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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

### **Initial report submitted by Qatar under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2020\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



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## **Part I**

### **Introduction**

1. The State of Qatar acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights under Decree No. 41 of 2018, on 21 May 2018. The Covenant came into force in Qatar on 21 August 2018 and was published in the Official Gazette No. 15 on 21 October 2018. Article 1 of the Decree states that the Covenant has force of law under article 68 of the Constitution.
2. Upon acceding to the Covenant, Qatar entered the following reservation and statement:

#### **I. Reservation**

3. The State of Qatar does not consider itself bound by the provisions of article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for they contravene Islamic sharia with regard to questions of inheritance and descentance.

#### **II. Statement**

4. The State of Qatar shall interpret the meaning of “trade unions” and matters related to unions – as set forth in article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Labour Code and national legislation. Qatar reserves the right to implement that article in accordance with such an understanding.
5. The State of Qatar is honoured to be submitting this initial report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, in accordance with the Committee’s own reporting guidelines and general recommendations, as well as with Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/4 of 24 May 1987. Qatar affirms its commitment to the principles and purposes articulated in the Covenant; the measures taken to implement the Covenant will be described in detail in the present report.

#### **Mechanism and methodology for the preparation of the report**

6. This is a joint national report and was prepared by a government committee established by decree of the Council of Ministers at its thirty-first ordinary meeting of 2018, held on 7 November 2018. Chaired by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the committee comprises members drawn from a number of government entities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Culture and Sports, and the Planning and Statistics Authority. The committee has been mandated to draft the initial reports of Qatar for submission under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and to discuss those reports before the respective committees, as envisaged in the Covenants.
7. The present report is divided into three parts, part I containing an introduction and information about the mechanism and methodology for the preparation of the report. Part II contains substantive information, arranged in sequential order, on the measures taken by the State to implement articles 1 to 15 the Covenant. Part III focuses on the challenges and obstacle the country is facing as it looks to the future.
8. In January 2019, the State of Qatar submitted its common core document<sup>1</sup> forming part of the reports of States parties to treaty bodies. The document contains basic information

<sup>1</sup> See HRI/CORE/QAT/2019.

on the land, population, general political structures and legal framework for human rights protection in Qatar.

9. In line with the practice recommended by human rights treaty bodies,<sup>2</sup> the present report was transmitted to the National Committee for Human Rights<sup>3</sup> for its comments and feedback. From 2010 to the present, the National Committee has held A status from the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC). On a separate front and in the context of cooperation with civil society organizations, the report was also transmitted to the Qatar Foundation for Social Action,<sup>4</sup> which is a private institution that serves the public interest and runs a number of different centres.

10. In submitting this initial report to the Committee, Qatar affirms its full readiness to cooperate in responding to any queries or requests for clarification concerning the implementation of the Covenant. Qatar wishes the Committee continued success in its work to protect and promote economic, social and cultural rights.

## **Part II**

### **Measures taken by the State to implement the Covenant**

11. This part describes the legislative, institutional, administrative and procedural measures taken by the State to implement the Covenant. It sets out specific information relating to articles 1 to 15 thereof, dealing with each provision one at a time.

#### **Article 1**

##### **Right of self-determination**

12. The right of self-determination is enshrined in article 7 of the Constitution, which stipulates: “The foreign policy of the State is to be founded on the principle of strengthening international peace and security through encouraging the peaceful settlement of international disputes and promoting the right of peoples to self-determination, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and cooperation with peace-loving nations.”

13. Qatar recognizes the right of peoples and governments to permanent sovereignty over their own natural wealth and resources, in accordance with their national interests. Article 29 of the Constitution reads: “Natural wealth and resources are the property of the State, which shall preserve and make good use of them as provided by law.” Act No. 3 of 2007, concerning the utilization of natural wealth and resources, as amended, establishes that all natural wealth and resources are the property of the State and may not be utilized, transferred or traded except as envisaged by the Act.

14. Believing as it does in the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination, the State of Qatar has supported United Nations resolutions supporting that right.

#### **Article 2**

##### **Respect for the rights envisaged in the Covenant**

###### **Exercising rights without discrimination**

15. Qatar subscribes to all international legal principles and norms that protect individuals within its territory, whose rights it ensures on the basis of the social justice enshrined in the

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<sup>2</sup> Qatar is under obligation to submit reports to the following treaty bodies: the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the Committee against Torture; the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Human Rights Committee; and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

<sup>3</sup> For further information, see <https://nhrc-qa.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> For further information, see <http://www.qatarsocial.org>.

country's Permanent Constitution. The Constitution was approved by a public referendum in April 2003, ratified by His Highness the Emir in 2004 and entered into force in June 2005. The legal framework for equality and non-discrimination is embodied in chapter II of the Constitution (articles 18 and 19) concerning the fundamental components of society. Article 18 stipulates: "Qatari society is founded on the core values of justice, benevolence, freedom, equality and moral rectitude." Thus, under that article, equality is one of the underpinnings on which Qatari society is based. The principles articulated in article 18 are reinforced by article 19, which provides: "The State shall preserve the underpinnings of society and guarantee security, stability and equal opportunities for citizens." All State policies are therefore required to take account of and safeguard the core values of society referred to in article 18, including the principle of equality, which is exalted in Qatar and enjoys constitutional protection; no law or statute can be enacted if it runs counter to that principle. Under Act No. 12 of 2008, promulgated on 18 June 2008, the Supreme Constitutional Court was established to adjudicate in disputes over the constitutionality of laws and regulations, thereby further strengthening the protection envisaged under the Constitution.

16. The general principle of equality is set out in article 18 of the Constitution then elaborated in detail in chapter III (articles 34 and 35) concerning public rights and duties. Article 34 stipulates: "Citizens are equal in rights and duties", while article 35 guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination before the law, stating: "All persons are equal before the law and there shall be no discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion." Fundamental rights and freedoms – including economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights – are thus enshrined in chapter III of the Constitution on the basis that rights are complementary, interdependent, interrelated and indivisible. Moreover, chapter III provides further human rights safeguards in Qatar by enshrining public rights and freedoms as legal provisions at the very heart of the Constitution, according them primacy over ordinary laws and making them binding. The Constitution also affirms that such rights may be neither restricted nor derogated under the pretext of regulating or amending them. In fact, article 146 states that the provisions regarding public rights and freedoms may be amended only in order to increase safeguards for citizens.

17. Constitutional protection for the right to equality and non-discrimination was strengthened by the accession of Qatar to a number of international anti-discrimination treaties. These include the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the International Convention against Apartheid in Sports. Under article 68 of the Constitution, which explicitly provides that treaties and conventions have the force of law once they have been ratified and published in the Official Gazette, these instruments are valid in the State of Qatar and have the force of law, with no obstacles preventing their application by the courts.

18. All citizens and residents of Qatar enjoy the rights and freedoms set forth in chapter III of the Constitution, without distinction as to sex, origin, language or religion. Article 52 expressly states: "All persons lawfully resident in the State shall be entitled to protection of their person and their property, as provided by law." The constitutional and legal framework for securing equal rights and non-discrimination has been strengthened through measures to promote the right of legal recourse, as will be explained in more detail later.

19. All State institutions and bodies are required to observe the principle of equality and non-discrimination enunciated in articles 18, 34 and 35 of the Constitution and to refrain from engaging in any action or practice that involves, encourages or fosters discrimination. The rule applies across the board, and all State institutions have a constitutional and legal duty to uphold the principles of equality, justice and non-discrimination. On a separate front, political discourse in Qatar is governed by a number of parameters including that of respect for non-citizens and an appreciation for the contribution they make to national development. This is particularly important as foreigners account for more than 85 per cent of the population. For that reason, legislation and other domestic measures strive to propagate and reinforce a culture of ethnic and racial respect and non-discrimination in society. In conformity with this and with the guarantees enshrined in the Constitution, the State has enacted primary and secondary legislation to ensure that rights are upheld and that means of redress are available. These include the following:

- Act No. 1 of 2019 regulating investment of non-Qatari capital in economic activities;
  - Anti-Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act No. 20 of 2019;
  - Act No. 17 of 2018 concerning the establishment of the Migrant Workers' Support and Insurance Fund;
  - Act No. 13 of 2018 amending article 7 of Act No. 21 of 2015, which regulates the entry, exit and residency of non-nationals, so as to abolish the requirement for an exit permit;
  - Act No. 11 of 2018 regulating political asylum;
  - Act No. 10 of 2018 concerning permanent residency;
  - Council of Ministers Decree No. 6 of 2018 establishing committees to settle labour disputes, setting the rules and procedures to be followed before such committees, identifying the mechanism for implementing their decisions and setting levels of remuneration;
  - Domestic Workers Act No. 15 of 2017;
  - Act No. 13 of 2017, which amends certain provisions of the Labour Code, promulgated pursuant to Act No. 14 of 2004, and of Act No. 13 of 1990 promulgating the Code of Civil and Commercial Procedure;
  - Act No. 11 of 2017, which amends certain provisions of Anti-Terrorism Act No. 3 of 2004;
  - Council of Ministers Decree No. 40 of 2017 establishing the National Committee to Combat Drugs;
  - Mental Health Act No. 16 of 2016;
  - Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act;
  - Act No. 14 of 2016, which amends certain provisions of Retirement and Pensions Act No. 24 of 2002;
  - Act No. 13 of 2016 concerning personal data privacy protection;
  - Amiri Decree No. 19 of 2016 establishing the National Committee for Information Security;
  - Amiri Decree No. 12 of 2016 regulating the Primary Health Care Corporation;
  - Act No. 21 of 2015 regulating the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers;
  - Act No. 15 of 2015 regulating human organ transplantation;
  - Cybercrime Act No. 14 of 2014;
  - Act No. 7 of 2013 concerning social health insurance;
  - Act No. 6 of 2013 concerning the Health and Education Fund;
  - Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 15 of 2011.
20. A number of national governmental and non-governmental institutions have been established to promote and protect human rights. They include:
- The Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was established in 2003 to monitor human rights cases at the regional and international levels;<sup>5</sup>
  - The Human Rights Department at the Ministry of the Interior, which was brought into being pursuant to Decree of the Minister of the Interior No. 26 of 2005;<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For further information, see <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/the-ministry/organizational-structure/departments/departments-of-human-rights>.

<sup>6</sup> For further information, see <https://wps/portal/MOIIInternet/departmentscommittees/humanrights>.

- The Family Affairs Department at the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, which was established in 2014;<sup>7</sup>
- The National Committee for Human Rights, which was established in 2002 as an independent national institution for the protection and promotion of human rights;<sup>8</sup>
- The Qatar Foundation for Social Action, which was created in 2013 as a private institution that serves the public interest under Decree-Law No. 21 of 2006 concerning private foundations serving the public interest, as amended;<sup>9</sup>
- The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, which was set up in June 2017;
- The National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities, which was established in May 2019.

