



Business & Human Rights
Resource Centre

Inhospitable:

How hotels in Qatar & the UAE are
failing migrant workers

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Executive Summary

Gulf countries working to diversify their economies are investing in hospitality, with the 2020 World Expo in Dubai and 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar driving much of the regional sector's growth. Migrant labour will be the backbone of hotels' efforts to accommodate the influx of people visiting the region. Managed well, this can bring shared prosperity to the Gulf States, and to migrant workers and their families. Hotel companies have made strides in integrating human rights into their global corporate governance: 76% (13/17) of companies we surveyed have a public commitment to human rights and 71% (12/17) have labour rights-specific supply chain standards.

According to the [International Labour Organisation](#), hotel companies recognize that migrant workers are vital to their operations and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Yet, our research finds companies are failing to adequately protect migrant workers' rights. The gaps between companies' human rights policies and practice can be attributed to the hotel industry's fragmented business model, where responsibility for workers' rights is often lost among hotel companies, third-party property owners, and suppliers. Despite an awareness by companies of these risks, there has been little serious action to address them. Without clear standards and accountability mechanisms that cut across business relationships at the operational level, hotels expose workers to a high risk of abuse. This risk is amplified in the Gulf, where migrants face restrictions on their freedom of movement and ability to organise.

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) invited 17 hotel companies, representing 68 hotel brands with more than 200 properties across Dubai, United Arab Emirates and Qatar, to participate in a survey on their approach to safeguarding migrant workers' rights in these countries. Seven of the 17 companies responded: **Four Seasons, Hilton, Hyatt, InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG), Marriott, Radisson, and Whitbread**. This briefing analyses their responses, along with all 17 companies' publicly available human rights and labour rights policies, and compares it to testimony from migrants working in the hotel sector in Qatar and the UAE. It reveals a stark contrast between hotel chains' public commitments and policies and how these are enforced on the ground.

With over 25 million extra visitors expected to descend on Dubai and Qatar in the coming years, our findings suggest that hotel companies are woefully underprepared to prevent and remediate the human rights risks migrant workers face in their hotels. The lack of supply chain oversight is particularly concerning given that hotels will have to grow their workforce substantially for a time-limited period, exposing them to supply chain risks where migrant workers face a higher likelihood of labour abuse and exploitation.

Non-responders:

- AccorHotels
- Deutsche Hospitality
- Jumeirah Group
- Kempinski Hotels
- Millennium & Copthorne Hotels
- Minor International
- Rotana
- Shangri-La
- The Indian Hotels Company
- Wyndham

Key Findings

- **Recruitment fees, restricted freedom of movement and lack of overtime payment** are the key labour abuses revealed in testimonies from migrant hotel workers in the region.
- **Most of the 17 hotel companies surveyed failed to disclose any information.**
 - Ten out of the 17 companies failed to respond to our survey on how they mitigate risks to migrant workers in Qatar and/or the UAE.
- **Migrant workers at Gulf hotels risk falling through the gaps between companies' global policies and practices.**
 - Only three of the 17 companies (**AccorHotels, Radisson** and **Whitbread**) mention protection of migrant workers in their human rights disclosure.
 - Only one company (**Radisson**) has a publicly available process to enable migrant workers to terminate their employment contracts at will in the UAE.
 - Only two companies (**Hilton** and **Radisson**) indicated they provide alternative means of organising where freedom of association is restricted, as in Qatar and the UAE.
- **Hotel companies are failing to enforce human rights standards in their business relationships.**
 - Twelve companies have publicly available labour supply chain standards.
 - Three respondents (**Four Seasons, Hilton** and **Radisson**) provided publicly available information on how they ensure compliance by suppliers in Qatar and the UAE.
- Only one company (**Hilton**) indicated it conducts due diligence on the hotel property owners it partners with in these countries.
- **Nevertheless, a cluster of four committed companies (Four Seasons, Hilton, Marriott and Radisson) had the strongest disclosures** and demonstrated emerging best practice on enforcing ethical recruitment and facilitating worker representation.

Key Recommendations

Companies should

- Commit to upholding international standards on the protection of migrant workers and introduce protections against risks specific to Qatar and the UAE, including on freedom of movement and worker representation.
- Conduct robust human rights due diligence to identify risks to hotel workers and to screen business partners prior to entering business relationships.
- Introduce labour standards into contract clauses with suppliers in Qatar and the UAE, monitor their ongoing performance against these standards, and have clear corrective action plans to address and remedy non-compliance when it occurs.

Governments of Qatar and the UAE should

- Enforce existing labour laws and strengthen protections for shift workers with regards to working hours and days off.
- Allocate adequate resources and mandate to labour rights inspectorate bodies to identify and penalise companies for labour rights violations in their operations and supply chains.
- Remove the requirement for migrant workers to seek employer permission to change jobs at any time during their contract.

