
CONFERENCE PACK

Africa–Gulf Migration, Mobility and Trade

Past and Present, Policy and Prospects

DATES 9–11 September 2026

VENUES Movenpick Hotel and Residence and Ibis Styles Hotel Nairobi, Westlands

HOST CITY Nairobi, Kenya

A workshop of the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme, Gulf Research Center (GRC), the African Migration Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC), and the University of Cape Town Migration and Mobility Hub, in partnership with the African Migration Policy Center (AMPC), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO).



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Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this workshop on Africa–Gulf migration, mobility and trade in Nairobi. Convened under the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme of the Gulf Research Center, the African Migration Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC), and the University of Cape Town Migration and Mobility Hub, in partnership with the African Migration Policy Center (AMPC), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO), the workshop brings together researchers from across the social sciences to examine one of the most dynamic and least understood corridors of contemporary human movement.

The Africa–Gulf corridor has become an important destination for young Africans seeking livelihoods as workers and as traders connecting the two regions. Although the exact number of African workers and traders in the Gulf is hard to establish, their role in the region's labour markets and societies — historically and today — is unmistakable. The workforce is highly gendered, with women predominating in domestic work and hospitality, and proximity and long historical ties mean that East and Horn of African countries, alongside contributors from West Africa, are strongly represented.

Over two days the workshop moves from the deep and contradictory history of Africa–Gulf connections, through the contemporary dynamics of movement, work and trade, to the policy and legal frameworks that govern the corridor and the prospects that lie ahead. The aim is to understand the present in a rounded way and to think carefully about equitable, context-specific policy that centres the wellbeing of migrants — with a view to a shared publication that helps fill the knowledge gap in this area.

We are grateful to every contributor and participant for taking part, and we look forward to two days of rigorous and generous exchange.

Imco Brouwer, Dr. Faisal Garba and Dr. Linda Adhiambo Oucho
Organizers

About the Workshop

This workshop examines the Africa–Gulf migration, mobility and trade corridor across its historical, contemporary, policy and future dimensions. It highlights the deep and contradictory connections between the two regions in order to make sense of today's encounters and identifies the emerging issues that dominate discourse on the corridor — livelihoods, trade, working and living conditions, and the general wellbeing of African migrants. It welcomes theoretically grounded, empirically based contributions from across the social sciences.

Objectives

- Unpack the deep and contradictory history of Africa–Gulf connections to understand the contemporary dimensions of the encounter.
- Discuss the historical and contemporary factors shaping the corridor — livelihood opportunities, the search for knowledge, trade and religion.
- Map the policy regimes and legal frameworks governing the corridor, focused on working and living conditions and the wellbeing of migrant workers.
- Consider the prospects ahead — the likely direction of mobility and migration, and what it means for trade, socio-economic development in Africa, the global standing of the Gulf, and global human flows.

Workshop themes

Historical mobility — The deep historical entanglement between Africa and the Gulf, and the trade and mobility routes that linked them.

Contemporary migration and mobility — Patterns and drivers of movement, the infrastructures that enable it, work and welfare, traders, education, and everyday life in the Gulf.

Policy and programming — The frameworks, agreements and intermediaries that govern movement, and coherence across migration, trade and development.

Future prospects — The evolving nexus of migration, mobility and trade within global labour markets and geopolitics, and options for equitable engagement.

Organizers and Partners

Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population (GLMM) Programme

The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population (GLMM) programme is an international independent, non-partisan, non-profit programme hosted and supported by the Gulf Research Center (GRC). The programme provides data, analyses, and recommendations contributing to the improvement of understanding and management of Gulf labour migration, population, and labour markets, engaging with and respecting the viewpoints of all stakeholders. The GLMM has a wide range of activities: gathering and elaborating [data and documents](#); researching and analysing key issues; and organising [webinars](#), panels and [workshops](#). The GLMM produces an array of [publications](#) addressing all major issues in different formats: tables, documents, factsheets, policy briefs, explanatory notes, research reports, special issue of academic journals, and edited volumes.

Homepage: <https://gulfmigration.grc.net>

GRC Website: <https://www.grc.net>

GRM Website: <https://gulfresearchmeeting.net>

African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC)

The African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) is an independent research consultancy firm established in 2008 by the world-renowned migration and population studies expert, the late Professor John Oyaro Oucho (1943 - 2017). Prof Oucho was a post-doctoral fellow of the Carolina Population Center in the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, U.S.A (1982-83). He taught at University of Nairobi (3 decades), University of Ghana (3 years) and University of Botswana (8 years) where he trained many postgraduate students and contributed significantly to the academic development of these institutions. Professor Oucho authored over 250 pieces of work, including books, book chapters, refereed journal articles and conference papers. AMADPOC's mission is the recognition of the role and interplay of both migration and development policies; inter-ethnic relations and other spheres of national and international development, intra-regional harmony and interdependence within a globalising world in which diversity requires viable South-North and South-South partnership. AMADPOC's vision is to become a leading organisation spearheading research on issues of migration-development nexus; boosting the capacity of African countries and development partners in the corridors of national governments, inter-governmental cooperation and research institutions, collaborating with national governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the private sector, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the civil society.

Home page: <https://amadpoc.org>

University of Cape Town Migration and Mobility Hub

The University of Cape Town Migration and Mobility Hub is an academic research group based at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa. Its mission is to generate knowledge on human movement and migration rooted in diverse African histories and realities from an African and Global South perspective. The UCT Migration and Mobility Hub aims to generate knowledge on mobilities and migration that is rooted (in the diverse) African histories and perceptions of movement and belonging. It looks at migration of Africans within Africa and beyond, historically and in the present. By fundamentally questioning the instrumental approach in mainstream study of African migration, the project seeks to contribute to the independent work on African migration that is not shaped and driven by the policy imperatives of States. These imperatives

are geared towards keeping people out. The project is interested in an epistemic shift that questions the logic of exclusion. Unlike the assumption which views migration as an issue to be tackled, the project proceeds by viewing migration as a normalcy. The hub participates in broader academic networks, and is one of the founding collective of the Africa Network on South-South Migration.

African Migration Policy Center (AMPC-FES)

In the recent past, the issue of migration and displacement management has come to the forefront of policy discussions in Africa and beyond. Consequently, States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental institutions and other stakeholders have been engaged in the management of mobility in order to harness its development potential as well as to guarantee the safety and rights of migrant workers. Recognizing this, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung established the African Migration Policy Center (FES-AMPC) (formerly Flight and Migration Competence Center) in 2019 to align the work of FES in the areas of migration and refugee policies within the African continent. Based in Ethiopia, FES-AMPC aims to create fact-based platforms for dialogue between Africa and Europe on the management of flight and migration, supports stakeholders working within the field of migration on the continent and contributes to African migration policy debates. The Objectives of FES-AMPC are: (i) To organize multi stakeholder dialogue platforms between Africa and Europe in order to promote an inclusive discussion on the issue of flight and migration; (ii) To provide research and political analysis on the causes, realities and trends of migration in Africa, giving primacy to the representation of African voices; (iii) To contribute to the achievement of global, continental and sub-regional frameworks for the management of flight and migration in Africa by working with the AU, Regional Economic Commissions and other stakeholders in the continent; (iv) To serve as a focal point for FES offices that directly or indirectly work on the management of flight and migration as well as the protection of different migrant groups.