21. As a general rule, Act No. 1 of 2019 regulating investment of non-Qatari capital in economic activities allows non-Qataris to invest in all economic sectors, without discrimination. The most significant features and provisions of the Act are as follows:

- It allows non-Qataris to invest up to 100 per cent of capital in all economic sectors with the exception of commercial agencies, banks and insurance, except for those that have been approved and exempted by decree of the Council of Ministers;
- It allows applications for non-Qatari capital to exceed 49 per cent to be made to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which must rule on the matter within 15 days;
- It exempts non-Qatari investment projects from customs duties on the import of the equipment and machinery necessary to launch the project, and it allows such projects to be exempt from income tax;
- It exempts non-Qatari industry-related investment projects from customs duties on the import of the raw materials they need, provided those materials are not available on the domestic market;
- It grants freedom to transfer the funds and returns of the investment from and to abroad without delay;
- It grants freedom to transfer investment ownership to any other investor, either Qatari or non-Qatari;
- It allows the Council of Ministers to grant non-Qatari investment projects additional benefits and incentives;
- Disputes relating to the investment may be settled by arbitration or other dispute resolution methods, in accordance with the law.

22. The following graph, which shows the proportion of the active population engaged in economic activities, reveals a noticeable increase in the number of non-Qatari participants – women and men – in the economy between 2009 and 2018.

<sup>7</sup> For further information, see <https://www.adlsa.gov.qa/en/social-affairs/family-affairs/>.

<sup>8</sup> For further information, see <https://nhrc-qa.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> For further information, see <http://www.qatarsocial.org>.

Graph 1



Source: Qatar Social Statistics – Planning and Statistics Authority.

### Effect of international aid and cooperation in the full realization of the rights enunciated in the Covenant

23. Qatar plays a leading role in the field of international cooperation by supporting and empowering both developing States and other countries, its intention being to ensure the enjoyment of human rights at the global level. Various State bodies work with international organizations in different areas to push towards the realization of rights that will enable people to live in peace and to reduce the gap between members of a single society, without discrimination.

24. In reports they wrote following their visits to Qatar in 2019, both the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education praised the country for the efforts it had made in the field of international cooperation and for its support for educational opportunities, both nationally and internationally.<sup>10</sup>

25. Qatar has provided a package of aid measures that have had a positive effect on the individual and collective rights enshrined in the Covenant, both directly and indirectly, in a number of countries around the world. During the period 2014 to 2018, that aid amounted to around 18.126 billion Qatari riyals (QR).<sup>11</sup>

26. This voluntary aid has had a positive effect on the economies of the countries concerned, thanks to budgetary support that has enabled them to meet emergency expenditures and pay the salaries of State employees. The aid was provided unreservedly and unconditionally and there was no pressure for the recipient State to alter its policies. This kind of support has a direct impact on the economic rights of individuals.

27. Aid from Qatar has, moreover, been provided as an emergency response to support hundreds of thousands of persons affected by natural and humanitarian disasters. For example, through the Qatar Development Fund, Qatar intervened in Mozambique in the wake of the devastating tropical cyclone Idai, and it has continued to provide aid and relief to Syrian and Palestinian refugees.

28. Other major life-saving development initiatives that have a direct impact on the right to life have involved providing support to citizens in several countries: for example, people crushed by the blockade in the Gaza Strip, the Rohingya and people in Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

<sup>10</sup> The reports of the special rapporteurs are A/HRC/44/39/Add.1 and A/HRC/44/44/Add.1.

<sup>11</sup> Annex 2: Table showing (in Qatari riyals) the aid given by the State of Qatar to support other States and to contribute to upholding the rights enshrined in the Covenant, in the period 2014 to 2018.

29. By creating job openings, launching high-capacity projects, supporting small scale enterprises and funding youth projects, Qatar uses its institutions to help other countries combat unemployment. It does this by setting up friendship funds between Qatar and other States such as the Qatar-Tunisia Friendship Fund and the Qatar-Japan Friendship Fund. This is part of its efforts to support the right to work in fair and satisfactory conditions.

30. As concerns the right to education and the right to enjoy the benefits of cultural freedom and scientific progress, Qatar has launched many international cooperation initiatives. They include, for example, the “Educate a Child” programme which, in 2018, reached 10 million children around the world who had interrupted their education early or whom circumstances had prevented from attending school.

31. The Education Above All initiative and the Qatar Development Fund are working with international partners to ensure that people are able to access education in areas of armed conflict, for example, refugee camps.

32. In addition, Qatar funds international organizations that are attached to the United Nations and that work to provide education and to safeguard the right to survival and to life. This support is provided – without discrimination on racial, sexual or religious grounds – through joint-action disaster-response agreements such as those with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Red Crescent. Qatar also supports the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has opened a bureau in the country, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The latter organization – whose work is closely related to human rights in general – receives multi-year support from Qatar and it too has opened a bureau in the country.

33. Qatar has been strengthening international cooperation at all levels, including in the field of culture. In fact, one of the goals of the Second National Development Strategy 2018–2022 is to create and promote technical-cooperation mechanisms in the cultural sector. In that connection, the country has concluded a number of bilateral agreements with States on various continents that will promote increased cultural dialogue between the peoples of the world.

34. In addition to the above and in order to enrich the cultural offering, authorization has been given to establish a number of foreign cultural centres such as the British Council, the Sudanese Cultural Centre and the Institut français. Moreover, the country is in the process of signing agreements with Turkey and with the People’s Republic of China for the establishment, respectively, of a Turkish and a Chinese cultural centre in Qatar. Qatar has also organized cultural years with other countries, such as the year of French culture and the year of Indian culture.

35. On a separate front, Qatar has also rolled out international initiatives in the health sector. For example, Qatar was represented by the Qatar Development Fund at the sixth Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund to fight disease, held in the French city of Lyon. During the event, Qatar announced that it would provide multi-year funding of \$50 million to the Global Fund, which aims to eradicate diseases such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis by 2030. It should be noted that the international donors who participated in the conference pledged \$14 billion by 2020. Thanks to those contributions the Global Fund will help to treat 234 million infected persons and save the lives of 16 million people through prevention, care, immunizations and treatment.

36. Qatar actively finances the global health sector through initiatives and projects run by the Qatar Development Fund in a number of countries. These activities help to bring about positive change in the world, particularly in developing nations, and to deal with issues involving refugees and internally displaced persons.

37. Qatar was one of the first States to extend an open standing invitation to special procedures mandate holders, which is a positive sign of cooperation with international human rights mechanisms. This approach has meant that Qatar has received a number of mandate holders, including the following:

- Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity from 2 to 10 September 2019;

- Working Group on Arbitrary Detention from 14 September to 2 October 2019;
- Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;
- Special Rapporteur on the right to education from 8 to 16 December 2019.

38. In the context of its responsibility to foster global peace and security, Qatar has recently been taking steps to combat coronavirus disease (COVID-19), both via cooperation with international organizations and via international initiatives to respond to the demands of States that have been stricken by the pandemic. Around 535 tons of urgent medical aid has been sent out, including medical devices, protective masks and other supplies for medical personnel. As of May 2020, the aid sent to stricken countries amounted to \$40 million, in addition to which Qatar has also provided \$140 million to support multilateral health-care organizations that are developing vaccines or working to uphold health care in other States.

39. Most of this aid is provided in the context of directives issued by the Emir of Qatar and is aimed at supporting the efforts of friendly States as they struggle against the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way, medical aid has been sent to the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Serbia and others, amounting in total to some 36 States.<sup>12</sup>

40. During the 2020 Global Vaccine Summit, the Emir of Qatar announced his country's pledge of \$20 million for the Gavi Alliance. At the same gathering, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar announced a pledge of \$10 million for the World Health Organization (WHO) to support the rapid development of equipment for testing, treating and vaccinating against COVID-19.

### **Article 3**

#### **Ensuring equal rights for men and women**

41. The Constitution affirms the principle that all citizens have equality of rights and duties before the law, irrespective of gender. This provision ensures that women are protected from all forms of discrimination and affords them equal opportunities that enable them to strengthen their capacities, protect and promote their rights and participate positively in the development of society.

42. National legislation enacted in recent years has focused on measures to promote women's rights, eliminate discrimination between women and men, and lay the foundations for gender equality in all spheres. In prescribing rights and determining obligations, domestic laws employ generic terms and make no distinction between men and women.

43. The principle of equality of the sexes in all domains is also reflected in various national laws providing for, among others, equal rights to education, under article 2 of the Compulsory Education Act No. 25 of 2001; equal access to health-care services; equal access for women to housing, under Act No. 2 of 2007; equality in the conduct of public affairs, with women entitled to stand for election to municipal councils and to hold important political office; and equal access to public service positions and to all rights prescribed in the Civil Service Human Resources Act No. 15 of 2016. This matter will be dealt with in more detail when examining other articles in the Covenant. Furthermore, Qatar has strengthened its legislative framework by acceding to a number of international and regional treaties that uphold equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

44. As concerns the equality of women and men before the law, administrative bodies and the courts, all domestic laws in Qatar cleave to the principle of equality of treatment of persons of equivalent legal status and of men and women. There is no legislation that prohibits women from exercising any right, be it political, cultural, economic or social, and

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<sup>12</sup> Annex 3: Table showing the aid given by the State of Qatar during the COVID-19 pandemic, up to 18 May 2020.

they can make use of all services and occupy any administrative or leadership function, including judicial and legal functions. Women also enjoy the same privileges as men in the exercise of their rights and are not prevented from working in any field. They do not lose any of those privileges through marriage but continue to have independent capacity, their own name and financial independence.

45. One of the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030, in the area of economic and social development and the protection and development of the environment, is to “establish a society operating on the principles of justice, benevolence and equality”.<sup>13</sup>

46. On a separate front, Qatar was determined that there should be a high-level government body that concerned itself with the needs and aspirations of women. It has therefore established a number of institutions that focus on women’s affairs.<sup>14</sup>

### **Women and the labour market**

47. Article 54 of the Constitution states: “Public service is a national duty. In performing the duties of their office, public officials shall have the public interest as their sole object.” The message thus conveyed is that there is no distinction between women and men.