Introduction

The Gulf hospitality market is [projected](#) to grow from \$22.9 billion USD in 2017 to \$32.5 billion USD in 2022, as the region prepares for two highly anticipated global events in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

In the UAE, the World Expo in Dubai is [expected](#) to host 25 million visitors over a six-month period between October 2020 and April 2021, with more than [50,000 hotel rooms being built](#) to accommodate the influx of guests. Qatar [anticipates](#) the arrival of 1.5 million fans for the FIFA World Cup 2022, and under FIFA guidelines is [required](#) to have a minimum of 60,000 hotel rooms in time for the tournament.

The small size of the Qatari and Emirati local population means that migrant workers form the vast majority of the labour force in both countries. Migrants will inevitably be responsible for realising the rapid growth in hospitality, as they build and operate the countries' hotels. If managed properly, hotels can provide decent, safe work and a living wage for migrant workers, while contributing to economic diversification in host countries.

Despite this potential, migrant workers are vulnerable to labour exploitation as a result of the dominant business structure in the hotel industry, and the operating context in Qatar and the UAE, where local legislation limits migrant workers' freedom of movement and ability to organise.

In September and October 2018, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre spoke to 17 hotel workers during a series of visits to hotels in the region. Given the risks to workers' job security and fears of retaliation, their testimonies are anonymous and we avoid mentioning specific hotel companies where interviewees work. Through these interviews and research into publicly available allegations and reporting in the last three years, we have identified the following key risks to migrant workers in the hotel sector in Dubai and Qatar:

Exploitative recruitment practices

“On receiving a contract with half the promised salary at the airport just hours before his flight: “I had no option but to sign [the contract]... I had already paid so much. We were forced to get on the flight.”

Landscaping worker in Qatar, 2018

Violations of occupational health & safety

“Have you ever stood for 12 hours straight?... [At first] I couldn't walk properly because I felt like my joint was dislocated... It feels like you've been punched in the head a thousand times.”

Security guard in Qatar, 2018

Low wages, salary delays & uncompensated overtime

“I don't even know what my [ATM] card looks like because it has always been with my boss. In my... contract, my salary is mentioned as Dh2,000. But I am paid Dh1,500 in cash.

Security guard from Uganda in the UAE, 2018

Restrictions on freedom of movement

“We can only go out during our off days... That's the company rules and regulations. In our off days [we] can go out [from] 9am until 10pm only. We have a curfew until 10pm... [Otherwise] [t]hey will deduct 50 QR [from] our salary.”

Waitress from the Philippines, 2018

Inadequate & unsanitary housing

“Our shared kitchen does not have proper ventilation and there are cockroaches everywhere.”

Receptionist from Albania, 2018

Industry initiatives on modern slavery and forced labour

Spurred by the concerns of investors, customers, civil society and advocates within business, several labour rights initiatives have emerged from within the hotel industry in 2018. These include the Shiva Foundation's [Stop Slavery Blueprint](#) for fighting modern slavery in the hospitality sector, and the International Tourism Partnership's (ITP) [Principles on Forced Labour](#), which state that:

- Every worker should have freedom of movement
- No worker should pay for a job
- No worker should be indebted or coerced to work

The ITP should work with its members to operationalise their commitments to the Forced Labour Principles into procedures, and facilitate sharing of best practice throughout the industry.

Hotel companies that do not adopt and embed rigorous human rights commitments and due diligence open themselves up to possible reputational, financial, and legal risks. **Kempinski Hotels**, for example, is facing allegations of debt bondage and forced labour involving 19 subcontracted migrant workers at the Marsa Malaz Kempinski in Qatar. Workers' accounts detailed payment of excessive recruitment fees, salaries below the minimum wage, and consequent pressure to work overtime to compensate for debt and low salaries.

In response, **Kempinski Hotels** said: *"Marsa Malaz Kempinski, The Pearl, takes the allegations very seriously. We are committed to abiding by the highest ethical standards as an international luxury hotel operator. Equally, we expect all subcontracting companies to abide by these same standards. Due to the severity of these allegations, we have launched an investigation and will take appropriate remedial action as required."*

Kempinski Hotels did not respond to our survey and does not have a publicly available commitment to human rights. At the time of publication, they have not released the findings of their investigation or the remedial action taken.