AMPC website: <https://ampc.fes.de/index.html>

FES website: <https://www.fes.de/en/>

International Labour Organisation (ILO) FAIRWAY Programme

ILO's FAIRWAY Programme is an interregional initiative in the Africa and the Arab States labour migration corridor. Through a collaborative approach involving governments, employers, workers' organizations, civil society, and regional institutions, the Programme seeks to strengthen labour migration governance and improve working and living conditions for migrant workers. In its first phase (2019-24), the Programme targeted sectors with high concentrations of migrant workers, particularly domestic work and construction, and worked to strengthen gender responsive policies, engage private sector actors, combat discrimination, and enhance access to information and support services for migrant workers. Building on these achievements, Phase II (2024-28) expands efforts that deepens cooperation across the Africa-Arab States labour migration corridor. Adopting a gender-transformative approach, the Programme is working to address structural gender inequalities affecting migrant workers, especially in domestic, care, and construction sectors. FAIRWAY Phase II promotes inclusive social dialogue, strengthens regional cooperation, supports policy reforms in GCC countries, and empowers migrant workers to access fair, safe, and regular migration pathways. Ultimately, FAIRWAY contributes to more resilient, inclusive, and equitable labour migration systems across both regions.

FAIRWAY website: <https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/fairway-programme>

Center for Applied Research and Partnership with the Orient (CARPO)

Center for Applied Research and Partnership with the Orient (CARPO) was founded in 2014 by Germany-based academics trained in the fields of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Political Science and Social Anthropology. Our work is situated at the nexus of research, consultancy and exchange with a focus on implementing projects in close cooperation and partnership with stakeholders in the Orient. CARPO is a Germany-based think tank with a focus on the Orient that works at the nexus of [research, consultancy](#) and [exchange](#). Our work is based on the principles of partnership, inclusivity and sustainability. We believe that a prosperous and peaceful future for the region can best be achieved by engaging the creative and resourceful potential of all relevant stakeholders. Therefore, CARPO opens enduring channels for trustful dialogue and interactive knowledge transfer.

Home page: <https://carpo-bonn.org/en>

Practical Information

Organisers	Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme of the Gulf Research Center, the African Migration Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC), and the University of Cape Town Migration and Mobility Hub, in partnership with the African Migration Policy Center (AMPC), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO)
Directors	Faisal Garba (University of Cape Town) Linda Adhiambo Ouchó (AMADPOC, Nairobi).
Venue and dates	9 Sept. 2026: Mövenpick Hotel & Residences Nairobi, Westlands . The Mövenpick sits in the Westlands business district, a short drive from the city centre and convenient for airport transfers. It will be the venue for the pre-workshop fireside chat . 10-11 Sept. 2026: Ibis Styles Hotel Westlands, Rhapta Road, PO Box 14746-00800, Nairobi, Kenya . It will be the venue for the workshop.
Language	The working language of the workshop is English.
Format	Sessions are organised around four themes. Each paper is allocated a set time, followed by discussion. Contributions are expected to be theoretically grounded and empirically based, and as close to publication ready as possible.
Publication	The directors will work with participants toward a publication ready paper for an edited volume with Springer.
Inquiries	For questions, please contact the GLMM Programme at info.glmm@grc.net and AMADPOC on linda.oucho@amadpoc.org

Programme

The workshop opens with a pre-workshop fireside chat on the evening of 9 September and runs in full across 10–11 September. Times are indicative and may be subject to minor adjustment on the day. **Participants are required to attend all workshop sessions entirely.**

Wed 9 Sep	Pre-Workshop	Arrivals, opening welcome, fireside chat and welcome reception.
Thu 10 Sep	Day One	History of the corridor, then contemporary migration, work, welfare and trade.
Fri 11 Sep	Day Two	Policy and programming, future prospects, and a roundtable towards publication.

Pre-Workshop Wednesday, 9 September 2026

16:00 – 16:30	<i>Arrivals and registration</i> Early registration and collection of delegate packs at the Mövenpick, Westlands.
16:30 – 16:45	Opening welcome - Amish Karki, <i>ILO / FAIRWAY Programme</i> - Françoise De Bel-Air, <i>GLMM/GRM</i> - Bruck Negash, <i>AMPC/FES</i> - Hubert Kinkoh, <i>CARPO</i>
16:45 – 18:00	Fireside chat: Labour migration between Africa and Arab States - Strengthening Cooperation for Improved Labour Migration Governance Moderator: Linda Oucho, <i>AMADPOC</i> This special dialogue will bring together policymakers, regional actors, researchers, and civil society representatives to discuss emerging priorities for labour migration governance between Africa and the Arab States. The conversation will explore opportunities to strengthen cooperation between countries of origin and destination, improve migrant worker protection, and enhance the role of regional and interregional dialogue platforms in supporting fair and well-governed labour migration. Panellists: Doha Dialogue in context: progress, reforms and remaining challenges, <i>Ryszard Cholewinski, Senior Labour Migration Specialist, International Labour Organisation (ILO), Regional Office for Arab States</i> From dialogue to action: regional cooperation and bilateral labour mobility partnerships, <i>Representative, State Department for Diaspora Affairs, MoFA, Kenya (TBC)</i> Labour market trends and skills needs in GCC, <i>Murtaza Khan, International Organisation for Employers (IOE)</i> The Migration Journey: A Domestic Worker's Experience Across Recruitment, Migration, and Return <i>Sophia Amimo, Domestic Worker Returnees of Kenya (DWROK)</i> Gender responsive labour migration and care work, <i>Edith Murogo, Executive Director, Centre for Domestic Training and Development (CDTD)</i>

18:00 -18:45	Interactive dialogue Moderator: Prof. Linda A. Oucho, AMADPOC and Migration Policy Centre at the EUI's Robert Schuman Centre Interactive dialogue with participants: Following the fireside chat, MAG members, researchers, civil society and migrant community representatives, and other participants will be invited to engage directly with panellists and share their perspectives and recommendations. The discussion will explore: • Emerging labour migration governance priorities • Opportunities for stronger Africa-Arab States cooperation on labour migration • Key messages and recommendations for the Doha Dialogue
19:00	Networking and dinner