48. Legislation regulating the labour market in Qatar follows the model of the Constitution and does not envisage any discrimination against women. No distinction is made between men and women in terms of salary, holidays, promotion or employment privileges. The rights and duties of workers envisaged in the Labour Code are applicable to men and women both of whom, without discrimination, are understood to fall under the meaning of “worker”, which legislators have defined as any natural person who works in return for a wage for an employer or under the latter’s control or supervision.<sup>15</sup> This means that the term “worker” is applicable to men and women, that they have equal rights and duties and that there is no discrimination of any kind on grounds of sex. In fact, provision is made for positive discrimination such as in Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act and its implementing regulations, issued by Council of Ministers Decree No. 32 of 2016. That Act regulates public service in the country and includes a number of forms of positive discrimination whereby women have the right to:

- The allowances and benefits of a married functionary, while her spouse will receive the allowances and benefits of an unmarried functionary, if her benefits are greater than his;
- Paid leave if she has a child with a disability or a child suffering from a condition necessitating maternal care;
- Leave with full salary to accompany a sick child for treatment in a public or private hospital within the State;
- Fully paid maternity leave;
- Two hours per day for breastfeeding, for a period of two years;
- Leave of 130 days in the case of the death of a spouse, which is the period of mourning prescribed by Islamic sharia for the death of a husband; such leave is not counted as part of other leave;
- An accompanying family member if the woman has to travel on official business or to attend a training course; the costs of the companion are borne by the employer.

49. The Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004), as amended, is strictly compliant with article 35 of the Constitution, and none of its provisions discriminate negatively on grounds of sex. In fact, in some instances, such as the following, it discriminates positively in favour of women:

<sup>13</sup> See the Qatar National Vision 2030 <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/qnv1/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>14</sup> See paragraph 20 of the present report.

<sup>15</sup> See Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004).

- *Work*: Article 94 of the Labour Code stipulates: “It is prohibited to employ women in work that is hazardous or arduous, or that is harmful to their health or morals, or in other types of employment to be specified by decree of the Minister.” According to article 95 of the Code: “It is prohibited to employ women outside the times specified by decree of the Minister.”
- *Wages*: The basic principle followed is that of equal pay between men and women; however, legislators have chosen to include a clear legal text to specify their meaning. Thus, article 93 of the Labour Code reads: “A working woman shall receive the same wages as a man for doing the same work.”
- *Holidays*: Legislators included provision for maternity leave in articles 96 and 97 of the Code, according to which a female worker who has been employed by an employer for a full year is entitled to maternity leave with full pay for a period of 50 days. Such leave does not affect the worker’s other leave entitlements.
- *Separation*: In article 98 of the Code, legislators defined an employer’s obligations towards a female worker. The employer may not terminate her contact of employment on the grounds of marriage or maternity leave, or notify the worker that her contract has been terminated during such leave.
- *Reduction of working hours*: According to article 97 of the Code, a female worker who is breastfeeding a child, in addition to her entitlement to a rest period under article 73 of the Code, is also entitled to one hour per day for breastfeeding, for one year following the end of her maternity leave. The worker herself is to decide when to fix the time. Then period spent breastfeeding is counted as part of working hours and does not lead to any reduction in wages.
- *Promotion*: Article 93 of the Code states that female workers are to have the same opportunities for training and promotion.

### **Support for women to achieve work-family balance**

50. The State has developed policies and taken steps to support women’s rights and ensure their active participation in the labour market. These include:

- Providing an appropriate working environment that meets the needs of women, shows understanding for their nature and enhances their role in the family;
- Adopting policies that help women to reconcile their responsibilities in the family and in the workplace, this being one of the most important objectives of female empowerment. Among the means and mechanisms proposed to achieve this aim is the expansion of nurseries and kindergartens in workplaces so as to help women maintain their maternal duties and their role in building the family.

### **Statistics regarding equal rights between men and women**

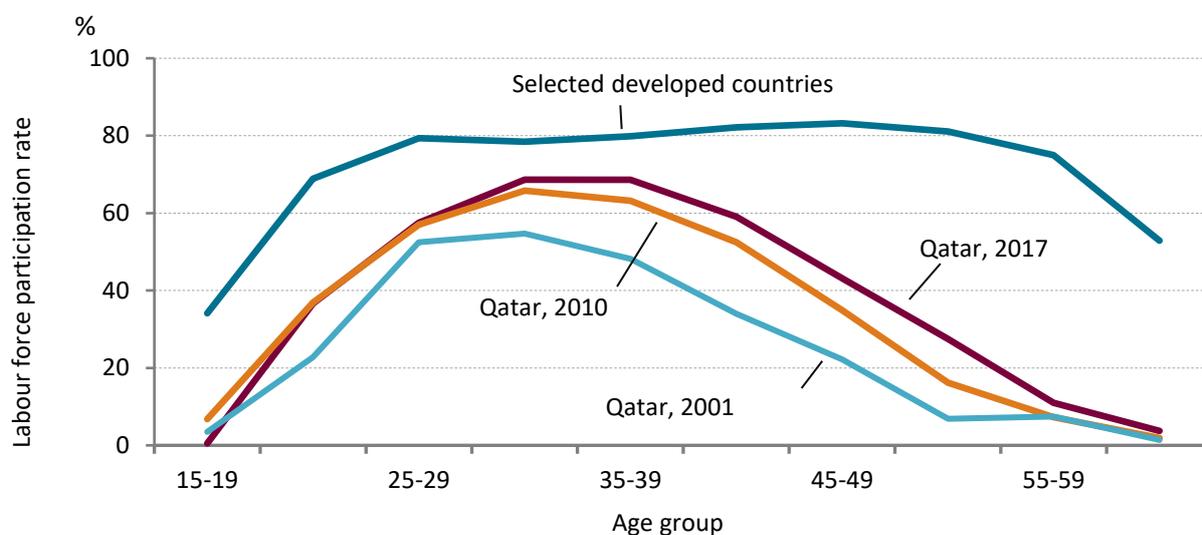
51. In 2017, according to official statistics on the labour force, Qatari women accounted for around 37 per cent of workers in the 25–29 age group, almost 49 per cent of workers in the 30–34 age group and 30 per cent of those in decision-making positions in government institutions and companies.<sup>16</sup>

52. The rates of participation by Qatari women in the labour force increased substantially between 2001, 2010 and 2017 across all age groups, although they remained low compared with the participation rates in selected countries, as shown in graph 2.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: Sample survey of the workforce, 2017 – Planning and Statistics Authority.

Graph 2  
Rates of participation by Qatari women in the labour force



Source: Planning and Statistics Authority and the World Labour Organization, 2017.

53. A comparison with the labour force participation rates for Qatari males shows that the rates for Qatari women are noticeably lower overall. In the 24–25 and 35–44 age groups, however, they are as high as 63 per cent. Women’s labour force participation rates in Qatar follow the same pattern as in the other Gulf States, as shown in the following tables.

Table 1  
Rates of participation by women aged 18 and over in the labour force of Gulf States

State	Men (%)	Women (%)
Qatar	96.1	58.5
Bahrain	86.9	43.5
Kuwait	87.9	49.9
Oman	87.8	29.8
Saudi Arabia	78.4	20.1
United Arab Emirates	92.8	52.6

Source: Planning and Statistics Authority, 2017.

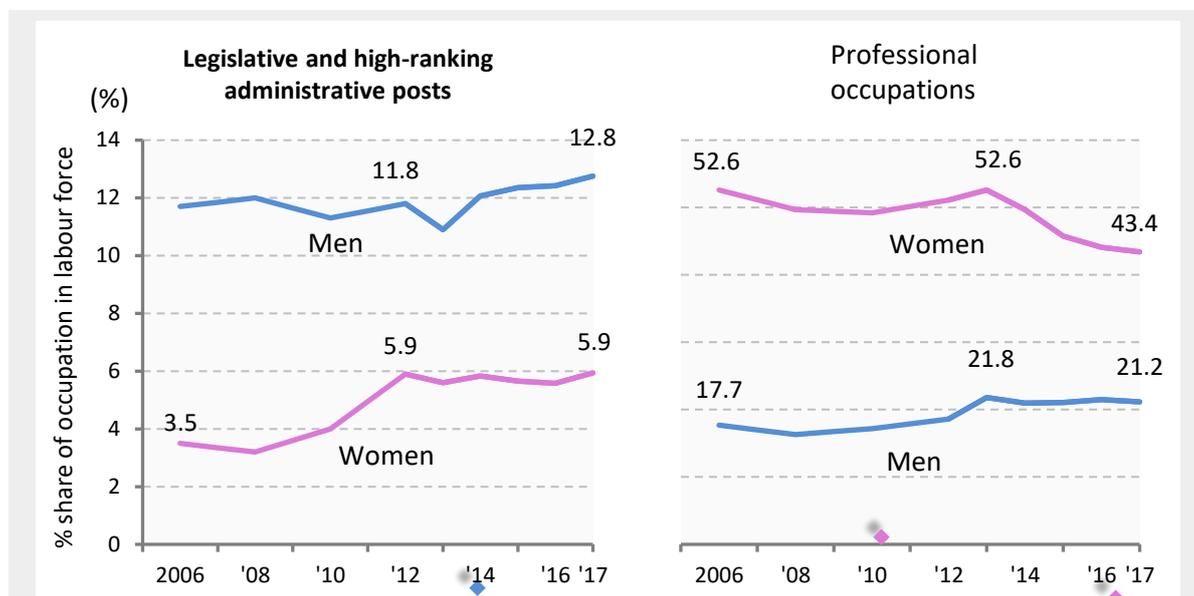
Table 2  
Rates of economic participation disaggregated by nationality, gender and age group (2017)

	Qataris			Non-Qataris			Total		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
15 to 24	42.4	17.6	30.1	83.8	53.1	76.7	78.5	41.5	68.1
25 to 34	96.2	63.3	78.7	99.6	73.8	95.4	99.5	72.1	94.5
35 to 44	97.5	63.0	80.4	99.9	70.4	94.4	99.8	69.5	93.7
45 to 54	88.2	35.2	62.5	99.9	46.4	92.7	99.2	43.5	90.0
55+	27.0	6.1	15.9	96.8	33.9	86.7	87.3	20.5	71.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>97.6</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>91.8</b>	<b>96.1</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>88.4</b>

Source: Annual sample survey of the labour force, 2017, Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics.

54. The percentage of Qatari women in administrative posts (legislators, senior officials and directors) rose rapidly during the period 2006–2012 and subsequently stabilized at 6 per cent between 2013 and 2017 (graph 3). However, the share of Qatari women in professional occupations, such as education and health, is much higher than for males.

Graph 3

**Share of administrative posts occupied by Qatari working women**

Source: Pluriennial labour force survey and other sources, Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics.

55. The proportion of Qatari women working in the private sector (including the mixed sector) rose from 16 per cent in 2016 to 20 per cent in 2017, exceeding the percentage for Qatari men. The increase for women is partly attributable to the “Qatarization”<sup>17</sup> policy pursued by the State, which aims to increase the proportion of nationals working in all institutions, especially at senior levels.