Survey Findings & Analysis

The Company Survey

Informed by these risks to migrant workers and business, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited 17 hotel companies, representing 68 hotel brands with over 200 properties across Dubai, UAE and Qatar to participate in a survey on migrant workers' rights¹. We focused on Dubai from among the other Emirates in the UAE because it will be the primary destination for guests attending the World Expo in 2020, and has received less attention than Qatar, despite the far larger audience anticipated for the Expo. The survey consisted of 21 questions covering company policy and procedures in the following areas (see [Annex 2](#)):

- Public commitment to human rights
- Managing business relationships (third-party property owners and suppliers)
- Ethical recruitment
- Freedom of movement
- Payment and wages
- Health and safety
- Living conditions
- Worker representation and grievance mechanisms
- Stakeholder engagement

We selected companies to survey based on desk research into multinational hotel brands with a presence in Dubai and/or Qatar. Where companies were found to have a presence in both countries, we surveyed them on the country where they had more properties and/or to ensure balance in the sample between Dubai and Qatar. The complete set of company responses and non-responses are available on our [Migrant Workers and Hotels](#) platform and are summarised in [Annex 1](#).

Company responses

Seven of the 17 companies we contacted responded to the survey.

- All seven respondents are members of the International Tourism Partnership (ITP): **Four Seasons, Hilton, Hyatt, IHG, Marriott, Radisson, and Whitbread.**
- Three ITP members with operations in Qatar and/or the UAE did not respond: **Deutsche Hospitality, The Indian Hotels Company, and Wyndham.**
- The remaining non-responders are: **AccorHotels, Jumeirah Group, Kempinski Hotels, Millennium & Copthorne Hotels, Minor International, Rotana, Shangri-La.**

While a 40% response rate is low, it is higher than similar surveys we conducted in the construction sector in Qatar and the UAE, where only 22% [responded](#) in 2016 and 28% in 2018.

¹ This survey comes after an earlier pilot we conducted in early 2017, the results of which can be found [here](#).

Company evaluation

	Human rights policy	Supply chain standards	Risk areas							
			Recruitment	Timely payment & fair wages	Freedom of movement	Health & safety	Living conditions	Freedom of association	Grievance mechanisms	Survey response
Hilton	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Radisson	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Marriott	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Four Seasons	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hyatt	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Whitbread	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
IHG	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Wyndham	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Minor International	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
The Indian Hotels Company	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
AccorHotels	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shangri-La	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Millennium & Copthorne Hotels	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jumeirah Group	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Deutsche Hospitality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kempinski Hotels	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rotana	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Human rights policy & supply chain standards: ● Publicly disclosed policy ● Commitment/undisclosed policy ● None
 Risk Areas: ● Good practice ● Regional implementation ● Policy/commitment ● None

Policy to Practice

Public commitment to human rights

To assess companies' commitments to human and labour rights, we analysed publicly available disclosures made in company policies, codes of conduct and reporting, alongside the information contained in the survey responses.

We found that 13 of the 17 companies in our analysis have a public commitment to human rights, but in the cases of **Jumeirah Group** and **Shangri-La** these have not been adopted as formal policies. The companies with no public human rights commitment are **Deutsche Hospitality**, **Four Seasons**², **Kempinski Hotels**, and **Rotana**.

Despite the prevalence of migrant workers in company operations and supply chains in countries like Qatar and the UAE, and the specific risks they face due to their immigration status, only **AccorHotels**, **Radisson** and **Whitbread** specifically mention protection of migrant workers in their human rights disclosure.

Companies' commitments to labour rights vary in scope, from modern slavery and trafficking statements and commitments to abide by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) core conventions, to specific policy commitments on recruitment, living wage, health & safety and freedom of movement.

Managing business relationships

Third-party owners

According to companies' survey responses, approximately 70% of hotels in the seven responding companies' combined portfolios operate as managed hotels. Under this model, a hotel company lends its brand and distribution channels to a property, and is responsible for managing its day-to-day operations.

The prevalence of this operating structure means that employment relationships in Qatar and the UAE are governed by third-party property owners, not the international hotel companies. As a consequence, responsibility for migrant workers' rights is fragmented, making it more difficult for hotel companies to apply their human rights policies to subcontracted staff.

“Due to our decentralized management approach, [Shangri-La] does not have oversight of all contracts entered into by [its] subsidiaries and affiliates at the hotel level. [Shangri-La] does not currently have a policy or mechanism for checking all contracts for human rights issues.”

Shangri La, 2017 UN Global Compact Communication on Progress

Hilton is the only company to report conducting due diligence on the hotel owners it contracts with. The company states that it is “committed to working with and encouraging [their] owners to uphold the principles of our Human Rights Policy Statement, and to adopt similar policies within their business. [Their] hotel owners undergo a thorough due diligence review. A reference to the Code of Conduct and Human Rights Policy is included in the due diligence questionnaire that [they] send to all new owners.”

² **Four Seasons** has a human rights policy that has been made public on our website as part of their survey response, however it is not publicly available on their website or elsewhere.

