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Kenya is an emerging labour emigration country in East Africa, and since 2022 has prioritized labour migration as an economic tool to increase remittances and deal with high unemployment. To facilitate this program Kenya has increased institutional capacity, introduced new regulations, and initiated negotiation of 21 new BLAs. The GCC countries represent a main destination for Kenyan low wage workers as well as the source of many worker abuses.

Legal Framework

- Labour Migration Management Policy (2023).
- Creation of Labour Migration Directorate and State Department for Diaspora Affairs (2023).
- Labour Migration Management Bill (2024 draft) is currently being tabled in the Senate.

Recruitment

- All Private Recruitment Agencies must be vetted and licensed by the National Employment Authority.
- Government-to-Government scheme for Nurses with UK and Saudi Arabia.
- Current lack of legal framework to deal specifically with recruitment for foreign employment.

Pre-departure training

- All migrant workers receive pre-departure training, all domestic workers receive home care training.
- Curriculum reviewed in 2022 with ILO support.
- In 2024 domestic worker training was shortened from 25 to 14 days.

Exit controls

- 2024: creation of airport exit checks for migrant workers to ensure migrants use formal channels.
- Collaboration with Ugandan government to prevent trafficking of Uganda workers through Kenya's airport.

Destination Country Protections

- Labour attachés in 3 key GCC destinations.
- Promises to create safe houses and increase the number of labour attachés have yet to materialize due to budget restrictions.

Bans on Migrant Worker Mobility (case study)

- Kenya imposed a ban on Saudi Arabia in 2014.
- Resulted in the signing of a BLA in 2017.
- Recent data collection shows that stakeholders in Kenya no longer feel bans are an effective tool due to porous borders and high competition with other origin countries.

Based on the current government's goals to increase remittances and the number of Kenyan labour migrants, significant effort has gone into streamlining the sector domestically. However, proposed actions in GCC destination countries, such as increased Labour Attachés, safe houses, and a Migrant Welfare Fund have yet to materialize. The government can point to the recent migration agreement signed with Germany as evidence that Kenya continues to proactively look for job opportunities for Kenyan workers abroad as a strategy to deal with high domestic unemployment.

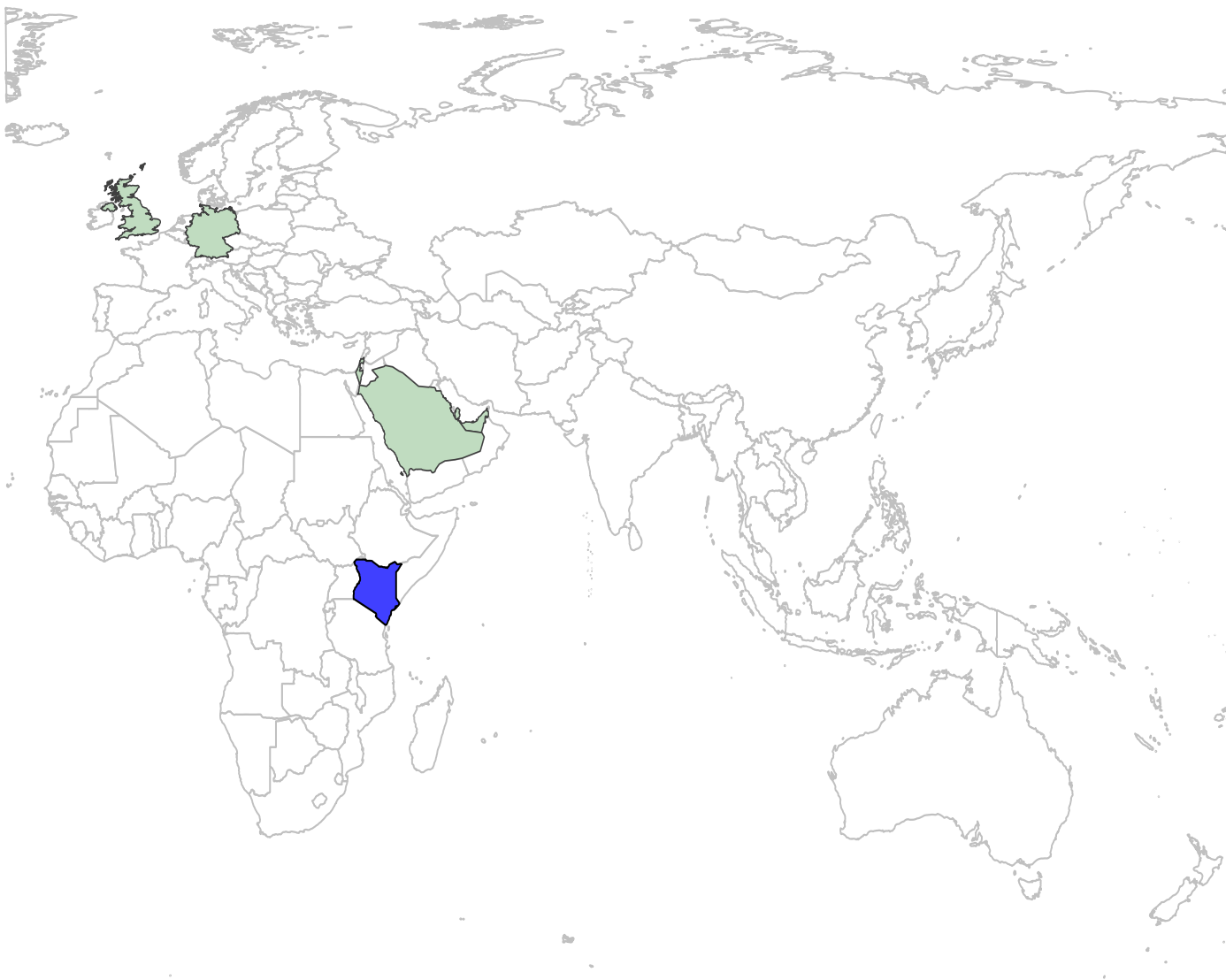
Kenya Bilateral Labour Agreements

Our database records a total of 7 Bilateral Labour Agreements or Memorandum of Understanding between Kenya and 6 destination countries (alphabetical order):

Germany (2017, 2024), Israel (2023), Qatar (2012), Saudi Arabia (2017), United Arab Emirates (2018), United Kingdom (2021).

The above list includes both valid and expired agreements.

Figure 1 Map of Kenya (● blue) and destination countries with BLA (● green)



The above information derived from the [RIGHTS policy database v6.0](#). For a more comprehensive overview of emigration policies in 50 origin countries in the database, see Ersanilli, E (2024) [Origin countries' policies on low-waged migrant workers. Results from the RIGHTS policy database](#).