Table 3

**Percentage of Qatari women in the labour force in governmental and non-governmental sectors**

Sector	2012 (%)	2017 (%)
Women		
Public sector (including State-run enterprises)	84	80
Private sector (including mixed sector and diplomatic corps)	16	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Number	27 072	37 057
Men		
Public sector (including State-run enterprises)	84	82
Private sector (including mixed sector and diplomatic corps)	16	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Number	55 741	66 887

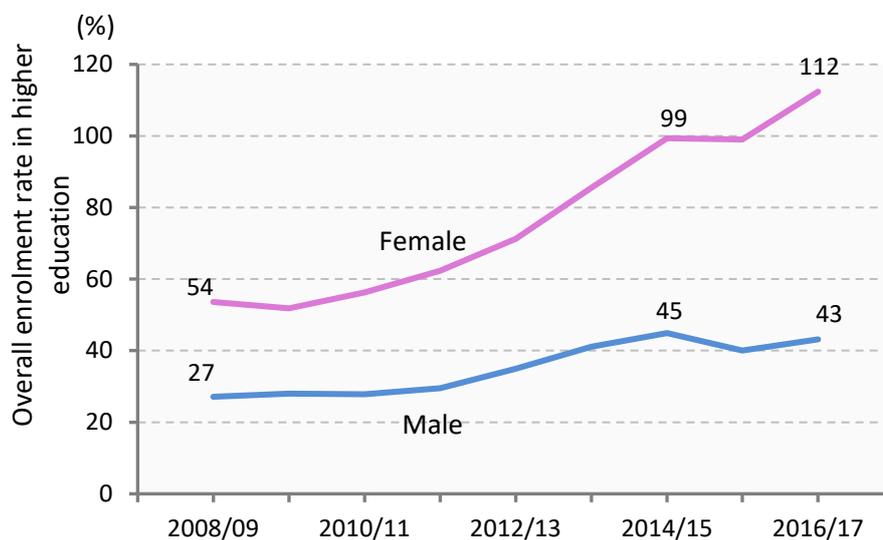
Source: Planning and Statistics Authority.

<sup>17</sup> Qatarization is a strategic initiative launched by the Government with the aim of providing employment opportunities for citizens in the private sector.

56. Over the years, the university enrolment rate for Qatari women has constantly exceeded that for males (graph 4), and their enrolment rate in higher education is more than double that for males. This growing gap is primarily due to the tendency for Qatari males to enter the labour market, especially police and army jobs, at an early age, which explains the high labour-force participation rate for males in the youngest age group of 15 to 24 years.

Graph 4

**Rate of enrolment in higher education for female and male students**



Source: Pluriennial statistics – Planning and Statistics Authority.

57. National legislation ensures that women are able to enter economic life without discrimination by guaranteeing their right to engage in economic activity, which includes setting up companies. The Qatari Women's Association for Economic and Investment Awareness was established to promote the role of women in the country's economic development. It works to raise awareness about women's contribution to the domestic product; enhance the role of women in economic decision-making; provide business management training for girls and women; educate them about the main risks associated with running an enterprise and ways of avoiding such risks; and guarantee women's equal involvement in social and cultural activities, which includes the establishment of associations pursuant to Decree-Law No. 21 of 2006 concerning private foundations serving the public interest. The Association's efforts to secure women's engagement in sports and cultural activities has led to the establishment of a women's sports committee and several youth and cultural centres for girls, under Decree-Law No. 5 of 1984 regulating clubs. This has helped to promote gender equality in leisure activities and has contributed to the country's intellectual and creative output. There are seven such centres for girls, as well as gatherings hosted by public youth centres.

58. The Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry provides a permanent headquarters for the Qatar Businesswomen Association, which was established in 2000 with the aim of enhancing the role of Qatari women in economic decision-making and encouraging women to contribute actively to investment projects of various kinds. The Association has a number of goals, most notably to develop and promote cooperation between businesswomen in the field of trade and economic relations; to create an environment conducive to the exercise of women's role in the economic development process; to boost the role of Qatari women in economic decision-making; to encourage women to establish small-scale and artisanal enterprises and industries; and to augment the role of the private sector and of Qatari women in commercial and investment activities. The Association holds meetings and seminars on the laws governing commercial and economic activities, thereby helping prepare women to contribute effectively to the process of economic development.

59. Women play a central role in charitable institutions, providing assistance of all kinds both within and outside their own communities. They also participate in activities such as

conducting field research into families, setting up charity sales and organizing campaigns for donations for disaster-stricken areas. Women work in such associations both as staff and in a voluntary capacity.

60. The Qatar Business Incubation Centre, which is one of the largest multiple-use incubation centres in the Middle East and North Africa, provides business support services to help entrepreneurs and businesses start a new enterprise or develop an existing one. The Centre was established in 2014 as an initiative by government institutions in Qatar to support local entrepreneurs. Its purpose is to assist new Qatari businesses with funding, office space, guidance and advice.

### **Ensuring the principle of equal participation in all forms of cultural activity**

61. Public spaces for cultural and sporting activities are open to everyone, without discrimination. Moreover, women occupy positions of leadership in various cultural institutions, and the Ministry of Culture and Sports has set up cultural centres for women as a way of guaranteeing their participation in cultural life. The Qatar Women's Sport Committee was established with the aim of promoting women's involvement in the sporting sector. The Committee organizes annual sports activities for women, and Qatari women participate in local and international sporting events.

### **Gender-based assessment**

62. The Planning and Statistics Authority issues a periodic (biennial) report on women and men, which is published on the Authority's website<sup>18</sup> and examines disparities between the genders. The National Committee for Human Rights also undertakes a gender-based equality assessment of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>19</sup>

### **Services offered by civil society organizations**

63. The Qatar Foundation for Social Action and all its affiliated centres provide their services equally irrespective of gender, race, religion or nationality.

64. Centres affiliated to the Qatar Foundation for Social Action offer education and training activities on women's rights with the aim of raising awareness among families and communities about the need to avoid discrimination against women and to address all forms of violence or marginalization that may affect them, whether in the workplace, the family or society. Reports and statistics are compiled, disaggregated by the gender of service users and by other economic, social and cultural variables. This enables the Foundation to undertake systematic evaluations and to make adjustments as necessary.

65. The Wifaq Centre<sup>20</sup> is an important institutional mechanism that deals with family situations that are often marred by attitudes and behaviours in which women are discriminated against or victimized as a result of antiquated thinking, ignorance of national law, misinterpretation of religious tenets and teachings or a subordinate view of women on the part of certain persons or groups. The Centre works through its specialized units to filter ideas and attitudes in order to remove the religious and cultural misinterpretations which certain husbands and fathers use in their dealings with women and girls. It works to achieve this aim through dialogue, counselling and awareness-raising sessions, which are run by specialists on a daily basis. The Centre also organizes training activities to build capacity among its own staff and the staff of other organisations working on issues related to women and the family.

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<sup>18</sup> For further information, see <https://www.psa.gov.qa/ar/statistics1/pages/topicslisting.aspx?parent=Social&child=GenrealSocialStatistics>.

<sup>19</sup> The results of the assessment are accessible at <https://nhrc-qa.org/>.

<sup>20</sup> For further information, see <http://www.wifaq.org.qa>.

## Articles 4 and 5

### Derogations from obligations under the Covenant and restriction of the scope of the rights provided for therein

66. The rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are recognized in the Constitution and reaffirmed in relevant domestic laws and legislation. However, certain exceptional situations and circumstances can lead to derogations from constitutional norms and, consequently, to restrictions on some of the rights stipulated in the Covenant. Article 69 of the Qatari Constitution states that the Emir may, by decree and in exceptional circumstances, declare martial law in the country and determine the means for addressing those circumstances, which are limited to risks that threaten the integrity or territorial unity of the State or the security and interests of its people or that obstruct State institutions in the performance of their functions. There are, however, fundamental rights that cannot be suspended, even if martial law is declared. The exceptional circumstances must also be specified by law and a decree issued to identify their nature and indicate the measures for addressing them. The Shura Council must be notified of the decree within 15 days of its issuance or, if for any reason it is not in session, when it next convenes. Martial law may be declared for a limited period that may be extended only with the approval of the Shura Council. Article 20 of the Civil Defence Act No. 25 of 2015 also stipulates: “In the event of a public disaster or in circumstances where the occurrence of a public disaster is likely, the Council shall declare a state of emergency. It shall also declare an end to the emergency once the requirements for its declaration no longer exist.” No state of emergency has been declared in Qatar since the adoption of its Constitution.

67. As stated earlier, treaties generally have force of law under article 68 of the Constitution.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the enforcement of international treaties on its territory, Qatar adheres to the general principle of “unity of law”; this means that the agencies, institutions and authorities of the State of Qatar are obliged to implement treaties once they have been ratified and published in the Official Gazette. However, peace treaties, treaties relating to State territory or to sovereignty rights, treaties relating to the public or private rights of citizens and treaties that require an amendment of domestic law need to be issued in the form of a law before they can be enforced. In such cases, the State must amend and adapt its legislation to bring it into line with the treaty in question, with due regard for any reservations or declarations contained in the instrument of ratification. Moreover, any subsequent legislation must be consistent with the treaties to which the Qatar has acceded.

68. The accession by the State of Qatar to the Covenant has taken the form of binding national legislation and is implemented in line with article 6 of the Constitution, which states: “The State shall respect international charters and treaties and strive to implement all international conventions and treaties to which it is a party.” For its part, article 143 (2) of the Constitution reads: “The enforcement of the present Constitution shall not affect the provisions of the treaties and international agreements to which Qatar is a party.” Article 33 of the Civil Code (Act No. 22 of 2004) stipulates “The provisions of the preceding article shall not be applicable if a contradictory text exists in a particular law or in an international treaty in force in Qatar.” It follows, therefore, that all parties have the right to invoke the norms set forth in the Covenant in any case that comes before the courts. However, because domestic legislation – which is binding upon national courts – is in line with the principles enshrined in the Covenant, there have been no cases in which the Covenant actually has been invoked. Rulings of the Court of Cassation have reaffirmed the obligation to abide by the international treaties to which Qatar has acceded and in regard of which decrees have been issued.

69. With regard to article 5 regarding the non-restriction of the scope of the rights provided for in the Covenant, the State of Qatar is keen to ensure that human rights remain at the heart of constitutional, political, economic, social and cultural reform. Its concern to do so is reflected in the measures taken to develop and strengthen the country’s legislative and institutional human rights machinery. Under article 68 of the Constitution, treaties have force of law while, also according to the Constitution, rights may be neither restricted nor

<sup>21</sup> See the Constitution at <https://www.almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=2284&language=en>.

diminished on the pretext of regulating or amending them. Article 146 states that provisions on public rights and freedoms may be amended only in order to increase safeguards for citizens.

## **Article 6**

### **Right to work**

70. The right to work is guaranteed under the Constitution, wherein articles 26, 28 and 30 – which require the State to provide job opportunities – envisage a relationship between workers of all categories and their employers that is rooted in social justice, that aims to achieve equality and equal opportunity and that provides the means and necessities to live a life of dignity and to exercise the human rights enshrined in divine law, international treaties and the legislation of States. Contractual relations between workers and employers are regulated by domestic laws, which principally aim to achieve an equilibrium between the two sides in order to create a solid relationship that benefits not only the parties involved but society as a whole.