Day One · Thursday, 10 September 2026

08:30 – 09:00	<i>Registration and Welcome Coffee</i> Collection of delegate packs and badges.
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome and Introductions Opening remarks and overview of Workshop Linda Oucho, AMADPOC Françoise De Bel-Air, GLMM Amish Karki, ILO / FAIRWAY Bruck Negash, AMPC/FES Hubert Kinkoh, CARPO
09:30 – 10:45	Session 1: Historical Mobility between Africa and the Gulf Chair: Linda Oucho, African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) Discussants: Ali Mohammed; Halifet Ayemohammed • The Political Economy of Africa-Gulf Investment and Trade: Shifting Logics of Capital Accumulation, Harry Verhoeven, <i>London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) / European Institute of Peace, United Kingdom</i> • Multi-Generational Communities of African Descent in Jeddah: Belonging and Urban Practices, Solenn Almajali, <i>Independent Researcher, Amman, Jordan</i>
10:45 – 11:15	<i>Coffee break and Group Picture</i>
11:15 – 13:00	Session 2.1: Patterns of Africa-Gulf Migration and Mobility Chair: Faisal Garba, University of Cape Town Discussants: Sale Seid Adem; Johnson Wilson Appia Kubi • One Corridor, Several Migration Systems: African Labour Mobility to the Six GCC States, Françoise De Bel-Air, <i>Gulf Labour Migration and Population Programme, Gulf Research Center (GLMM/GRC)</i> • Ethiopian Women's Labor Migration to the Gulf States: Its Social Foundation, Endalkachew Mulugeta, <i>Debre Markos University, Ethiopia and Migration Researcher and Consultant, East Africa, Ethiopia</i>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00 – 15:30	Session 2.2: Enablers of Movement, Infrastructure, Networks and Technology Chair: Bruck Negash, Africa Migration Policy Centre, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Discussants: Andani Husin Mubarak; Endalkachew Mulugeta • Domestic Worker Migration within the Ghana-Gulf Corridor: Enabling Infrastructures, Leander Kandilige and Johnson Wilson Appiah-Kubi, <i>Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana</i>¹. • Governing the Diaspora Abroad: Ethiopian Migrant Self-Organizations and the Trans-nationalization of State Authority in the United Arab Emirates, Saleh Seid Adem, <i>University of Cologne, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Germany; Arba Minch University, Ethiopia.</i>
15:30 – 15:50	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:50 – 17:00	Session 2.3: Work, Working Arrangements and Gender Labour Migration Chair: Hubert Kinkoh, <i>Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO)</i> Discussants: Wambua Muindi; Youssef Cherif

¹ Only Johnson Wilson Appiah-Kubi will attend the workshop.

	• Remittances and Geopolitical Exposure: Gulf-Based North African Mobility after the Arab Uprising - The Case of Tunisia, Youssef Cherif, <i>Leiden University Netherlands</i> • Labour Migration, Remittances and Food (In)security in a South-South Context: Evidence from the Kenya-Qatar Corridor, Zack Ahmed², Fatuma Ali, and Jonathan Crush. <i>Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Canada.</i>
17:15	Day one wrap-up

Day Two · Friday, 11 September 2026

09:00 – 10:45	Session 2.4: Trade, Traders, and everyday lives of Africans in the Gulf Chair: Sarah Mostafa-Kamel, Institute of Human Rights Business Discussants: Shaymaa Bayoumi; Zack Ahmed; Françoise De Bel-Air • Sudanese Mandoob and the Functioning of Migrant Enterprise in Qatar, Sharique Umar, <i>Gulf Studies Center, College of Arts and Science, Qatar University</i> • Labour Migration and the Gulf City in Kenyan Popular Music, Wambua Muidi, <i>Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala, Uganda.</i> • Strengthening Policy Coherence at the Labour Migration, Development and Trade Nexus in the Africa-GCC Corridor: Towards an African-Centred Multi-Level Governance Framework, Charles J. Kiiza, <i>Department of Governance, University of Rwanda</i>
10:45 – 11:05	Coffee break
11:05 – 13:00	Session 2.5: Everyday lives of Africans in the Gulf and Educational Mobility Chair: Sarah Mostafa-Kamel, Institute of Human Rights Business Discussants: Solenn Almajali; Harry Verhoeven • Narrating Africa-Gulf Connections: The Ethiopian International School in Saudi Arabia as a Geocultural Space of Education, Halifet Ayemohammed Yusuf, <i>Global Studies University (GSU), Sharjah, UAE</i> • Migration, Discrimination, and Community Organising of Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Bahrain, Ali Mohamed, <i>Migrant Rights research Open Repository (MRRORS), Bahrain</i>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 – 15:15	Session 3: Policy, Governance, Legal Frameworks and Protection Chair: Faisal Garba, University of Cape Town Discussants: Abebaw Minawe; Eyram Uvy Sedzro; Sharique Umar • Protection or Control? Institutional Representation of Risk in Ghanaian Women Migration to the Gulf, Eyram Ivy Sedzro, <i>University of Melbourne, Australia</i> • Structurally Embedded Vulnerabilities: Reframing Ghana-Gulf Labour Migration through Migration Systems Theory and Political Economy, Andani Husin Mubarak, <i>Consular and Welfare Officer at the Embassy of the Republic of Ghana, Kuwait</i> • From labour Export to Governance Strategy: Integrating Mobility into Africa-Gulf Economic Partnerships, Shaymaa Bayoumi, <i>Arab Academy for Management, Banking, and Financial Service, Cairo</i>
15:15 – 16:30	Session 4: Future Prospects: Migration, trade and development partnerships

² Zack Ahmed will present the paper.

	Chair: Ryszard Chloewinski, International Labour Organisation, Regional Office for Arab States Discussants: Charles Kiiza; Froilan Malit, Jr • How and why do sending states cooperate in the Global South? Froilan Malit, Jr, <i>Department of Politics and International Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London</i>; <i>Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme, Gulf Research Center, Geneva</i> • From Lamenting on Abuse of Domestic Workers to Strategic Partnership: Ethiopia's Potential to Contribute for Enhanced Collaboration between the GCC and the East and the Horn of Africa, Abebaw Minaye, <i>Addis Ababa University, Research Chair for Forced Displacement and Migration Studies, Ethiopia</i>
16:30 – 16:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16:45 – 17:00	Towards a publication Discussion of the planned special issue or edited volume, and of next steps for contributors. Dr. Garba and Prof. Oucho.
17:00 – 17:20	Closing remarks Closing reflections from the workshop directors. Dr. Garba and Prof. Oucho.

Sessions and Abstracts

The workshop is organised around four sessions. For each, the scope and the invited paper topics are set out below, drawn from the call for papers. The sample abstracts that follow are illustrative placeholders that show how accepted papers will be presented; they will be replaced with the confirmed contributions once papers are selected.

Session 1: Historical Mobility between Africa and the Gulf

This session foregrounds the long historical connections between Africa and the Gulf, treating migration and mobility as a blend of trade in goods, services and knowledge rather than a purely contemporary phenomenon.