Suppliers

For human rights commitments to become operational, companies must take specific steps to embed their policies in both their direct operations and their supply chains. Despite the prevalence of human rights and responsible sourcing policies among respondents, only a handful described how they operationalise them in the context of Qatar and the UAE to identify and manage the risks to migrant workers and enforce labour standards in their supply chains.

Only three companies (**Four Seasons, Marriott, and Radisson**) reported procedures, specific to their Qatar or UAE operations, for identifying workforce risks. Regarding better practice, **Radisson** engaged a consulting company to create a hotel self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) designed to identify potential gaps and vulnerabilities in the business processes of hotel properties and third-party intermediaries related to the recruitment and employment of migrant workers. The SAQ was tested in three of their hotels in the Middle East. **Marriott** reported that it implements an ongoing risk management process to identify, prevent and mitigate relevant human rights risks globally, including Qatar. At the global level, **Whitbread** uses ratings and analysis developed by global anti-slavery group, Stop the Traffik, to identify high risk suppliers in countries that are vulnerable to modern slavery. However, the company did not specify whether they have applied this framework in their Dubai hotels.

None of the companies in our outreach disclosed information on the specific workforce risks identified in their Dubai and Qatar hotels. **Marriott** identifies forced labour, human trafficking and unethical recruitment as the main workforce risks affecting their global business operations and value chains. **Hilton** also identified human trafficking for sexual exploitation and modern slavery as the key risks in their global business activities.

Four companies provided workforce data (**Four Seasons, Hilton, Radisson and Marriott**), albeit to varying levels of completeness. Based on numbers from Hilton and Marriott, 26% of their hotel workforce is female. None of the respondents highlighted gender-specific risks to workers when asked to identify the workforce risks in their Qatar and UAE hotels, despite the common practice of instituting curfews on female staff and risks of sexual harassment.

A subcontracted waitress at a UK-headquartered hotel brand described the curfew that the company imposes on female staff. On their day off, they can leave their accommodation between 9am and 10pm. Violating the curfew allegedly results in a 14 USD salary deduction. During working days, female staff must return to their accommodation immediately after their shift and are prohibited from staying out.

The workforce data also revealed that these hotels subcontract 25% of their workforce, with the remaining directly employed by the hotel or property owner. The most common job categories for subcontracted workers are housekeepers, restaurant staff, security guards, drivers and stewards.

Very few companies in our outreach provided details on how they ensure that subcontracted service providers and labour suppliers comply with company standards:

Hilton's standard vendor contracts require its labour outsourcing agencies to comply with its Responsible Sourcing Policy and to participate in an ethical trading audit. They have also created a training on the risks of Modern Slavery in Labour Sourcing that is mandatory for General Managers, Human Resources Directors, Procurement Managers and Directors of Finance at its managed hotels. The company reported that both the vendor contracts and training programmes are applied in Qatar.

Radisson conducts audits of suppliers in the UAE to ensure adherence to their Supplier Code of Conduct including on payment of wages and accommodation. The company also mentions several checks it conducts of suppliers, including checking that outsourced employees have work permits.

Four Seasons' contracts with recruitment agencies in Qatar contain clauses that prohibit the agencies from charging fees to workers. The company is in the process of integrating labour rights criteria into their tendering process, whereby "agencies will be obliged to provide evidence and documentation for working and living conditions as well as ethical recruitment for their staff" if they wish to work with the company.

Whitbread requires its suppliers to register on software that measures performance and compliance on an on-going basis. However, the company did not clarify if its UAE suppliers are assessed using the same system.

Ethical recruitment

No-fee recruitment



Recruitment fees incurred by low-wage migrant workers are a major contributor to forced labour in Dubai and Qatar. Recruitment agencies and their intermediaries in countries of origin leave many workers in situations of debt bondage and vulnerable to further exploitation.

Ten of the 17 hotel workers (59%) we talked to said they had paid recruitment fees to secure their jobs; six had to borrow money to pay the fees.

³ Proportion of companies that have a global policy on given risk area

⁴ Proportion of companies that extend this policy to their suppliers at the global level

⁵ Proportion of respondents that shared a regional process on given risk area

⁶ Proportion of respondents that extend this regional process to suppliers

Sample recruitment fees in Qatar and the UAE⁷

Destination country	Qatar			UAE
Origin country	India	Philippines	Nepal	Pakistan
Average fees	1,149 USD	480 USD	1,054 USD	2,351 USD
Months' worth of pay	2.0 months	1.1 months	3.3 months	7.2 months

The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility's (ICCR) [Best Practice Guidance on Ethical Recruitment of Migrant Workers](#) recommends that companies adopt a publicly available policy that addresses the recruitment of migrant workers, including the prohibition of worker-paid fees, passport/personal paper confiscation and requires a written contract with the terms of employment in the language of the worker:

Worker-paid fees: Seven of the 17 companies in our analysis have a global policy commitment to no-fee recruitment. **Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott, Radisson, and Whitbread** adopt the 'Employer Pays Principle'. Only **Four Seasons** and **Hilton** described how they apply their policy in their Qatar operations; both companies prohibit recruitment fees in their contracts with recruitment agencies and conduct interviews with employees to confirm non-payment of recruitment fees. Hilton requires the agency to pay back fees to workers if it finds that recruitment fees have been charged.