71. Legislators in Qatar have been at pains to protect the weaker of the contracting parties by enacting legislation to guarantee their rights and the possibility to exercise those rights, in adherence to the aforementioned international standards. This approach to legislation in Qatar is evident in Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act and its implementing regulations, the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) as amended and Domestic Workers Act No. 15 of 2017.

72. The rights of employees following their term of service are guaranteed by legislation, according to which the employee or worker is entitled to a pension if their term of service comes to an end for one of the following reasons: death; reaching the age of separation or termination of service as a disciplinary measure, if the length of service was not less than 15 years; resignation if the length of service was not less than 15 years and the individual concerned is not less than 40 years of age; unfit to work in the opinion of a medical panel; suppression of post or termination of service as a non-disciplinary measure, if the length of service was not less than 5 years (for staff of ministries and other government agencies and of public bodies and institutions); termination of service for reasons other than those envisaged in law, if the length of service was not less than 15 years.

73. Workers are entitled to and an end-of-service bonus for each year of service if their term of employment is one full year or more. The bonus is to be agreed between the parties but must not be less than three weeks' wages for each year of service.

### **Encouraging Qataris to engage in private business**

74. The State encourages citizens of working age – i.e., between the ages of 18 and 60 – to engage in private-sector employment while also guaranteeing all the privileges deriving from their citizenship, as provided by the State. These include the right to a housing loan, the right to obtain land and the right to be covered by the Pensions and Social Insurance Act. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs reviews the number of Qatari employees in the private sector by asking the institutions and companies concerned to provide information about how many nationals and how many residents they employ. The aim is to establish a database that will help to open the way and provide opportunities for locals to enter into private-sector employment and thereby to “Qatarize” that sector through successive five-year plans. The database, in fact, includes information about the various specializations that will be required by the private sector over the next 10 years, divided into two stages, and about numbers of Qataris and non-Qataris working in the private sector. This helps to direct students towards those specializations with view to meeting the needs identified to the Ministry by the bodies concerned.

75. A department has been set up to receive grievances of all kinds from Qataris in private-sector employment, including complaints of marginalization and harassment to force them to leave private-sector work. The Ministry organizes meetings to highlight the importance of encouraging young persons to work in banks, institutions and companies of

the private sector thereby stimulating the progress of “Qatarization”<sup>22</sup> and ensuring that the largest possible percentage of jobs in those institutions are “nationalized”, in line with the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

### **Protection against arbitrary dismissal**

76. The Labour Code, as amended, is akin to other peremptory norms related to public order. In fact, in issuing the Code, the intention of legislators was to achieve the public interest and maintain the social fabric by balancing the interests of workers and employers and preventing one group from discriminating against the other. This principle is enshrined in article 30 of the Constitution, which reads: “The relationship between workers and employers is to be based on social justice and regulated by law.” In that connection, article 64 of the Labour Code stipulates: “Before appealing before the competent court against any penalty inflicted against them, workers shall first complain to their own employers, within seven days of learning of the penalty. A decision on the complaint is to be made within seven days of its submission and, if that period expires without a decision, the complaint is considered to have been rejected. If, during the period stipulated, the complaint was rejected or no decision was taken, workers may lodge a complaint with the Department against the penalty, within seven days of the rejection. The Department must make a decision on the complaint within seven days of its submission. Any decision it takes is final. If that period expires without a decision, the complaint is considered to have been rejected. Exceptionally, workers may appeal against a penalty of dismissal before the competent courts.”

77. If the courts find that the dismissal of a worker was arbitrary or violated the provisions of the Code, they can rule either to annul the penalty of dismissal, reinstate the worker concerned and order that he be paid for the period in which he was unable to work as a consequence of the penalty imposed, or they can decree adequate compensation for the worker. The assessment of such compensation is to include the pay and other benefits of which the worker was deprived as a consequence of the dismissal.

78. Article 2 of Act No. 7 of 2007 concerning the settlement of administrative disputes states: “One or more administrative chambers, each made up of three judges, are to be established in courts of first instance. Such chambers are to have exclusive jurisdiction to consider administrative disputes as defined in the present Act.”

### **Reinstatement**

79. The National Development Strategy 2018–2022 includes five projects to support the retention and utilization of migrant workers. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs has developed and implemented a project to address the situation of supernumerary and retired workers who are still of working age – who are seen as a productive force in need of support – the aim being to reinsert them into the labour cycle. The Ministry registers and promotes citizens who are looking for work and monitors their appointment in the private and public sector. It also monitors the supply and demand for Qatari workers on the domestic labour market in order to strike the correct balance and to find appropriate job openings for all citizen jobseekers or to direct them to acquire professional skills that reflect the requirements of the job market. The Qatar Manpower Solutions Company (WISA)<sup>23</sup> has been established, which aims to recruit professional workers and to provide various services related to training and qualification. It also helps to retain workers and to utilize their services inside the country.

### **Mentoring and training programmes for technical and professional staff**

80. Legislators addressed the question of training and development in section V (articles 30 to 33) of Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act. The Act places government bodies under an obligation to develop training plans. Article 30 states: “In coordination with the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social

<sup>22</sup> This means ensuring a set proportion or quota for Qatari workers in non-governmental or quasi-governmental institutions, in order to guarantee the involvement of Qataris in all sectors of the State.

<sup>23</sup> For further information, see <https://www.wisa.qa>.

Affairs, government agencies are to develop training plans that are compatible with career plans, in order to achieve the agencies' objectives within the context of general State policy. The aim is to improve the performance of staff by giving them appropriate opportunities for training, advancement and qualification thereby developing and reinforcing their capacities and enabling them to acquire new skills, and so improve their fulfilment of their duties and qualify them to hold higher positions. This is to take place in accordance with conditions and rules set forth in the implementing regulations to the present Act." Legislators have also decreed that time spent training is considered as working time. In fact, article 32 of the Act reads: "The time employees spend on training is to be considered as working time, during which they enjoy all the privileges of their employment. Failure to participate in training without a cause acceptable to the employer is considered to be a violation of professional duty."

81. Legislators regulated the issue of vocational training in section II (articles 11 to 17) of the Labour Code, promulgated pursuant to Act No. 14 of 2004.

82. A number of State bodies are also to provide technical and professional training programmes. They include the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, the Community College of Qatar<sup>24</sup> and the College of the North Atlantic.<sup>25</sup>

83. By implementing this legislation and these measures, the Government, in cooperation with different State sectors, has successfully achieved high levels of "Qatarization" and it is continuing to roll out programmes to train Qataris to perform specialized functions. The results of a study to determine why young persons are reluctant to enter the private sector have been analysed and solutions have been proposed. As a first step, a questionnaire has been developed for the financial sector, which constitutes the largest portion of the private sector and the most coveted by job seekers.

#### **Reducing unemployment, especially in rural areas**

84. There are no rural areas in Qatar, and the rate of unemployment in the country fell from 1.6 per cent in 2012 to 0.1 per cent in 2019. In other words, the labour market is reaching the point of full employment. In fact, the unemployment rate in Qatar is the lowest in the world, compared to a global average of 5.5 per cent and an average in the European Union of 6.4 per cent, in 2018.

85. The rate of participation of Qatari women in the workforce rose from 53.7 per cent in 2013 to 58.5 per cent in 2018. This was accompanied by a significant improvement in the balance between the work and life responsibilities of women, thanks to a revision of the 2009 Human Resources Act.

86. With regard to supporting families financially to prevent destitution, the State provides families with support in the form of opportunities for work, housing, social security, allowances and social insurance. It also runs projects to support low-income families.

#### **Work in the informal sector of the economy**

87. Data indicates that the rate of informal employment in the non-agricultural sector stood at zero for the period between 2012 and 2018. In fact, the informal sector is entirely absent in Qatar, and all workers are employed in the formal sector.

#### **Protection for domestic workers**

88. Qatar has promulgated Domestic Workers Act No. 15 of 2017, which provides legal protections for domestic workers in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and applicable international standards. The most significant features of the Act are as follows:

- The Act regulates the relationship between employers and domestic workers, prohibits the employment of domestic workers until they have obtained a permit to work in the

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<sup>24</sup> For further information, see <https://www.cq.edu.qa>.

<sup>25</sup> For further information, see <https://www.cna-qatar.com/>.

country and prohibits the employment of domestic workers of either sex who are under 21 or over 60 years of age;

- A domestic worker may not be employed in the absence of a written contract of employment that has been approved by the competent department of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. The contract is drawn up in three copies with each party receiving a copy and the third copy being deposited with the competent department. The employment contract is to define the working relationship between the parties and include all other relevant information;
- Legislators in Qatar require employers and persons residing with them to provide domestic workers with suitable food and lodging as well as with appropriate medical care, medicines and medical necessities if they fall ill or are injured while performing their duties or as a result thereof, without imposing any financial burden on the workers themselves. In addition, domestic workers must be treated in a manner that safeguards their dignity and physical well-being, their lives and health must not be endangered and they must not be exposed to physical or psychological harm. Moreover, they must not be compelled to work during sick leave or during daily or weekly periods of rest;
- The Act stipulates that, for each solar year of their employment, domestic workers are entitled to paid leave of three weeks and to paid travel tickets. Legislators in Qatar also require employers to pay an end-of-service bonus to domestic workers at the end of their employment as well as any other amounts due to them. The Act stipulates that domestic workers' end-of-service bonus is to be equal to three weeks' wages for each year of service;
- The Act allows domestic workers to terminate their contracts early while retaining their entitlement to an end-of-service bonus in the following instances:
  - When employers fail to fulfil their obligations under the employment contract or the Act;
  - When employers or their representatives have acted fraudulently when setting the terms and conditions of employment;
  - When employers or members of their family assault workers in such a way as to cause physical harm or endanger life;
  - When employers or persons residing with them are aware of a grave danger threatening workers' health or safety and fail to take action to eliminate that danger;
  - When employers employ domestic workers outside the country without the workers' consent;
- Disputes arising between employers and domestic workers relating to the application of the Act shall be subject to the provisions of the section on labour disputes contained in the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004), as amended. The Act also stipulates that employers must compensate workers for any work-related injuries, in accordance with the Labour Code;
- The Act prescribes financial penalties for violations of its provisions of between QR 5,000 and QR 10,000;
- The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs has set up a department to receive and resolve complaints from domestic workers. Such complaints are monitored and catalogued on a regular basis.