The Political Economy of Africa-Gulf Investment and Trade: Shifting Logics of Capital Accumulation

Harry Verhoeven, *London School of Economics and Political Science / European Institute of Peace, United Kingdom*

"The Rise of the Gulf" is one of several significant changes in the global political economy of the last 25 years. While the term is used in the literature to refer to various empirical developments that are somewhat distinct from each other, this paper interprets it principally as the emergence of the states that comprise the Gulf Cooperation Council -Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates- as a centre of global and regional economic power. This rise has its origins in the exports of hydrocarbons to both developed and developing economies and concomitant price hikes in the 1970s. But, in the last quarter century, the Gulf has gone far beyond providing critical energy supplies. As oil and gas exports from the Gulf soared in parallel with prices after 1998, the region has increasingly become a globally important centre for capital accumulation through infrastructure development, logistics and finance. Gulf economies are a significant source of demand for a wide range of agricultural and industrial goods and, equally, have become major sources of overseas development assistance, petrochemical products, capital for indebted sovereigns, and outward investment across sectors. This "rise" has potentially transformative implications for various parts of the world, yet despite its manifest significance, has not been mapped in great depth for many regions and sub-regions, exceptions notwithstanding. This paper sketches out the strategic contours of the patterns of economic engagement between leading Gulf states and Africa and some of their implications. The paper does so by focusing on the Horn of Africa- the region geographically and historically most proximate to the Gulf, with deep cultural, linguistic and political affinities linking both sides of the Red Sea, but also the theatre of considerable controversy owing to Gulf political and military interventions. In the Horn, statistical (and other) information is, for a variety of reasons, not always easily accessible, collected or published in a systematic, easily comparable manner. However, even in the absence of comprehensive data that is sufficiently rich in detail for all sectors and types of economic interaction, an un-mistakeable structure emerges: while the Gulf exports hydrocarbons and finished goods to the Horn of Africa and is the source of (some) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and aid, the Horn mostly sends gold, labour and livestock to the Gulf as well as offshore capital that escapes tax and regulatory scrutiny from African governments. As the paper articulates, such asymmetric integration into a Gulf-centred economic order has in practice been highly destabilizing and encouraging of political violence and dispossession.

Multi-Generational Communities of African Descent in Jeddah: Belonging and Urban Practices

Solenn Almajali, *Independent Researcher, Amman*

This paper introduces an ongoing research project on multi-generational communities of African descent in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Although it was initially intended to draw on findings from a first phase of fieldwork, the ongoing conflict in the region has delayed its implementation. This workshop therefore provides an opportunity to outline several research directions and analytical perspectives based on a preliminary review of the literature. The paper is also informed by my previous doctoral research on the migration trajectories of African and Yemeni refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan, a country located close to the Gulf states.

Session 2: Contemporary Migration and Mobility between Africa and the Gulf

This session examines the present state of migration, mobility and trade in the corridor. It spans the patterns and drivers of movement, the infrastructures and networks that enable it, working and living conditions, the role of mobile traders, educational mobility, the everyday lives of Africans in the Gulf, and Gulf interests in Africa.

Session 2.1 Patterns of Africa-Gulf Migration and Mobility

One Corridor, Several Migration Systems: African Labour Mobility to the Six GCC States

Francoise De Bel-Air, *Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme, Gulf Research Center (GRC)*

African labour migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states is increasingly described as an emerging Africa-Gulf corridor. This chapter argues that the geographical label conceals several partially overlapping migration systems, which are institutionally constructed and continually re-sorted. Drawing on destination-country administrative records, origin-country deployment data, migrant surveys and research reports, it identifies four major configurations: a large and occupationally diversified Egyptian system; a smaller, selective and institutionally brokered Tunisian professional system; a feminised domestic-work system linking Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya to Gulf households; and an emerging, more volatile Sub-Saharan African system supplying security, hospitality, cleaning, transport and technical services. These systems are not simply the products of labour supply and wage differentials. They are jointly constituted by recruitment infrastructures, gendered occupational demand and GCC policies that classify, select and monitor foreign workers. Rare Kuwaiti data also show a disproportionately high share of non-Arab African residents in irregular administrative situations, suggesting that declining formal stocks may reflect a rotating recruitment system and irregularisation of migrants rather than return alone. The chapter concludes that the expansion of Africa-Gulf mobility is generating greater differentiation, not convergence towards a homogeneous corridor.

Ethiopian Women's Labor Migration to the Gulf States: Its Social Foundation

Endalkachew Mulugeta, *Debre Markos University, Ethiopia and Migration Researcher and Consultant, East Africa, Ethiopia*

Migration is one of the most pressing global issues of the twenty-first century. Labor migration of women from certain areas in Ethiopia, such as South Wollo, to the Gulf States is the most prevalent, socially structured, and non-random practice. Ethiopian women migrants face notorious hurdle and multifaceted exploitation from departure to arrival at their destinations. Criticism of earlier migration studies for their reductionist approach, micro-level analysis, and economic determinism underscores the need for research to understand the social foundation

of migration from the family and community perspective. Migrants do not make the decision to emigrate in a social vacuum; as members of a larger social structure, their behavior and actions are conditioned by family and community milieu. The study is based on the scientific premise that migration as a social phenomenon can be well understood through examining the context in which migration decisions are made. Therefore, this study has examined the social underpinnings of migration through understanding the way women's migration to the Gulf States is shaped by family and community circumstances. The study is conducted in one of women migration hotspot areas in Ethiopia, Mekane Selam town of South Wollo in the Amhara regional state located in northeastern Ethiopia. The study is guided by the aspiration-capability framework, cumulative causation theory, New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM), and social networking theories. The study utilized a mixed-sequential exploratory research design. For the qualitative study, 25 informants were purposively selected and key informant and in-depth interview were conducted. Additionally, 362 sample respondents were proportionally selected from both migrant-sending and non-migrant families for the household survey. Qualitative findings underwent inductive thematic analysis, while quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Session 2.2: Enablers of Movement, Infrastructure, Networks and Technology

This session turns to governance, inviting critical engagement with the policies, agreements and programmes that shape the movement of people, skills and trade between Africa and the Gulf. It spans bilateral and multilateral frameworks, recruitment and labour-mobility schemes, development cooperation and trade investment.

Domestic Worker Migration within the Ghana-Gulf Corridor: Enabling Infrastructures, Leander Kandilige and **Johnson Wilson Appiah-Kubi**, *Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana*.

Migration for domestic work has predominated the discourse of migration studies on the Gulf Region. Extant literature has examined the typologies of migration, the migration histories, key driving factors, experiences of migrants in the Gulf region and the need for a rights based formalised system for regulating such migrations. West Africa has become an emerging region for the supply of domestic workers to meet labour needs in the Gulf region. Specifically, Ghanaian female migrants regard the Gulf Region as a viable destination for them to exchange their labour for remuneration. As target earners, time-limited contracts shape the temporality of their migrations. However, very little research has been conducted into the network of actors who facilitate or constrain such movements. Using data from mixed methods research, this paper adopts the concept of migration infrastructures to examine which of the five dimensions of migration infrastructure (the commercial, regulatory, technological, humanitarian and social dimensions), with distinct logics of operation, characterise migrations within the Ghana-Gulf migration corridor. This allows for a nuanced analysis of the facilitating as well as extractive components of contemporary migration to emerging destinations. We conclude that there is the need for a deeper, nuanced and heterogenous appreciation of the role and activities of migration intermediaries to elevate the discourse of potential abuse beyond emotive and simplistic analysis.