Passport confiscation: Five out of the 17 companies said they do not withhold employee passports in Qatar and the UAE. **Four Seasons** is the only company to report extending its policy on passport retention to suppliers in Qatar. The two companies that did not provide this information are **IHG** and **Whitbread**.

Contract substitution: Four out of the seven respondents reported issuing contracts directly to successful candidates in their home country to prevent contract substitution. **Four Seasons** provided a description of the legal process in Qatar, which involves securing government attestations of contracts either before or upon an employees' arrival⁸. We did not find any publicly available information about contract substitution policies among the non-respondents.

⁷ "ILO-WB partnership on measuring recruitment costs: progresses on SDG indicator 10.7.1", International Labour Organization and World Bank, 15th Coordination Meeting on International Migration United Nations Headquarters New York, 16-17 February 2017.

⁸ In October 2018, Qatar launched visa centres in primary sending countries where prospective migrants can access and sign copies of their contracts which have been approved by the Qatari Ministry of Interior.

Passport retention



Hilton's description of its recruitment process explains how employment relationships are governed in managed hotels, whereby workers are employed by the hotel owner and managed by Hilton. Within this arrangement, "Hilton recruits and hires employees on behalf of the owner and, in this capacity, is committed to ethical recruitment, through [its] web portal, recruitment agencies and employment practices." **Marriott** similarly states that "although we manage and select the employees, the employment entity is an ownership entity with Marriott having Power of Attorney".

Freedom of movement

Freedom to change employment



The visa sponsorship system used in the Gulf has been widely criticised for restricting migrants' ability to exit abusive employment conditions. Although all Gulf countries, except Saudi Arabia, now allow migrant workers to leave the country without seeking an employer's permission, no objection certificates (NOC) are still required for employment transfers. The 17 migrant hotel workers we spoke to in the region told us that NOCs are rarely granted by employers; only one in five workers who had requested a transfer was approved.

An Albanian receptionist at a US-headquartered hotel says it is virtually impossible to obtain a NOC: "It's like going to the bank and requesting a 50-million-dollar loan. It's not going to happen." The receptionist claims that during their four years at the hotel, only one employee had been granted an employment transfer, after he was physically assaulted by hotel guests.

Even among companies with public commitments to workers' freedom of movement, only **Radisson** described how they guarantee the right to change employment in light of the legal restrictions imposed by visa sponsorship. The company said it is rolling out permanent contracts for its UAE staff, whereby employees can resign at any time provided they adhere to the notice period. **Four Seasons** said it "does not prevent any of its employees to change job[s] or leave Qatar... [W]e have granted approvals... to few employees who requested that."

Marriott's response provides insight into how hotel business models limit a company's ability to uphold workers' rights because of the fragmented relationship between the company, workers employed by property owners, and suppliers: "the company issues transfer permits (NOC) wherever ownership has granted the authority to do so. In some cases, the operator must obtain ownership approval to provide NOCs."

Payment & wages

Timely & full payment



Our outreach to companies sought to understand how companies enforce timely and full payments to migrant workers and how they set wage levels. The questions were informed by current efforts in Qatar to [revise the minimum wage](#) and the rise in reports of delayed and unpaid wages in all Gulf countries.

With regard to timely payment of salaries, most respondents referred to monthly payroll processes that adhere to local laws when describing how they pay employees in Qatar and the UAE. **IHG** and **Whitbread** did not disclose information in this area. None of the companies have publicly available information on the steps they take when suppliers fail to pay workers employed at their hotels in Qatar and the UAE or how they prevent illegal deductions to workers’ wages. **Hyatt** did specify that its hotels would not work with vendors who do not pay their employees on a timely basis. **Marriott** directed us to the steps they took to [address](#) delays in salary payments to workers subcontracted on the construction of a branded property in Amman, Jordan.

Companies in the UAE have been found to be making illegal deductions to workers’ salaries by transferring contractually-agreed wages into migrant workers’ bank accounts as per the requirements of the Wage Protection System, but withholding workers’ ATM cards and withdrawing up to 40% back in cash.

Fair wages



We asked whether workers’ nationalities play a role in determining wages, and whether companies consider a living wage in setting pay scales. None of the 17 companies have a publicly available policy to determine a living wage for migrant workers in Qatar and the UAE. **AccorHotels** and **Whitbread** do have global procurement policies that require suppliers to offer remuneration that allows for “[decent living conditions](#)” and “[discretionary income](#)”, respectively. The use of salary scales and conducting market surveys were the main mechanisms respondents reported using to benchmark workers’ wages. **Hilton** and **IHG** use a scale that they apply to all employees, stating explicitly that it is applied regardless of nationality.