### **Measures, practices and efforts to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers**

89. The following measures have been taken to protect and promote migrant workers' rights prior to recruitment:

- The State has signed 36 bilateral agreements and 13 memorandums of understanding with labour-sending States regarding the provision of legal protection for migrant workers before their recruitment;
- Employers and companies are obliged to use approved labour recruitment bureaux and coordinate with sending States in exchanging lists of such bureaux in their respective territories to ensure that proper recruitment procedures are followed and that legal action can be taken against bureaux that are non-compliant;
- The State has introduced an electronic notification service for use by workers who transfer from one employer to another or who wish to leave the country permanently. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for deciding on requests submitted by workers. A notification form has also been produced for workers to send to employers in order to end the relationship between the two by mutual consent;
- The State has taken a number of measures to provide adequate housing for migrant workers, in accordance with recognized international standards.

## **Article 7**

### **Right to just and favourable conditions of work**

90. Replies under this article will be dealt with by presenting information to supplement that already given in the reply under article 6, above. This will cover a number of topics such as minimum wage, protecting and promoting the employment rights of migrant workers, both before they reach Qatar and while they are there, and the means whereby workers can change employer.

#### **Minimum wage**

91. On 16 October 2019, the Council of Ministers approved a bill regulating the minimum wage. The bill, which is currently in the process of being enacted, requires employers to pay a basic minimum wage to workers, including domestic workers, and to provide them with adequate food and lodging.

92. Apart from these basic necessities the minimum wage bill also aims to set an inviolable lower limit on wages, one that may not be broken even by agreement between the worker and the employer. This constitutes the lowest amount that may be paid to workers for a duty performed, irrespective of the level of skill involved or the kind of work they do.

93. Under the bill, the amount of the minimum wage – for both workers and domestic workers – is to be set by decree of the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs and is to be reviewed at least once a year. A committee known as the minimum-wage committee is to be established in the Ministry to examine and review the minimum wage for workers and domestic workers and to make recommendations in that connection to the Minister, in line with rules and conditions set forth in the bill itself, and with ILO standards. Once the bill has come into law, employers will be required to adjust the wages they pay to workers to bring them into line with the minimum levels stipulated by law. Wages that are below the minimum must be raised without compromising wages that are already in excess of the minimum.

#### **Protecting and promoting the employment rights of migrant workers**

94. Qatar is determined to accord fair treatment to migrant workers, to which end it pursues an effective legislative and administrative policy that is intended to uphold their rights and protect them from discrimination or abuse. In order to combat all forms of exploitation to which workers might be subjected, Qatar has recently taken measures affecting every stage of the recruitment process. These include:

*Stage I: Prior to workers' arrival in Qatar*

95. The Qatar Visa Centre has set up offices in sending States where fingerprints can be taken and medical tests conducted before the workers arrive in Qatar. The workers can also sign their contracts online and they have the chance to read the contract in their mother tongue meaning that they are able to understand and discuss it if there is some provision about which they are unconvinced. This arrangement also helps to ensure no dispute arises concerning the offer of employment, as announced by recruitment bureaux in the sending States, and the legal terms of the contract. The Centre – which has been instrumental in eliminating recruitment fees payable by the workers themselves – has established offices in six States that principally send workers to Qatar. They are Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, India and the Philippines, and there are plans to open offices in Tunisia, Kenya and Ethiopia. All the services offered by the Centre are available online and free of charge. The costs are met by employers and payments are made by bank transfer.

96. Combating forced labour and human trafficking is a main priority of the State, one in which appreciable progress has been made. For example, ensuring that workers can enter Qatar without indentured debts gives them greater freedom and eliminates one form of forced labour and human trafficking. In May 2019, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs opened a forum to develop the procedures that regulate employment and fair recruitment and to abolish the payment of recruitment fees. To that end:

- The activity of recruitment bureaux is regulated so that recruitment takes place only via licensed companies that take full account of workers' rights;
- Bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding have been signed with labour-sending States regarding legal protection for migrant workers before and after recruitment;
- The activity of recruitment bureaux is monitored and inspections are carried out, both periodically and without prior notice, to ensure that migrant workers are not being exploited, and to protect their rights.

*Stage II: After workers' arrival in Qatar*

97. Qatar has enacted legislation and regulations to prevent any kind of exploitation against migrant workers:

- The Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) was amended by Act No. 1 of 2015 in order to bring in a wage protection system for workers who are subject to the provisions of the Code. Under the system, wages must be transferred to an account held by the worker at one of the country's banks. The system also performs an electronic matching process to detect non-compliant enterprises, which are penalized for the late payment of wages. Penalties for violating the system include a term of imprisonment of up to 1 month and a fine of between QR 2,000 and QR 6,000. The regulations governing the wage protection system for workers subject to the Labour Code were issued pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 4 of 2015, which requires employers to transfer wages to a worker's bank account within seven days of the due payment date. In the event of non-compliance, the Minister may cease granting new work permits and freeze all the offending employer's transactions, except for the approval of workers' contracts so that the measures taken against the employer do not redound against the interests of the worker. The Ministry actively follows up on all companies through the wage protection system to ensure that workers receive all their financial dues. The Ministry also takes steps against non-compliant companies, such as blocking their transactions and keeping a record of violations, in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Code and the ministerial decrees implementing it. The Ministry follows up with employers until workers' wages are paid and working conditions are modified in accordance with the procedures and laws in force in Qatar. There are a number of measures the State can take against enterprises that fail to comply with the wage protection system. They include:
  - Blocking requests to bring in new workers;

- Referring cases to the security authorities as a prelude to referring them to the Office of the Public Prosecution for violations of the Labour Code;
  - Giving employees of non-compliant enterprises the freedom to transfer to another employer.
- Penalties against anyone who violates the wage protection system have been made more severe. In fact, meeting on 3 June 2020, the Council of Ministers approved a bill to amend certain provisions of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) with a view to intensifying supervision and increasing workers' financial entitlements, without discrimination;
  - Act No. 21 of 2015 regulating the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers represents an important change with respect to previous legislation. In fact, the Act abolishes the *kafalah* system, replacing it with a contractual working relationship, and defines – under articles 21 and 22 – the cases in which a migrant worker is permitted to change employer, namely:
    - Prior to the expiry of the worker's employment contract, by mutual consent of the worker and the employer;
    - Immediately following the expiry of a fixed-term employment contract or after five years' employment if the contract is indefinite;
    - In the event of the death of the employer or the expiration of that legal person for any reason;
    - On a temporary basis, in the event of judicial proceedings between the worker and his employer;
    - Where it has been shown that the worker suffered abuse at the hands of the employer or where allowing the worker to change employer is in the public interest.
98. Legislators have decided to abolish the requirement whereby a worker stay is required to spend two years outside the country in order to obtain a new residence permit.
- An electronic notification service has been introduced for workers who transfer from one employer to another or who wish to leave the country permanently. The service is accessible on the Ministry's website where workers can register using their ID number and a mobile telephone registered in their name. This enables them to access the online notification form which, being integrally linked to the database, includes the worker's personal details, profession, age and current employer. The worker can then select the reason for the notification, be it to change employer or to leave the country permanently. The worker then makes the application, attaching a certified copy of the contract of employment and a copy of a document attesting either to the end of the contractual relationship with the employer by mutual consent or to an act of abuse on the part of the employer. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs can then make a decision on the worker's application.
  - The distribution of notification forms has begun, which workers can send to employers to end the relationship between them by mutual consent. The notification includes information such as the duration of the employment contract (fixed-term or indefinite) and the type of notification. The three options are: termination of the employment contract and change of employer by mutual consent during the period of the contract's validity; termination of the contractual relationship and departure from the country during the transition period; and termination of the contractual relationship and transition from an employment relationship to that of personal or family employee. Once the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs has confirmed that the legal conditions enshrined in the employment contract have been met, the worker is permitted to change employer.
  - Under Act No. 13 of 2018, which abolishes the requirement to obtain permission before departing from the State, migrant workers have the right to leave the country temporarily or definitively during the period of validity of their contract of work.

Employers can submit a motivated prior request to the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs containing the names of the persons who, due to the nature of their work, require prior approval before departing the country, provided that the number does not exceed 5 per cent of the employer's workers.

- Act No. 13 of 2017 includes provision for the creation of one or more dispute-resolution committees to rule, within a time limit of three weeks, on disputes arising from the provisions of the Labour Code or contracts of employment. If mediation by the competent department in the Ministry does not lead to an amicable settlement, disputes are referred by that department to the dispute-resolution committee, and the committee's decisions have the power of a writ of enforcement. With a view to facilitating, expediting and localizing workers' engagements with the legal system, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Supreme Judiciary Council, has opened an office for the enforcement of decisions at the dispute-resolution committees' headquarters in the Ministry. This means that the workers' complaints system is linked to the court system and thus speeds up to process of registering and enforcing labour-related rulings and decisions issued by the committees.
- The Migrant Workers' Support and Insurance Fund was established pursuant to Act No. 17 of 2018 as a mechanism whereby migrant workers may claim financial rights granted by the dispute-resolution committees.
- Act No. 21 of 2015 prohibits the withholding of passports and envisages severe criminal penalties for anyone who violates that provision, with fines of up to QR 25,000. Ministerial Decree No. 18 of 2014 defining the conditions and specifications of what constitutes decent accommodation for migrant workers states that such workers must have free access to designated secure areas containing lockable safes where they can keep personal documents and possessions, including passports. In practical terms, there is coordination between the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior to ensure that workers' passports are not withheld. In 2015, the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of the Interior received 168 complaints concerning the withholding of passports, all of which were referred to the Office of the Public Prosecution. Most of the cases were investigated and the offenders were forced to return the passports. Several arrest warrants were issued and some offenders were imprisoned for not paying the fines imposed. Surveys conducted in 2017 and 2018 by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute at Qatar University<sup>26</sup> showed that the confiscation of passports is becoming less common.
- The Council of Ministers has approved a bill to amend certain provisions of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) and Act No. 21 of 2015 regulating the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers. The aim is to facilitate the transfer of workers from one employer to another during their period of residency in the State in such a way as to protect the rights of both parties. The new system will be characterized by a greater flexibility, which will allow migrant workers who are subject to the provision of the Labour Code to transfer within the job market under conditions that are consistent with ILO standards.
- The "Better Connections" programme was launched in 2016, thanks to a partnership between the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. Its purpose is to give migrant workers in Qatar the opportunity to use the Internet, thereby promoting their effective integration into the digital community and enabling them to become part of the Tasmu Smart Qatar initiative.<sup>27</sup> Reinforcing digital culture among workers will, in fact, help improve relations between them and their employers. The programme also seeks to support employers in the fulfilment of their duties and responsibilities towards migrant workers; to the end, it facilitates the access to and use of information

<sup>26</sup> For further information, see <http://www.qu.edu.qa/ar/research/centers/sesri>.

<sup>27</sup> For further information, see <https://www.motc.gov.qa/ar/10118546node14067>.

and communications technology and the Internet inside workers' accommodation. It also envisages training for individual migrant workers, to be delivered by groups of unpaid volunteers; this too will help the workers become part of the digital community, give them access to information and laws, and make them aware of their rights and responsibilities during the period they are working in Qatar. It will also enable them to access online government services provided by the competent ministries and, of course, help them to communicate with their families in their countries of origin.