Governing the Diaspora Abroad: Ethiopian Migrant Self-Organizations and the Transnationalization of State Authority in the United Arab Emirates

Saleh Seid Adem, University of Cologne, *Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Germany; Arba Minch University, Ethiopia*

Mobility between Ethiopia and the Arabian Peninsula long predates contemporary labour migration. Red Sea trade, pilgrimage, religious study, and other forms of circulation historically connected Ethiopian communities with Arabia, creating enduring routes and imaginaries of movement (Pankhurst 1997). From the 1970s onward, however, these older connections were progressively reorganised into a mass labour-migration corridor as oil-driven development increased demand for foreign workers across the Gulf. Saudi Arabia became the principal destination, while the UAE later emerged as another major centre of Ethiopian employment and commercial activity. This transformation was strongly gendered: migration increasingly involved young Ethiopian women entering domestic work through licensed agencies, informal brokers, personal networks, and irregular routes (Demissie 2018; Fernandez 2020). Contemporary Ethiopian migration to the Gulf thus became concentrated in temporary, employer-dependent domestic and service-sector employment under labour regimes that offered little possibility of permanent settlement. This paper examines how the Ethiopian state seeks to govern this recently recognised UAE-based diaspora through the formalisation of migrant self-organisations (MSOs) and the digitalisation of consular engagement. It asks: How are dispersed and frequently informal migrant networks transformed into recognisable diaspora institutions? How does the UAE's restrictive associational environment for migrants shape this process? And what forms of authority, representation, and contestation emerge when migrant organisations become institutionally aligned with the state of origin?

Session 2.3: Work, Working Arrangements and Gender Labour Migration

This forward-looking session situates Africa–Gulf migration, mobility and trade within global labour markets and geopolitics. It invites reflection on how both regions are navigating shifting economic priorities and demographic pressures, and on the partnerships that will shape the future of the corridor.

Remittances and Geopolitical Exposure: Gulf-Based North African Mobility after the Arab Uprising - The Case of Tunisia

Youssef Cherif, *Leiden University Netherlands*

This paper examines how Gulf-based North African mobility shaped domestic political economy and foreign-policy positioning between 2011 and 2025. While research on Africa–Gulf migration has largely focused on labour conditions, recruitment systems and migrant vulnerability in destination states, less attention has been paid to the effects of outward mobility on origin-country governance. This question became particularly important after the Arab Uprisings, when North African political transitions and growing economic fragility coincided with intensified competition among Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. The paper takes Tunisia as its principal case. This focus reflects the greater size of Tunisia's Gulf-based labour diaspora, the availability of official migration data, and the existence of a substantial parliamentary and media record. The paper argues that migration to the Gulf functioned as more than a labour corridor or an individual livelihood strategy. It generated two related feedback effects in Tunisia. First, remittances contributed to increasing employment and foreign-currency inflows during a decade and a half marked by unemployment, inflation, repeated political crises and declining confidence in state institutions. Second, the presence of a growing Tunisian

population across competing Gulf states created diplomatic and political sensitivities. Tunisians in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar were exposed to bilateral disputes, visa restrictions, interrupted air connections, fears of expulsion, and changes in employment conditions. These concerns reached official Tunisian institutions through consular channels, media, Facebook groups, diaspora organisations and parliamentary debates.

Labour Migration Remittances and Food (In)security in a South-South Context: Evidence from the Kenya-Qatar Corridor

Zack Ahmed, Fatuma Ali, and Jonathan Crush, *Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Canada*.

Labour migration from East Africa to the Gulf has expanded rapidly, yet little is known about how food security is produced across migrant origin and destination. This paper examines the Kenya-Qatar migration corridor through a mixed-methods study of migrant-sending households, return migrants, left-behind family members, and focus group discussions conducted in Nairobi, Kenya. The findings show that food insecurity was a major driver of migration, with many households pursuing overseas employment to meet basic food and livelihood needs. While remittances improved household food access and stabilized consumption in Kenya, these gains depended on migrants working under precarious conditions in Qatar, including delayed wages, long working hours, constrained food environments, and continuing obligations to support family members. The paper argues that migration did not eliminate food insecurity but reorganized it across migrants and the households that depended on them. By bringing origin and destination into the same analytical framework, it advances a translocal understanding of food security.

Session 2.4: Trade, Traders and Everyday Lives of Africans in the Gulf

This session examines migrant enterprise, cultural representations of Gulf labour migration, and policy coherence in the Africa-GCC corridor. The papers connect everyday trade, popular imagination, and governance to show how trade-driven mobility is lived, represented and regulated.

Sudanese Mandoob and the Functioning of Migrant Enterprise in Qatar

Sharique Umar, *Gulf Studies Center, College of Arts and Science, Qatar University, Qatar*

Migrant-run small and micro-scale enterprises are a ubiquitous feature of Arab Gulf economies. However, the migrants who finance and operate these businesses are often not the individuals whom the state formally recognizes as their owners. As a result, legal authority and economic control are divided across different actors. Existing scholarship has explained migrant entrepreneurship by examining entrepreneurs' resources, social networks, or the policy environments in which they operate. Less attention has been paid to the actors whose everyday work makes business formation possible under conditions of temporary migration. This paper addresses that gap by examining how commercial life is organised in Qatar and the role different migrant communities play in sustaining it. The paper draws on qualitative fieldwork conducted as part of a broader study of migrant entrepreneurship in Qatar, including thirty semi-structured interviews with South Asian migrants, participant observation in marketplaces and small businesses, and informal conversations with Sudanese intermediaries and researchers familiar with Sudanese migration to the Gulf. Although the research initially focused on entrepreneurial trajectories, fieldwork pointed to the central role of Sudanese intermediaries (mandoob) in connecting migrant entrepreneurs to citizen sponsors and state institutions. This pattern prompted an investigation into the organisation of migrant enterprise.

Labour Migration and The Gulf City in Kenyan Popular Music, Wambua Muidi, *Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala, Uganda.*

Using popular culture as a barometer, this paper seeks to show how the study of cultural production(s) can reorient our understanding of Afro-Arab relations in relation to Gulf-Africa labour mobility. Through the example of contemporary Kenyan popular music, the paper seeks to examine the cultural dimension of this labour migration in the representation of Arab cities as global cities that are magnets of opportunities and particularly how images of these cities as sites of contact, exchange and understanding between Africans and Arabs are refracted in popular music. Through a digital ethnography, resulting in selected songs and analysis of the meaning of lyrics, understood as texts, the paper shall examine how the Gulf's Coast cities; histories foster generative conversations which find expressions in popular cultures due to the (labour) migration networks they have forged over time. This paper will argue that musical cultures and economies convene music in its nature as a resource and an archive that surfaces counter-archives of cultural, economic and political relations, flows and affinities. Hence, in taking a micro perspective on how the Gulf city refracts as a migration node within popular imagination and memory in Kenya, and how this moves beyond history mediated by the Indian Ocean World with its attentive, loaded historical legacies to negotiate contemporary understandings of Afro-Arab relations from a humanistic perspective. In so doing, the paper ultimately seeks to argue how popular cultural products work the aesthetic and the symbolic to open new visions of African-Arab solidarity and relations by animating the everyday lives and realities of African imaginary and migrant engagement in public spaces in the Gulf.

