

Evaluation Of Government Services Extended To Ugandan Migrant Workers In Gulf : Progress, Gaps, And The Urgent Need For Action.

1. PRE-DEPARTURE TRAINING: MANDATORY BUT WEAKLY ENFORCED

Ugandan law requires all migrant workers to undergo at least 14 days of pre-departure training. As of June 2023:

- 54 accredited training institutions exist nationwide
- Capacity: 21,284 trainees per month
- About 80% of the Ugandan Migrant domestic workers report receiving some training

Key gaps

- Training is rushed, overcrowded, and treated as a formality
- Corruption enables shortened training or forged certificates
- Some workers are deployed without any training at all

2. EMBASSY AND CONSULAR SUPPORT

Ugandan embassies are expected to assist migrant workers with:

- Emergency travel documents
- Consular assistance
- Mediation in labour disputes
- Repatriation and shelter in distress cases

Reality on the ground

- Majority of the Ugandan Migrant workers do not receive embassy assistance

- Helplines go unanswered
- Movement restrictions especially for the Ugandan Migrant domestic workers block access to the Embassies
- Long distances between the embassies and workplaces of the Ugandan Migrant domestic workers
- Only one Labour Attache is deployed in the entire Gulf region and is currently stationed in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Uganda currently maintains embassies in only three Gulf countries that is; Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar leaving workers in other gulf countries without direct diplomatic support.

Even where embassies exist;

- Staffing levels are low
- Financial resources are inadequate
- Only one Labour Attache is stationed in Riyadh
- Plans to deploy more labour attaches stalled due to lack of funding

3. DIGITAL MONITORING: THE EXTERNAL EMPLOYMENT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (EEMIS)

Launched in 2018, EEMIS is Uganda's digital system for tracking migrant worker recruitment and deployment. It feeds into the broader Labour Market Information System (LMIS), inaugurated in May 2025.

What EEMIS has improved:

- Transparency in recruitment agency licensing
- Centralised migrant worker data
- Faster administrative processes
- Better traceability of formal migration pathways

However,

- There is limited awareness of the same among workers and local governments
- Does not capture returnee data
- Informal migration remains undocumented

4. THE MIGRANT WORKER SUPPORT CENTRE UNDER MGLSD : A PROMISING BUT NEW INTERVENTION.

In March 2025, the government established a Migrant Worker Support Centre under MGLSD. The Centre provides:

- Pre-employment information
- Legal guidance
- Rights awareness
- Psychosocial support
- Repatriation and reintegration assistance

While this is a positive development, its operation and reach remains limited, and sustained funding is essential for nationwide impact.

5. REPATRIATION

- Recruitment agencies are legally responsible for repatriation.
- Government intervention is mostly limited to paperwork
- The state rarely funds emergency returns

6. REINTEGRATION SUPPORT

- Uganda has no fully operational reintegration framework
- Most reintegration assistance comes from CSOs and UN agencies
- The National Migration Policy (2025) promises reform but the implementation this policy is yet to be funded.

Without reintegration support, many returnees fall back into poverty or re-migrate.

The Funding Contradiction

Uganda earns:

- USD 1.6+ billion annually in remittances
- UGX 30+ billion in non-tax revenue from labour externalization
- Yet, investment in worker protection remains minimal.

A call to action

Labour externalisation cannot remain a revenue-generating programme without protection. Increased public funding is urgently needed to:

- Strengthen monitoring and enforcement
- Strengthen the operational capacity of the Migrant Workers Support Centre under MGLSD
- Strengthen pre-departure training
- Deploy Labour Attaches and expand embassy capacity
- Integrate EEMIS with reintegration services
- Establish a comprehensive, gender-responsive reintegration framework

“Every Ugandan worker abroad deserves respect, care, and support.”