#### **Steps taken by the Government to facilitate the change of employer**

- The Government has lifted the restrictions on changing employer that previously applied to migrant workers who had been granted work visas for specific projects. Such visas were known as restricted visas. Now, workers on restricted visas entitling them to work only on one project have the right to change employer if they fulfil certain conditions.
- The Government has placed no restrictions or conditions for moving to another employer other than that the new employer should comply with the provisions of the Labour Code.
- An office has been established to follow up and review procedures for migrant workers wishing to change employer.

### **Article 8**

#### **Right to form and join trade unions**

99. When it acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the State of Qatar submitted an explanatory declaration to the effect that it would interpret the meaning of "trade unions" and matters related to unions – as set forth in article 8 of the Covenant – in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Labour Code and national legislation and that it would reserve the right to implement that article in accordance with such an understanding.

100. The right to form associations is guaranteed under article 45 of the Constitution, which reads: "Freedom of association is guaranteed in accordance with the conditions prescribed by law."

101. Qatari workers' right to form labour federations is enshrined in article 116 of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004), which states: "Workers in an establishment employing a minimum of 100 Qatari workers are entitled to form a committee to be known as the labour committee. Not more than one committee may be formed in each establishment. Labour committees in establishments operating in trades or industries that are the same, similar or interrelated are entitled to form a general committee to be known as the general committee of workers in that trade or industry. The various general committees of trades and industries shall form a general federation to be known as the Qatar General Federation of Workers. The membership of the aforementioned committees and of the Qatar General Federation of Workers is restricted to Qataris. The Minister determines the conditions and procedures for the formation and membership of the aforementioned labour organizations, their respective rules of procedure, and the trades and industries to be categorized as similar or interrelated."

102. Act No. 12 of 2004 regulating private associations and foundations governs the right of natural and legal persons to establish an association with the aim of engaging in humanitarian, social, cultural, scientific, professional or charitable activities, provided that its purposes are not for profit and non-political. The Act states that, in order to establish an association, a minimum of 20 Qataris over 18 years of age must submit an application to the administrative authority, together with a fee of QR 1,000 for a charitable association or QR 50,000 for a professional association. An additional QR 10,000 is payable annually for the licence renewal. The condition concerning the nationality and number of founders may be waived by decree of the Council of Ministers where necessary and as required in the public interest, at the proposal of the Minister. Another condition for the establishment of an

association is that the founders must provide evidence of a lease for the premises of the association or confirmation that they will have premises once the association is established.

103. Joint labour committees have been brought into being pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 21 of 2019, which concerns the establishment of such committees in enterprises that are subject to the provisions of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004). The Decree was issued in enactment of section XIII of the Code, which states that employers and workers in any establishment employing 30 or more workers are to select representatives and establish joint labour committees on which the two sides are equally represented. The committees consider matters such as regulation of work, means of production, training programmes, risk limitation, occupational health and safety standards and development of workers' general culture. They also examine individual and collective disputes and seek to reach amicable settlements. This helps to improve the working environment and reduce tensions and it opens the way for workers from different cultures and nationalities freely to express their concerns and voice and discuss their grievances before the committees in order to find suitable and consensual solutions. The activities of the committees are akin to those of trade unions.

104. With regard to workers' right to strike, the relationship between workers and employers is codified in article 30 of the Constitution, which stipulates: "The relationship between workers and employers is to be based on social justice and regulated by law." As a consequence, relations between workers and their employers are rooted in social justice, which requires that due account be given to workers' rights vis-à-vis wages, quality of work, performance, working hours, suitability for women, etc. Under the Labour Code, workers have the right to strike if an amicable resolution with their employers cannot be reached. The relevant provisions are contained in article 120 of the Code, which states: "Workers may strike if it is impossible to reach an amicable resolution between them and their employer, in accordance with the following conditions:

- Approval by three-quarters of the general committee of workers in the trade or industry concerned;
- A minimum of two weeks' notice to the employer prior to launching the strike, and approval of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, after coordinating with the Ministry of the Interior, with regard to the time and place of the strike;
- No detriment to State assets or to the property, security or safety of individuals;
- No strikes are permitted in vital facilities; i.e., oil and gas and related industries, electricity, water, ports, airports, transportation and hospitals."

## **Article 9**

### **Right to social security and social insurance**

105. Article 3 of the Social Security Act No. 38 of 1995, as amended, identifies the categories of persons who benefit from social security. Those categories, as defined in article 1 of the Act, are: widows, divorced women, needy families, persons with disabilities, orphans, persons unable to work, older persons, the families of prisoners, abandoned wives and families of missing persons.<sup>28</sup> New categories can be added to the list by decree of the Council of Ministers at the proposal of the Minister. All persons in the State are covered by some form of social security, including the most deprived and marginalized categories, without discrimination of any kind.

106. Legislators have designated who has authority to set the amount of allowances and have laid down rules for disbursement. Article 4 of the Social Security Act reads: "The amount of the allowance and the rules for payment to the categories listed in the preceding article are to be set by decree of the Council of Ministers at the proposal of the Minister." In that regard, the Council of Ministers issued Decree No. 8 of 1997 setting the amount of the allowance payable to the categories mentioned in the Social Security Act and the rules for its disbursement. Social Security Act No. 38 of 1995, as amended, envisages payment of a social

<sup>28</sup> For further information, see <https://almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=3979>.

security allowance to persons of unknown parents and orphans. Moreover, Council of Ministers Decree No. 46 of 2014 set the amount of the monthly social security allowance payable to beneficiaries under 17 years of age who are orphans or one or both of whose parents are unknown, and to beneficiaries over 17 one or both of whose parents are unknown.

107. As concerns the existence of lower limits on the amount of the subsidies provided and whether that amount is sufficient to ensure a decent standard of living for beneficiaries and their families, the social security allowance is limited by the provisions of article 1 of Council of Ministers Decree No. 46 of 2014 setting the amount of the allowance payable to the categories mentioned in Social Security Act No. 38 of 1995 and the rules for its disbursement.

108. The following table shows that the proportion of the State's total public spending on social protection went up from 1.6 per cent in 2017 to 2.2 per cent in 2018, an increase of 37 per cent.

Table 4  
**Proportion of government spending on social protection**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
Social protection as a proportion of overall government spending	1.6%	2.2%

*Source:* Planning and Statistics Authority.

109. The Social Security Department of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs is required to receive and examine applications for social security services and other forms of social assistance then to submit a report regarding cases that warrant a social security allowance and to set the amount of that allowance in line with the rules and conditions governing eligibility. The Department follows up on cases where beneficiaries receive the allowance to verify that the eligibility conditions still exist and takes the steps necessary to provide beneficiaries of the social security system with training and qualifications. It also conducts research and studies into social security and social insurance and provides emergency relief services in situations of disaster. Thanks to these measures, and on the basis of the outcomes of its research, the Department is able to determine the appropriate amount to ensure a decent standard of living.

110. The number of social security beneficiaries almost doubled between 2009 and 2018, from nearly 11,000 to 21,000. Disaggregating the beneficiaries by the type of assistance they receive, it emerges that the number of persons receiving an allowance for a domestic helper increased from around 4,000 in 2010 to around 8,000 (34 per cent male and 66 per cent female) in 2018.

Table 5  
**Number of beneficiaries of social security, by year**

	<i>January 2019</i>	<i>December 2019</i>	<i>January 2020</i>	<i>Monthly variation</i>	<i>Annual variation</i>
Number of social security beneficiaries	15 323	15 696	15 555	-0.9	1.5
<b>Total value of social security (thousands of Qatari riyals)</b>	<b>85 266</b>	<b>85 746</b>	<b>85 390</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	<b>0.1</b>

*Source:* *Qatar Monthly Statistics* No. 73 – statistics for January 2020, Planning and Statistics Authority.

**Table 6**  
**Social security beneficiaries disaggregated by type of assistance and gender, 2015–2018**

BENEFICIARIES OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY TYPE OF SECURITY AND GENDER  
2015 - 2018  
TABLE (218)

Year & Gender	*2018			2017			2016			2015			السنة والنوع السنة والنوع
	المجموع Total	إناث Females	ذكور Males										
Widow's Pension	266	266	0	405	405	--	445	445	--	473	473	--	معاش أرملة
Divorcee Pension	1,124	1,124	0	1,294	1,294	--	1,192	1,192	--	1,188	1,188	--	معاش مطلقة
Needy Family Pension	888	28	860	911	39	872	915	55	860	818	90	728	معاش أسرة محتاجة
Persons With Disabilities Pension	1,944	857	1,087	1,344	613	731	1,141	502	639	959	458	501	معاش ذوي الإعاقة
Orphan Pension	1,906	1,054	852	1,790	1,004	786	1,641	889	752	1,386	760	626	معاش يتيم
Infirmity Pension	3,881	3,131	750	3,761	3,151	610	3,335	2,855	480	3,086	2,629	457	معاش عاجز عن العمل
Elderly Pension	3,435	2,984	451	2,182	1,828	354	1,858	1,553	305	1,681	1,411	270	معاش مسن
Prisoner Family Pension	66	43	23	77	53	24	43	20	23	33	15	18	معاش أسرة سجين
Deserted Wife Pension	3	3	0	3	3	--	4	4	--	3	3	--	معاش زوجة مهجورة
Pension for Families of Missing People	5	2	3	1	1	0	2	2	0	3	2	1	معاش أسرة مفقودة
Servant Allowance	7,634	5,048	2,586	5,995	3,854	2,141	4,806	3,072	1,734	4,686	3,001	1,685	معاش بدل خادم
Pension for Children of Unknown Parentage	81	42	39	81	43	38	93	51	42	107	65	42	معاش مجهول الأبوين
Total	21,233	14,582	6,651	17,844	12,288	5,556	15,475	10,640	4,835	14,423	10,095	4,328	المجموع

\* The total number of actual beneficiaries of social security in 2018 = 13899. We explain that the number reached 21233, by the recurrence of some cases in the social security pension and the allowance of a server of 7334 cases.

\* إجمالي عدد المنتفعين الفعليين من الضمان الاجتماعي في 2018 = 13899، ونفسر وصول العدد إلى 21233 هو تكرار انتفاع بعض الحالات في معاش الضمان الاجتماعي وبدل خادم بواقع 7334 حالة.

Source: Planning and Statistics Authority.

### Safeguards for persons with disabilities

111. Over recent years, the State of Qatar has devoted increasing attention to the rights, advancement and welfare of persons with disabilities and has taken appropriate legislative, legal, administrative and other measures to give effect to those rights and provide ways of entrenching, furthering and enhancing them as part of the integrated social development of families. In that connection, the State has delegated the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs to coordinate with the competent bodies to ensure that the services and programmes those bodies provide reach persons with disabilities. This includes medical, preventive, therapeutic, health and psychological services; awareness-raising among citizens about the rights of persons with disabilities; appropriate educational and habilitation programmes; and special welfare and relief services.