Strengthening Policy Coherence at the Labour Migration, Development and Trade Nexus in the Africa-GCC Corridor: Towards an African-Centred Multi-Level Governance Framework, Charles Kiiza, *Department of Governance, Rwanda University, Rwanda*

Labour migration between Africa and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states has become one of the most dynamic yet underexplored dimensions of contemporary South–South migration. While considerable scholarship has examined migration between Africa and Europe or North America, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to the governance implications of the rapidly expanding Africa–GCC migration corridor. Driven by demographic pressures, youth unemployment, and limited domestic employment opportunities in many African countries, alongside sustained labour demand generated by economic diversification and large-scale development programmes in GCC states, labour mobility has become increasingly intertwined with trade, investment, regional integration, and development cooperation. Consequently, labour migration can no longer be understood solely as a labour market phenomenon but must be analysed within a broader migration trade–development nexus requiring coherent governance across multiple institutional levels. This paper examines how African regional governance institutions have responded to the expanding Africa–GCC labour migration corridor and assesses the extent to which existing governance frameworks promote policy coherence across labour migration, trade, and development. Specifically, it addresses four interrelated questions: how African regional institutions have responded to growing labour migration to GCC countries; the extent to which continental, regional, and bilateral governance frameworks promote policy coherence; the principal institutional and governance challenges that continue to constrain effective labour migration governance; and how an African-centred governance framework can strengthen strategic engagement with GCC labour markets while advancing Africa's development priorities.

Session 2.5: Everyday Lives of Africans in the Gulf and Educational Mobility

This session looks at how African communities in the Gulf create spaces of learning, support and belonging. Through examples from schools, migrant associations and community organising, the papers invite participants to reflect on everyday experiences of discrimination, resilience and connection.

Migration, Discrimination, and Community Organising of Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Bahrain

Ali Mohamed, *Migrant Rights Research Open Repository (MRRORS), Bahrain*

Sub-Saharan African migration to Bahrain has grown notably over the past decade, yet it remains largely absent from research on labour migration in the country, which has focused overwhelmingly on South and Southeast Asian populations. Drawing on desk research and interviews with fifteen Sub-Saharan African migrant workers and community representatives in Bahrain, this report maps the situation of African migrants across the private and domestic sectors. The report finds that African migrants experience an additional dimension of racialisation and discrimination, one that shapes their recruitment costs, working conditions, and treatment in public life, and sets their experiences apart from those of Asian and Arab counterparts. In recent years, Sub-Saharan African community organisations have emerged in Bahrain to challenge the treatment of African workers, showing that they are not passive subjects lacking agency. The report identifies several issues requiring policy attention. These include unregulated recruitment channels, the precarious status of live-out domestic work despite demand, and the persistent difficulty of addressing discrimination and organising migrant workers so long as the kafala system remains intact.

Narrating Africa-Gulf Connections: The Ethiopian International School in Saudi Arabia as a Geocultural Space of Education

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The Africa-Gulf relations and the Red Sea corridor have roots in centuries of cross-border exchange, marked by a complex mix of maritime trade, shared religious traditions, and deep historical migration. From the first hijrah to Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula have operated as a connected area of movement. However, research on Africa-Gulf migration has predominantly focused on labour mobility, migration governance, and migrant welfare. While current scholarship often overlooks these historical ties in favour of labour market analysis, the relationship remains fundamentally influenced by these shared past and spiritual bonds. In this context, Ethiopia serves as a unique case because its longstanding diplomatic and social presences in the Gulf, and especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), provide a key site to explore how traditional mobility has produced modern educational institutions that accompany migration and shape everyday transnational relations, which are largely unexplored. Hence, this paper addresses this gap by examining the Ethiopian International School (EIS) in KSA (Jeddah and Riyadh) as a geocultural space for narrative production through which Africa-Gulf connections are schooled and negotiated. Drawing on the concepts of geoculturality and geocultural diplomacy, this paper argues that community schools are academic environments where narratives of national identity and cross-regional relations are taught through curricula, language programs, commemorative events, and daily educational activities. The findings demonstrate that EIS functions as a geocultural space where educational practices produce and circulate narratives of Africa-Gulf relations while cultivating transnational forms of belonging among multilingual and bicultural graduates.

Emergency Statecraft, Food Insecurity and Ghanaian Migrants in Qatar During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Bernard Owusu (1) and Jonathan Crush (2), *Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Canada (1); University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa (2)*³.

The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security around the world is now well-documented (Béné et al., 2021; Dasgupta & Robinson, 2022; Mueller et al., 2022; Oliva-Orcas et al., 2022). Pandemic-related food insecurity was unevenly spread but experienced most intensely by vulnerable groups in every jurisdiction (Ahmed et al., 2023). Migrant populations experienced high rates of infection, heavy job loss, and reduced income which disrupted access to sufficient food. In Africa, pre-pandemic food insecurity among vulnerable migrant populations was significantly exacerbated by COVID-19 (Ahmed et al., 2024; Bhanye, 2023; Ncube et al., 2025; Onyango et al., 2023; Ramachandran et al., 2024; Tawodzera & Crush, 2025). Most studies of pandemic-related food security challenges confronting African migrants working outside the continent have focused on those in Europe and North America (Hayward et al., 2021; Mansour et al., 2020; Mori & Onyango, 2023). Migrant workers in the Global South were often stranded in countries of destination and confined to barracks during the pandemic lockdowns. In Singapore, for example, 200,000 foreign workers were living in over 40 large purpose-built dormitories with rooms housing between 12 and 20 workers sharing communal facilities (Tan et al., 2021). In the Gulf states, most migrant workers are accommodated in dormitory-style “labour camps” where they are crowded into small rooms with bunkbeds and shared communal bathrooms. In Kuwait, for example, Alahmad et al. (2020) note that “a large proportion of migrant workers in Kuwait live in cramped dormitories with poor housing conditions: small rooms with tens of men living together; unmaintained and shared toilets; poor or no ventilation; and high risk of bed bugs and other pests.” Overcrowded dormitories and labour camps became hotspots for COVID-19 transmission, giving the authorities an added reason to seal them off from the general population (Nahari et al., 2024).

Session 3: Migration and Mobility Policy – Governance, Legal Frameworks and Social Protection

This session focuses on understanding migration, mobility, and trade governance between Africa and the Gulf. Participants are invited to critically engage with the policies, agreements, and programmes that shape movement of people, skills, and trade across regions. This session will highlight some aspects of bilateral and multilateral frameworks, recruitment and labour mobility schemes, development cooperations, and trade investments.

Protection or Control? Institutional Representation of Risk in Ghanaian Women Migration to the Gulf

Eyram Ivy Sedzro, *University of Melbourne, Australia*

Risk has become a key concept in Ghana's contemporary migration governance. Women's migration to the Gulf countries is widely characterized as involving heightened risk, vulnerabilities and exploitation. In response, awareness campaigns, and safe migration initiatives have been increasingly deployed to discourage or regulate the migration of women seeking domestic and care work in the Gulf. Yet women's migration to the Gulf persists despite the proliferation of these interventions, raising important questions about how risk is framed in these regulatory instruments and governed in policy discourses. Using an analytic of problematization drawing on the “What's the Problem Represented to be?” (WPR) approach, this paper

³ Both authors are unable to attend the workshop, and the paper will not be presented.

documents and conceptualizes the role of risk in the regulatory instruments shaping women's mobility within the Africa-Gulf migration corridor. It examines how the National Labour Migration Policy and IOM's information campaigns portray risk associated with migration while uncovering the assumptions and presuppositions embedded in these representations. Through this approach, the paper demonstrates how both regulatory instruments adopt a rational-technical conception of risk in relation to women's migration to the Gulf. Within this framing, risk is operationalized both as a description of migrant vulnerability and misinformation, that are informed by assumptions. The paper argues that Ghana's migration regime operates through privileging the institutional construction of risk. This often functions as control shaping how women's mobility is problematized and regulated.

