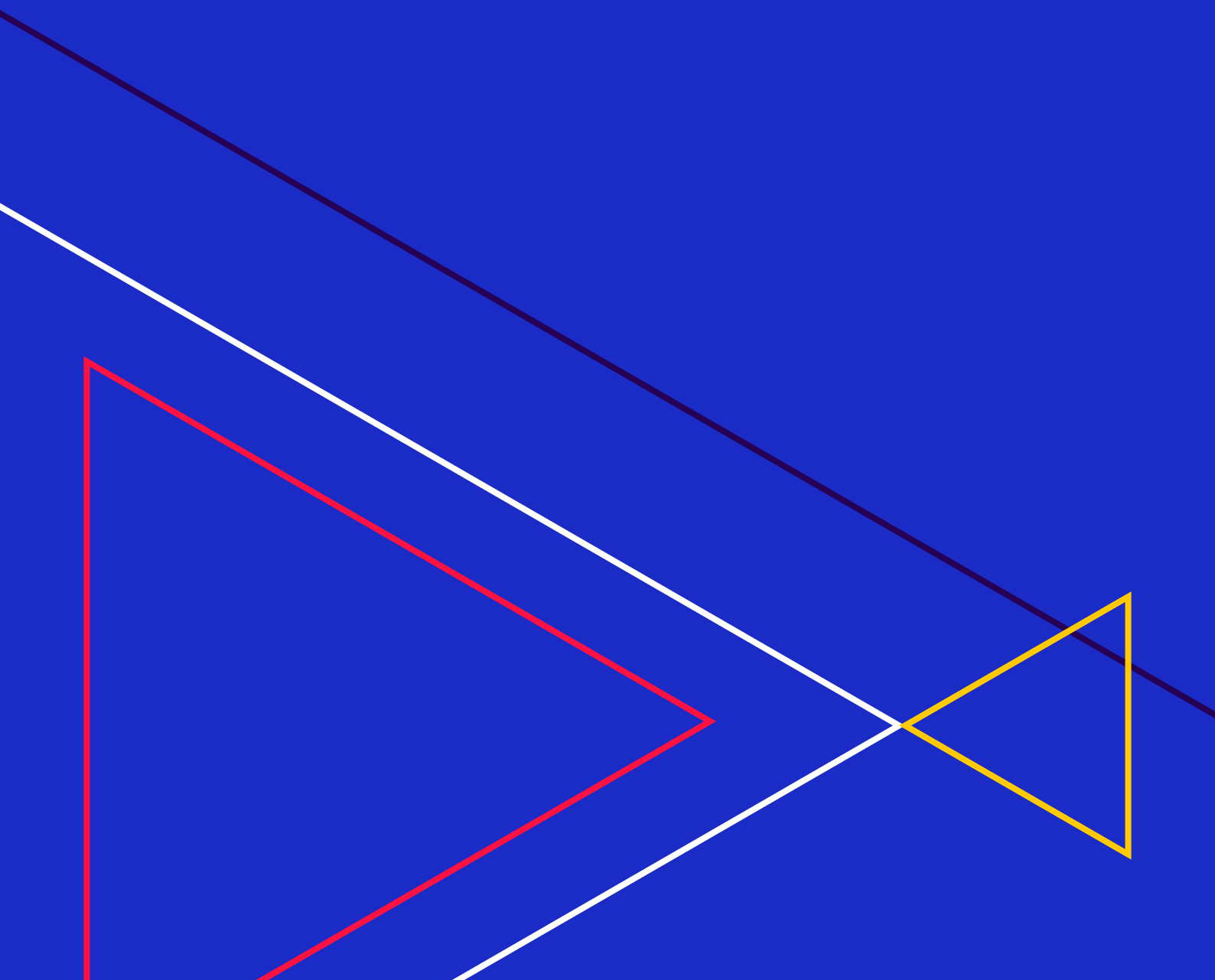
► **Lawrence Simpi**, Labour Department, Ghana



► **Lawrence Egulu**, Ministry of Labour, Uganda



▶ **10** Additional resources



- ▶ Beyond the desk: Empowering consular officials, diaspora desk officers, and labour attachés in the Arab States to champion migrant workers' protection.

The following additional resources are grouped by module and accessible online, with certain links supporting multiple modules where content is interconnected.

Module 1. Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and International Legal Framework

- ▶ [Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#)
- ▶ [ILO Declaration on FPRW and its follow up](#)
- ▶ [ILO indicators of forced labour](#)
- ▶ [Protecting migrant workers from Forced Labour](#)
- ▶ [NORMLEX Ratification of conventions by country](#)
- ▶ [C097 - Migration for Employment Convention](#)
- ▶ [C143 - Migrant Workers \(Supplementary Provisions\)](#)
- ▶ [C 181 - The Private Employment Agencies Convention](#)
- ▶ [C189 - Domestic Workers Convention](#)
- ▶ [C 190 - Violence and Harassment Convention](#)
- ▶ [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#)
- ▶ [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)

Module 2. Kafala (Sponsorship) Systems

- ▶ [Employer-Migrant Worker Relationships in the Middle East](#)
- ▶ [Sponsorship reform and internal labour market mobility for migrant workers in the Arab States](#)
- ▶ [Country briefs of the regulatory frameworks governing migrant workers in the Arab States](#)
- ▶ [Youtube: How can employer set a mitigation plan to protect workers from heat stress in Qatar?](#)
- ▶ [Qatar's Ministerial Decision on Heat Stress](#)

Module 3. Labour Migration Governance and Bilateral Cooperation

- ▶ [Guidance on Bilateral labour migration agreements](#)
- ▶ [ILO agenda and action on fair migration](#)
- ▶ [Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and Destination](#)
- ▶ [Developing and implementing bilateral labour migration agreements](#)

Module 4. Labour Migration Trends, Migration Cycle and Vulnerabilities from a Gender Perspective and Sectoral Approach

- ▶ [Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage](#)
- ▶ [The Social Construction of Migrant Care Work At the intersection of care, migration and gender](#)
- ▶ [Gender-sensitive reporting and communication on labour migration](#)

Module 5. Fair Recruitment

- ▶ [General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment](#)
- ▶ [Recruitment fees and related costs at a glance](#)
- ▶ [Fair Recruitment Initiative: Paving the way for decent work](#)

Module 6. Access to Justice, Grievance Mechanisms and Case Management

- ▶ [Justice across borders: Access to labour justice for migrant workers through cross-border litigation](#)
- ▶ [Fair recruitment and access to justice for migrant workers](#)
- ▶ [Empowering Migrant Workers: Lessons Learned from ILO Migrant Worker Resource in the ASEAN region](#)

Other sources:

- ▶ [The role of ASEAN labour attachés in the protection of Migrant Workers](#)
- ▶ [Consultations with Labour Attachés and Consular Officials in Malaysia on the Protection of Migrant Workers](#)



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978-92-9049-921-3 Empowering consular officials, diaspora desk officers, and labour attachés in the Arab States to champion migrant workers' protection Parctical Guide (web PDF)

978-92-9049-922-0 Empowering consular officials, diaspora desk officers, and labour attachés in the Arab States to champion migrant workers' protection Parctical Guide (print PDF)

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