Health & safety

Health & safety



“It can be very exhausting working for 12 hours. It’s like killing yourself.”

Filipino housekeeping worker in Dubai, 2015

Migrant hotel workers in Dubai and Qatar have reported working 12-hour shifts, sometimes outdoors in 45-degree heat.

We asked companies about their approach to ensuring migrant workers’ health and safety in these conditions, including but not limited to: health and safety training, maximum working hours, non-discrimination, and prevention of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse.

Fourteen out of the 17 companies report having health and safety standards for workers at the global level. Five out of the seven respondents report conducting health and safety training for workers in Qatar and the UAE. **Marriott** also convenes a monthly health and safety committee to “ensure adherence and corrective action where needed”. It is not clear from the company responses whether workers employed by suppliers receive health and safety training, or whether they require suppliers to abide by the same health and safety standards. A survey of publicly available information from non-respondents found that five companies require their suppliers to adhere to their health and safety standards.

Respondents largely cite the local labour law with regard to enforcing working hours and sick leave. However, none acknowledged the risks that shift workers are exposed to because they are either excluded or overlooked in the provisions of the labour law⁹.

Whitbread’s Responsible Sourcing Policy prescribes that workers should have at least one day off for every seven-day work period on average. The company also prohibits overtime from exceeding 12 hours per week on average, which must not be undertaken on a regular basis. As is the case with other provisions in their detailed policy, the company did not explain how these regulations are applied in its Dubai hotels to address specific risks to migrant workers, given the history of abuse there.

⁹ [Qatar’s labour law](#) excludes shift workers from its provisions on working hours and leave. The [UAE’s labour law](#) specifies that working hours may be increased to a maximum of nine hours for hotel workers. Although it states that workers should not work more than five consecutive hours without an hour’s break, this is not applied in cases where work is carried out in successive shifts.

Living conditions

Living conditions



Employer-provided housing for low-income migrant workers in Qatar and the UAE has been criticised for being overcrowded, unsafe, and unhygienic. It is also often in isolated areas with limited access to urban centres. An [investigation](#) conducted by business and human rights group, Swedwatch, documented naked wires hanging from the ceiling of workers’ accommodation. We heard from migrant workers who said they sleep in overcrowded rooms with bunk beds, which are known to cause [serious injuries](#) and, in the case of Qatar, are considered [illegal](#).

A receptionist at a US-headquartered hotel, employed by the hotel’s property owner, reported sharing a kitchen in their company-provided housing that lacks proper ventilation and has a cockroach infestation. As a result, they have been trying to seek employment elsewhere.

In Qatar, **Hilton** states that “employee accommodations are built to Hilton standards and are managed by Hilton”. **Four Seasons, Marriott** and **Radisson** inspect rented worker accommodation to check for compliance with local labour laws and company standards.

Worker representation & grievance mechanisms

Freedom of association



Given restrictions on freedom of association in Qatar and the UAE, we asked companies how they ensure migrant workers’ voices are represented and what grievance mechanisms are in place to receive complaints. Only three companies described the mechanisms put in place to address the restrictions on freedom of association that exist in Qatar and UAE:

In a welcome and emerging best practice, **Hilton** and **Radisson** provide alternative means of organising through various forms of worker-management dialogues. In Qatar, **Hilton** has an ‘Employees’ Committee’ with representatives from each department that meets on a monthly basis and presents its outcomes to the General Manager. **Radisson** is currently rolling out ‘Joint Consultative Committees’ as part of its Human Resources plan.

In November 2017, Qatar introduced labour reforms requiring companies employing 30 or more workers to form 'joint labour committees' with equal representation from employers and employees. Company representatives are appointed by the employer and workers are elected by their peers. Committee members serve on two-year terms. Joint labour committees have a mandate to discuss all work-related issues, including productivity, workers' training programmes, risk prevention tools, and occupational health and safety. Little is known about the effectiveness of these committees, or how many have been formed, given that corporate transparency is limited. Ensuring non-retaliation and government enforcement will be key to successful implementation. At the time of writing, no such forms of representation are mandated in the UAE.

Deutsche Hospitality, Jumeirah Group, Kempinski Hotels, and **Rotana** do not have public commitments on freedom of association. The Indian Hotels Company allows freedom of association to the extent that "such activities do not create an actual or potential conflict with the interests of [the] company"¹⁰.

Grievance mechanisms



Under the UN Guiding Principles, companies have a responsibility to put in place operational-level grievance mechanisms for workers to raise concerns, in their own language and in a way that ensures grievances can be reported safely without intimidation or retaliation.