Structurally Embedded Vulnerabilities: Reframing Ghana-Gulf Labour Migration through Migration Systems Theory and Political Economy

Andani Husin Mubarak, *Consular and Welfare Officer at the Embassy of the Republic of Ghana, Kuwait*

Labour migration from West Africa to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has been on the increase over the last two decades. While there are several corridors that have received a lot of attention from scholars and researchers on international migration, there are a few others that have not received as much attention. Specifically, the Ghana-Gulf labour migration with special reference to the emerging Ghana-Kuwait and Ghana-Iraq corridors needs to be addressed. Historically, Asian countries have dominated labour-Gulf migration. While there is a massive body of research on Asian Labour-Gulf migration, there is less information and analyses on African participation in the GCC labour market. This paper seeks to address this considerable gap in the research on international migration by employing both Migration Systems Theory and the political economy of labour migration approaches to examine the Ghanaian labour migration to Kuwait and to Iraq respectively. The vulnerabilities of the Ghanaian labour migrant are not accidents; they are not circumstances that have befallen the migrant. Rather, such vulnerabilities are or are embedded in the labour recruitment system; the system of sponsorship; the temporal nature of a country's labour policy towards a group of citizens of another country and unequal-governance or lack of it by structures of both the country of origin and the country of destination.

From labour export to Governance Strategy: Integrating Mobility into Africa-Gulf Economic Partnerships

Shaymaa Bayoumi, *Arab Academy for Management, Banking and Financial Sciences (AAMBFS), Cairo, Egypt*

One of the most important modern South-South mobility corridors is labour migration from African nations to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Outward labour mobility offers vital livelihood opportunities, remittance inflows, and job outlets for the rapidly growing youth population in many African economies. At the same time, trade growth, strategic investments, agricultural cooperation, infrastructure development, and wider economic partnerships have all contributed to the significant deepening of economic ties between Africa and the Gulf over the past 20 years. Despite this increasing interdependence, frameworks for economic cooperation and labour mobility governance have developed primarily in parallel rather than in tandem. The main methods of controlling African labour migration to the Gulf are still bilateral labour agreements, hiring practices, and internal administrative policies. These tools frequently function in fragmented and reactive ways, despite their stated goals of promoting mobility and offering differing levels of worker protection. Rarely do preferential trade agreements (PTAs) and more general economic partnership agreements between African nations and GCC states

contain formal provisions addressing labour mobility, skill recognition, or regulatory cooperation pertaining to worker mobility. This paper makes the case that African states' strategic ability to influence migration outcomes in ways that support long-term development goals is limited by their continued treatment of labour mobility as a stand-alone issue rather than as an essential part of economic partnerships. It raises the question of whether preferential economic frameworks could be more purposefully employed as instruments to improve policy coherence between development, trade, and migration agendas.

Session 4: Future Prospects in Migration, Trade and Development Partnerships

This session explores the evolving nexus of migration, mobility, and trade between Africa and the Gulf situating these dynamics within the global labour market and geopolitical relations among others. This forward-looking session will share how both regions are navigating the shifting economic priorities, demographic pressures and exploring various partnerships on mobility, migration, and trade and how it will shape the future of Africa-Gulf engagement.

Exporting Migration Knowledge for Soft Power? Inter-Sending State Cooperation, Institutionalized Soft Power, and Norm Diffusion of in the Philippine-Africa Corridor

Froilan Malit, Jr, *Department of Politics and International Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London; Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme, Gulf Research Center*

Why and how do sending states in the Global South share migration management knowledge with potential competitors, and how does this inter-sending state cooperation advance their foreign policy objectives? International relations (IR) scholarship has broadly treated Global South sending states as either rule takers or passive actors rather than as proactive foreign policy actors fully capable of shaping regional and transregional migration governance. This article examines the Philippine state's inter-sending state multi-level cooperation with African sending states to show how cross-regional knowledge diffusion can become an instrument of migration diplomacy. I argue that the sending state instrumentalizes this knowledge to institutionalize a soft power reputation for global migration governance expertise as well as pursue other wider foreign policy aims. I trace these inter-sending state practices across three sites of diffusion in the Philippine-Africa corridor: interstate engagement (by the Department of Migrant Workers with African sending states), subnational engagement (via training and coordination through UN CICAL), and extraterritorial informal engagement (through informal knowledge exchange through Philippine diplomatic missions in destination countries). Rather than framing sending states as simply exporters of migrant labor, I demonstrate how they also tactically operate as producers and brokers of regional and global migration governance. Methodologically, I draw on semi-structured interviews with Filipino and African state and non-state officials, process tracing, a decade of field observation in the Philippine–Gulf–Africa migration corridor, and analysis of government documents, policy materials, and newspaper coverage. Overall, the study advances the IR and South-South labor migration on migration diplomacy, soft power, and South–South norm diffusion by showing how sending states tactically shape cross-regional migration governance within and beyond the Global South through institutionalized expertise.

From Lamenting on Abuse of Domestic Workers to Strategic Partnership: Ethiopia's Potential to Contribute for Enhanced Collaboration between the GCC and the East and Horn Africa,
Abebaw Minaye, Addis Ababa University Research Chair for Forced Displacement and Migration Studies, Ethiopia

Ethiopia with a population of about 139 million where more than 3 million youth join the work force every year is strategically located close to the Gulf Cooperation Countries. Following the surge of the oil economy and the consequent development in the GCC, out migration from Ethiopia to the GCC grew exponentially specially in the last 20 years. Regular migration alone grew from less than two thousand in 2007 to over 190 thousand in 2012. The irregular migration was almost double the regular one (US TIP reports from 2013-2022). Following the 2013 deportation crises (163,000 Ethiopians deported from Saudi Arabia) there came a growing anti-migration attitude among public opinion leaders and the government. One of the evidence for this is the travel ban which was put in place for five years (Oct 2013-Oct 2018). In fact this is against the reality on the ground where youth unemployment is huge and the intention for migration is very high in many parts of the country. The unprecedented deportation also led to diverse responses including enacting independent anti-trafficking/anti-smuggling legislations and overseas employment proclamations which both were revised three times in just a decade and establishment of a national coordination mechanism. Both showing the grave concern and desire to better manage migration. Recently, there is a significant shift from fear and panic of abuse of migrant domestic workers to modernizing labour migration. As a result Ethiopia has sent 500,000 labour migrants to the GCC and some Middle East countries in 2024/2025 and this figure grew to 622,864 in 2025/26 and the plan is to send over 1 million by 2026/27 migrant workers including efforts to diversify portfolio of migrants. Although irregular migration is still a challenge the regular one is growing and improving its efficiency. Now the country is also strengthening its collaboration with Middle East and GCC countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel focusing on trade, investment, infrastructure, and tourism. If Ethiopia enhances its leverage by sending skilled labour migrants and working for a balanced trade relations; given its geography, population and emerging economy it can be a strategic linkage between the GCC/Middle East countries and the East and Horn of Africa. But this requires working hard to have calibrated migration diplomacy, improved migrant skill sets and better management of labour migration.

Biographies

Faisal Garba is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Cape Town, where he leads the Migration and Mobility Hub. His research addresses African mobility, political economy, inequality, working-class organising and social theory. Dr Garba Muhammed's research is broadly around the sociology of Africa, with a focus on migration and mobility, Afro-Asian social formations, inequality, labour studies and working-class movements. His work is guided by a set of perspectives informed by his location while thinking about global questions. His intellectual outlook is shaped by this vantage point while not limited by place.



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Linda Adhiambo Oucho is Executive Director of the African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) in Nairobi and a part-time professor at the European University Institute's Migration Policy Centre in Florence. She recently served as a Scholar of Excellence under Canada's CERC programme at Toronto Metropolitan University. She holds a PhD in Ethnic Relations from the University of Warwick, where her work focused on African women's migration agency. Her research spans migration governance, labour migration, regional integration, free movement in Africa, irregular migration and forced displacement, and she works closely with organisations including IOM, UNDP, IDRC and GIZ, as well as African governments, the African Union Commission and Regional Economic Communities.

Imco Brouwer is Managing Director of the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population (GLMM) programme, at the Gulf Research Center (GRC). He is affiliated with the GRC since 2009, initially assisting in the setting up of Gulf Research Meeting (GRM, 2009-2011) and then in establishing and managing the GLMM. Imco Brouwer has worked with universities, research centers, foundations, and non-governmental organizations. His focus has been on international migration, human rights, democratization, higher education, and international cooperation.



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Hubert Kinkoh is a Senior Researcher at Center of Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO), currently focusing on the Robert Bosch Stiftung-funded project on 'West Asian and Sub-Saharan African partnerships in Flux' (WASSAP). Over the last decade, he has developed expertise in the governance of peace, security, and development in Africa, researching, among others, how external influences impinge on African states and societies. Until July 2026, he was also a Mo Ibrahim Foundation Academy Fellow at Chatham House within the Africa Programme. Hubert has held research positions with prestigious organizations such as the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), International Crisis Group (ICG), the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), and the African Leadership Centre (ALC). He has also consulted for various stakeholders,

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Amish Karki is an official with the International Labour Organization (ILO) with expertise in labour migration governance. He currently serves as Project Manager for the ILO's interregional FAIRWAY Programme, which advances decent work and strengthens labour migration governance between Africa and the Arab States. Previously, he served as the ILO's Labour Migration Specialist for South Asia and managed a regional UN Joint Programme on labour migration governance in South and Southeast Asia. Amish has extensive experience working with trade unions, including through the South Asian Trade Union Council (SARTUC), and engaging governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society to advance rights-based and inclusive labour migration policies across Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa.



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Bruck Negash

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Bruck Negash is a migration policy expert and practitioner with extensive experience in program management, civil society engagement, and policy advocacy. His work focuses on strengthening the role of African and intercontinental civil society organizations (CSOs) in regional and global migration governance processes. His specific expertise include AU-EU migration dialogue, Legal pathways and legal migration and return policies. Bruck has designed and coordinated multi-stakeholder initiatives, facilitated high-level policy dialogues, and supported advocacy efforts on labor migration, legal pathways, climate mobility, return and reintegration, and diaspora engagement. He is particularly passionate about advancing inclusive, rights-based, and people-centered migration policies through collaborative regional and

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Dr. Françoise De Bel-Air is a socio-demographer specializing in the Middle East and Gulf region. Since 2013, she has served as Senior Fellow with the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population programme (GLMM) at the Gulf Research Centre Foundation. She previously held positions at the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO) in Amman, Jordan, and at the Migration Policy Centre of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. Her research and publications focus on population and migration data and policies, youth, family structures, labour reforms, and socio-political change in Arab countries.



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Dr. Solenn Al Majali is a French-Jordanian anthropologist based in Amman, Jordan. She received her Ph.D. from Aix-Marseille University (France) in 2024. Her research examined processes of racialization and sociability among Somali, Sudanese, and Yemeni refugees in Amman, Jordan. As part of this research, she conducted an ethnographic study of a working-class neighborhood in the capital, developing a neighborhood-based monograph that examined forms of sociability among different migrant communities and the ethnic boundaries that shape and regulate these interactions. Her research also seeks to develop forms of mobilization and activism in support of migrant rights in Jordan. She is currently interested in interactions and connections between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. Her research examines longstanding connections between Arabia and Africa in order to move beyond colonial territorial categories. She also works on processes of mixing and intermarriage between African and Arab populations, particularly through the case of the *mūwalladīn* and *mūwalladāt*, Yemenis of African descent.

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Dr. Johnson Wilson Appiah Kubi has a PhD in Development Economics and an MPhil Degree in Economics from the University of Ghana (UG) and specialised in Labour Economics. He is a Lecturer at the Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana, where he teaches graduate students in Quantitative research methods, Labour migration and Migration and Development. Prior to becoming a lecturer, Johnson had been a research consultant for a number of international organisations. He worked as a Danida Consultant on SPSP III Data collection and impact computations. He worked with the Centre for Migration Studies on a

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Migration out of poverty project, with the role of poverty computations out of two waves of data. He worked with ISSER and RIPS researchers on many projects (both at UG). He has also worked for IFPRI, UNU-WIDER and UNDP-Ghana office.



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Saleh Seid Adem is a doctoral researcher and lecturer in social and cultural anthropology at the University of Cologne. His research focuses on African migration, particularly Ethiopian labour migration to the Gulf states and Europe. He is completing his PhD within a collaborative project on migration, intersectionality, and institutional interaction, examining Ethiopian migrant workers' experiences under the kafala system in the United Arab Emirates. His work combines ethnographic and institutional approaches, with interests in digital ethnography, migration intermediation, transnational infrastructures, and migrants' engagement with formal institutions and digital platforms. Previously, he was a lecturer and researcher at Arba Minch University, Ethiopia, where he

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Dr. Youssef Cherif is the Founding Director of Columbia Global Center Tunis, Columbia University's hub for North and West Africa, and a PhD Researcher at Leiden University, currently seconded at the University of Ghana's Centre for Migration Studies, and based between Tunis, Accra, and Leiden. His work focuses on international relations, international political economy, and regional politics in North Africa and the broader Middle East, with particular attention to Gulf–Africa relations and South–South dynamics. He is a Visiting Researcher at the University of Ghana's Centre for Migration Studies, Non-Resident fellow at the Africa Governance Centre in Ghana, a member of the Carnegie Civic Research Network, the IEMed Yearbook Advisory Council, the Latin America and Global IR Research Group, Columbia University's Institute of African Studies, and the African Studies Centre Leiden. He has contributed to academic, policy, and media debates on North African and African affairs, and has worked across research, higher education, development, and international cooperation. He holds master's degrees from King's College London and Columbia University and is a Fulbright and Chevening scholar.



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