Migrant hotel workers' in Qatar and the UAE can submit anonymous complaints via international, toll-free grievances hotlines and online portals that are available in numerous languages, according to six of the company responses. **Radisson** is the only company to explicitly mention that its website and hotline are available to all outsourced employees and agency workers as well as direct employees. **Marriott** reportedly communicates the website links and telephone numbers on notice boards and other visible areas in hotel properties as well as the company website.

Four Seasons, Hilton, Hyatt, and **Marriott** also have an open-door policy where workers can raise grievances directly with their managers at the local level. However, with the exception of **Four Seasons**, these companies did not explain how complaints are escalated and resolved, in line with UN Guiding Principles.

In Qatar, **Four Seasons** reported zero grievances at its property, while **Marriott** disclosed three substantiated complaints. **Marriott** reported that, "[t]he grievances all related to concerns of the conduct of managers. A full investigation was conducted and recorded with each case and corrective action was taken against the concerned managers, up to a dismissal. Each associate was contacted after the corrective action was taken and received feedback of the outcome". **Radisson** said it received 74 grievances but did not specify if these were linked to its UAE operations. It also did not provide information on the nature of the complaints or the remedial actions taken.

¹⁰ www.tata.com/ebook/tcoc/index.html#p=12

Stakeholder engagement

All respondents reported on their commitment to promote human rights and combat forced labour as part of their membership of the ITP. The ITP is currently considering a pilot on ethical recruitment between Southeast Asia (e.g. Bangladesh, India, Nepal) and in one to two countries in the Middle East (Qatar and the UAE). In Qatar, **Hilton** and **Radisson** are reportedly exploring opportunities for collaboration with the ILO and Qatar Chamber of Commerce to advance workers' rights.

Recommendations

Companies should

- Adopt a publicly available human rights policy that includes a specific commitment to upholding international standards on the protection of migrant workers and introduce protections against risks specific to Qatar and the UAE, including on freedom of movement and worker representation.
- Conduct robust human rights due diligence to identify risks to hotel workers and to screen business partners, including third-party property owners and suppliers, in Qatar and the UAE prior to entering business relationships.
- Introduce labour standards into contract clauses with suppliers in Qatar and the UAE, monitor their ongoing performance against these standards, and have clear corrective action plans to address and remedy non-compliance when it occurs.

Governments of Qatar & the UAE should

- Enforce existing labour laws and strengthen protections for shift workers with regards to working hours and days off.
- Allocate adequate resources and mandate to labour rights inspectorate bodies to identify and penalise companies for labour rights violations in their operations and supply chains.
- Remove the requirement for migrant workers to seek employer permission to change jobs at any time during their contract.

Annex 1

Company Responses & Non-Responses

Colour code: ● Response ● Non-response	Survey Response	Country of HQ	Survey Country	Number of Properties (in survey country)
	●	France	UAE	50
	●	Germany	UAE	1
	●	Canada	Qatar	1
	●	USA	Qatar	3
	●	USA	UAE	6
	●	UK	UAE	16
	●	UAE	UAE	14
	●	Switzerland	Qatar	2
	●	USA	Qatar	9
	●	UK	Qatar	4
	●	Thailand	Qatar	11
	●	Belgium	UAE	5
	●	UAE	UAE	8
	●	Hong Kong	Qatar	1
	●	India	UAE	1
	●	UK	UAE	4
	●	USA	Qatar	3

Annex 2

2018 Questions for Hotel Companies *Migrant Worker Rights*

Scope of operations

01. Please describe the scope and structure of your company’s operations in [Country] in the table below, including the business model each hotel operates under (owned and managed; leased; managed properties; franchised properties; joint ventures; other).

No.	Name of hotel	Business model	Property owner
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Human rights & due diligence

02. Does your company have a publicly-available policy commitment to respect human rights in its operations and throughout its business relationships¹, that addresses workers’ rights? Please provide links or attachments to the company’s relevant policies.

03. Does the company have a human rights due diligence process for identifying and prioritising workforce risks in its operations and throughout its business relationships in [Country]? If so, please explain this process and highlight the top three workforce risks relating to a) its direct operations and b) its value chains.

04. Does your company include labour practices relating to recruitment, working, and living conditions, as part of its due diligence criteria when deciding to enter into business relationships in [Country]?

05. Does your company require hotel property owners and subcontractors in [Country] to comply with your human rights and other rights-related policies and procedures?

If yes:

a. How do you hold them accountable to these requirements (e.g. through contract clauses, brand standards) and what mechanisms do you employ to monitor and evaluate their compliance?

If no:

b. Does your company engage with its hotel property owners or subcontractors on issues related to their human rights practices (e.g. through workshops, training, audits)? Please provide details.

¹ [According to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#), the term “business relationships” encompasses business partners, entities in the company’s value chain and any other State or non-State entity directly linked to its business operations, products or services. This includes entities in its supply chain beyond the first tier and indirect as well as direct business relationships. The business partners we are primarily interested in for the purposes of this survey are **hotel property owners, labour suppliers, and service providers**.

Recruitment

- 06.** If you directly employ workers, please describe your company's process for recruiting migrant workers to [Country].
- 07.** Does your company have a publicly-available written policy to respect migrant workers' rights, that addresses the human rights risks they face during recruitment? Please explain how it applies to workers that are both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels.

Please also include the following information:

- How does your company prevent the practice of contract substitution? Does your company have a policy of honouring the terms of contract signed in workers' home countries?
 - If your company has a policy of no-fee recruitment, what steps does it take to ensure workers do not pay recruitment fees and related costs? How could you demonstrate that workers (both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels) do not incur any fees?
 - If your company has a policy of reimbursing fees, please describe the company's process for identifying incidences of worker-paid fees and reimbursing fees to workers (both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels).
- 08.** What are the most common countries of origin of migrant workers operating in your directly employed and subcontracted workforce?

Payment & wages

- 09.** What is your company's process for determining the wages of workers in [Country], and what external benchmarks does it use to set wage levels (e.g. do nationalities play a role in determining salary scales, do you consider a living wage in setting wage amounts)? Please explain how these policies apply to workers who are both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels.
- 10.** How does your company ensure that workers (both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels) are paid on time and in full, including for overtime and without illegal deductions? What steps does the company take when entities in its value chain fail to pay workers on time and in full?

Freedom of movement

- 11.** How does your company ensure that workers (both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels) have free and secure access to their passports, identity documents, and other valuables? What steps does the company take when entities in its value chain fail to ensure workers have sole, secure access to these personal items?
- 12.** How does your company ensure that workers (both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels) are free to change jobs and/or leave [Country] at will and without penalty? What steps does the company take when entities in its value chain prevent workers from changing jobs and/or leaving [Country] at will?

Health & safety

13. Please describe your company’s health & safety policy and procedures, including what steps the company takes to ensure that they are applied to workers (both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels).

Areas covered may include, but are not limited to:

- health & safety training
- injury prevention
- maximum working hours per week and overtime
- sick leave
- non-discrimination
- prevention of physical, sexual and verbal abuse

Living conditions

13. Please describe your company’s standards for workers’ living conditions both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels).

14. How does your company ensure workers are provided with safe and decent accommodations, including safe transportation, and access to healthcare and financial services? What steps does the company take when entities in its value chain fail to house workers in adequate living conditions?

Workforce data

15. Does your company maintain public workforce data? If yes, please provide a link or attachment with the data.

If not, please provide information on the number of:

Employment type ²	Total numbers of workers	Male	Female
Directly employed			
Employed by property owner			
Employed by subcontractors (service providers)			
Employed by subcontractors (labour suppliers)			

16. Please specify the typical activities conducted by your:

- a. Directly employed workforce
- b. Subcontracted workforce

Examples: Reception, cleaning, security, maintenance, gardening, restaurant staff, management etc.

² Employees may be 1) directly employed workers with whom you have a contract of employment and to whom you pay wages; 2) workers employed by the entity that owns the hotel branch; 3) workers employed by subcontractors; 4) workers employed by labour supply/manpower agencies.

Representation & remedy

17. Please indicate if the company has a global policy commitment on freedom of association and collective bargaining for workers in its direct and subcontracted workforce. If yes, please provide links or attachment to the relevant documents.
18. Given legal restrictions on freedom of association and membership of trade unions in [Country], how does your company ensure workers' voices are represented and heard by the company, e.g. through worker-representative committees? Please describe the mechanism in place.
19. In line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, does your company have an operational level grievance mechanism in place for direct and subcontracted workers to raise concerns, in their own language, and in a way that ensures grievances can be reported safely, without intimidation or retaliation? How are workers made aware of this mechanism? Please provide a description of the company's grievance mechanism.
20. How many grievances were raised in 2017 by workers (both directly employed and subcontracted at your hotels)? Please provide a summary of the grievances and the remedial actions that were taken by the company and its subcontractors, and whether follow up actions were taken to check if workers were satisfied with the outcome.

Other information

21. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about how your company takes a responsible approach to managing its operations in the Gulf region, including any challenges it faces in doing so?



Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

Business and Human Rights Resource Centre is an international NGO that tracks the human rights impacts (positive & negative) of over 8000 companies in over 180 countries making information available on its eight language website.

We seek responses from companies when concerns are raised by civil society. The response rate is over 75% globally.

For any questions about this briefing paper, please send an email to contact@business-humanrights.org