112. Act No. 2 of 2004, concerning persons with special needs, reads: "In addition to the rights they enjoy under other legislation, persons with special needs also enjoy the following rights:

- Education and habilitation, according to their abilities;
- Medical, psychological, cultural and social care;
- Access to equipment, devices and means of transport to assist them in their education, habilitation, movement and transportation;
- Relief and aid services as well as other assistance services;
- Access to work in the public and private sectors that is consistent with their abilities, qualifications and formation;
- The possibility to practise sport and leisure activities, according to their abilities;
- Accommodation that enables them to move and travel securely and safely;
- Special facilities for them in public places;
- Participation in decisions that affect them."

113. Article 5 of the Act concerning persons with special needs and persons with disabilities states: “Not less than 2 per cent of posts of all grades in certain institutions are to be reserved for persons with special needs, who are in possession of a certificate or identity card as envisaged under article 4.” Accordingly, private-sector employers who employ 25 persons or more are required to allocate a minimum of 2 per cent of posts to persons with disabilities, meaning that at least one of their workers must be a person with a disability. In no case, may persons without disabilities be appointed to fill that quota save in the absence of suitably qualified candidates and with official approval from the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. When filling the quota of posts allocated to persons with disabilities, priority is to be given to persons who suffered disabilities during or as a result of military service. In addition to this, many pieces of general legislation have been enacted that contain separate provisions guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities. These include Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act and Council of Ministers Decree No. 32 of 2016 promulgating the implementing regulations to the Civil Service Human Resources Act. For example, article 74 of Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act states: “Female officials may be granted leave with full pay in order to care for their children who have disabilities or who suffer from a condition necessitating maternal care, as attested by a medical report. For periods of up to five years, this requires the approval of the Director and for periods in excess of five years, the approval of the Prime Minister.”

114. Persons with disabilities in Qatar also benefit from social security provided by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. The number of such beneficiaries increased from 959 to 1,944 between 2015 and 2018. Persons with disabilities accounted for 9 per cent of all beneficiaries of social security in 2018, 16 per cent of males and 6 per cent of females. This category of persons also benefits from the free allowance for a domestic helper. In fact, persons with disabilities represented 21 per cent of all beneficiaries of the domestic helper allowance in 2018.

Graph 5

**Numbers of persons with disabilities who benefited from social security, 2015–2018**



Source: *Qatar Social Statistics 2009–2018*, pp. 25 and 26.

115. The National Development Strategy 2018–2022 includes a project on “occupational and community habilitation to build the capacities of persons with disabilities”. In that connection, the Shafallah Centre<sup>29</sup> seeks to provide a range of programmes for persons with disabilities and takes steps to ensure they are able to access health, habilitation, counselling, protection and social security services. These steps include:

- Issuing certificates to members and their families, which they can then submit to the competent authorities in Qatar to ensure that they receive social security services;

<sup>29</sup> For further information, see <http://www.shafallah.org.qa>.

- Providing members with disabilities of the Shafallah Centre with employment in various State institutions in Qatar, in coordination with the public and private sectors, so as to ensure that such persons are able to live a dignified life;
- Providing psychological and family support services to members and their families as a way of ensuring their psychological stability and well-being;
- Providing social services to members and their families, including home visits as required, in order to ensure family stability;
- Coordinating with organizations of persons with disabilities through seminars on the rights of such persons.

### **Retirement**

116. The pensions and social security system is an official system based on contributions exclusively from Qatari members who work in establishments that are subject to the laws regulating retirement and pensions. Legislators have been careful to ensure that there is no discrimination between men and women vis-à-vis pensions and social security. The Human Resources Act and the Labour Code set the age of retirement at 60 years and, according to the Retirement and Pensions Act, the minimum period for eligibility to a retirement pension is 15 years while the amount of the pension is calculated on the basis of a single equation, which applies equally to both sexes. However, the system does envisage an exception for women, who can retire at the age of 55 or at any subsequent time up to the mandatory age of separation. This is known as optional retirement for women and it does not entail any reduction in pension on the basis of the difference between the actual retirement age and the age of 60. It is intended to reflect the social circumstances of women and to discriminate positively in their favour.

117. Retirement pensions cover old age, incapacity, death and other eventualities envisaged in the Retirement and Pensions Act No. 24 of 2002. They also cover dependants of the pension holder such as widowed spouse, children, parents, siblings and grandchildren, in accordance with the conditions regulating pension eligibility for Qatari contributors who are subject to the pension and social insurance system.

118. No minimum level for retirement pensions is defined in the existing Retirement and Pensions Act. However, as part of plans to reform the Act, a proposal to set minimum pension limits has been made with a view to maintaining the income level of those concerned, subject to periodic review. Moreover, since the Retirement and Pensions Act was issued in 2002, Amiri Decrees have been issued at non-regular intervals to increase pensions by 40 per cent in 2006 and by 60 per cent in 2011.

119. The pensions and social security system does not cover non-contribution-based social assistance subsidies. It is based solely on contributions from the category of persons who are subject to the system while social assistance is regulated by the authority responsible for social security, which is the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs.

### **Social services for older persons**

120. Qatari legislators have defined an older person as “anyone over the age of 60 who has no breadwinner or no source of income sufficient for sustenance” and, as explained earlier, their rights are guaranteed under the Social Security Act. Articles 80 and 81 of the Family Code (Act No. 22 of 2006) state that elderly parents are to be maintained by their children, while article 108 of Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act allows the period of service to be extended, with the agreement of the person concerned, beyond the mandated age of separation, if doing so is in the public interest. Such extensions are to be decided by the competent authority on a year-by-year basis, for a maximum of five years. Any extension beyond five years, if required, necessitates the approval of the Prime Minister. Amiri Decree No. 50 of 2011 provided for a 60 per cent increase in basic pensions and social allowances for retired Qatari civilians.

121. The Ehsan Centre<sup>30</sup> provides its services free of charge to older citizens and residents of both sexes.

122. In early 2020, the Council of Ministers issued a decree granting Qatari workers leave to care for a parent or relative (up to the second degree) with a disability or a condition necessitating permanent care.

## **Article 10**

### **Protection for families, mothers and children**

123. The Constitution of the State of Qatar attaches great importance to the family. Article 21 reads: “The family is the foundation of society and its mainstays are religion, morality and patriotism. The law regulates the means for protecting the family, supporting the family unit, strengthening family bonds and safeguarding mothers, children and older persons.”

124. The Family Code (Act No. 22 of 2006) covers all family-related matters, including the wish to marry, the formation of a family, agreement and disputes in relationships, rights of spouses, financial and social issues, and the effects of separation on couples and children. These matters are dealt with in accordance with the provisions of sharia, without reference to any particular denomination except where no provision is made.

125. Marriage depends on the consent of both spouses. It is contracted for the bride by her guardian with her interests in mind, marriage being a mutual pact and a binding legal commitment in perpetuity between a man and a woman for the sake of chastity, virtue and the founding of a stable family cared for by both spouses. The validity of a marriage rests on the approval of the guardian who contracts the marriage, not because the woman lacks capacity but rather in order to uphold certain sharia rules, which include ensuring the man’s suitability for the woman, removing any doubts and suspicions, and preserving the woman’s material and moral rights.

126. Under the Family Code, divorce is effected by the husband. The Code also lays down conditions, however, for preserving the marital bond. No divorce can be effected during the woman’s period of waiting (*idda*) or menstruation, or by repudiation. There are, furthermore, several obstacles to divorce, which may not be effected, for example, by a person with a mental disorder or learning difficulties, by a person who is under duress or by a person whose awareness is diminished by intoxication, anger or the like. Successive pronouncements of divorce are counted as one. Pursuant to article 109 of the Code, a wife is also able to effect a divorce if her husband has empowered her to do so. The wife is furthermore empowered to take legal proceedings for a separation on various grounds, including harm and discord, and to seek a *khul’* divorce.

127. Reconciliation for couples unable to agree on a *khul’* divorce is regulated by article 122 of the Code. In the case of separation on grounds of harm or discord, the judge attempts to reconcile the couple through two arbitrators, as envisaged in article 133. Under article 135, the judge must also attempt to reconcile spouses who disagree over recompense. Similarly, under article 166, the judge must attempt to reconcile spouses who disagree over the custody of a child, taking account of the child’s interest.

128. In regulating their status in the Family Code, legislators have given prominence to children on several scores. In matters of parentage, maintenance and custody, for instance, the child’s interest is a key criterion. The Family Code also notably sets an age of custody that is higher than in the different schools of jurisprudence. Under article 183 of the Code, the child’s views and preferences may also be taken into account concerning the suitability of the disputing parties as custodians. Article 188 further provides that decisions to transfer the custody of a child should be executed gradually, taking into account the child’s interest, and that any use of force required to execute such decisions must not be directed against the child.

129. Legislators have established special chambers for the adjudication of cases and disputes involving family and inheritance matters with the aim of creating a dedicated family

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<sup>30</sup> For further information, see <http://www.ehsan.org.qa>.

court as an integral part of the domestic justice system. The ability of such a court to deal in one specialized setting with all separate proceedings brought by members of a single family helps to streamline procedures, reduce the burden on the family and further promote the principle of specialization and, in turn, the realization of justice.

### **Qatar National Vision 2030 and family cohesion**

130. The Qatar National Vision 2030 sets a number of goals for family cohesion and women's empowerment, specifically:

- Building strong and cohesive families that take care of their members and maintain high religious and moral values and humanitarian ideals;
- Preserving strong and cohesive families that take care of their members and maintain high religious and moral values and humanitarian ideals;
- Developing a sound social structure and building effective public institutions and strong and active civil society organizations;
- Building an effective social protection system for all Qataris that takes account of their civil rights, values their contribution to the advancement of society and ensures an income adequate for the preservation of dignity and health;
- Strengthening women's capacities and empowering women for social and economic participation, especially in the realm of decision-making;
- Holding training courses and workshops for the empowerment and advancement of women.

131. The national strategy for family cohesion and women's empowerment identified eight key development outcomes in three core areas (family cohesion, social care and women's empowerment) as a means of furthering the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030. In pursuit of those outcomes, 12 interrelated projects were initiated with a view to: promoting the role of the Qatari family as the mainstay of society; increasing parental responsibility and reducing reliance on domestic workers; lowering rates of domestic violence; creating a victim protection and support system; providing support systems for families in special circumstances, such as those with members who have disabilities or are juvenile offenders; minimizing the exposure of Qatari families to socioeconomic risks; improving family financial management and the health, well-being and safekeeping of children; increasing support for working families, particularly women; expanding the number of women in leadership and political decision-making positions; and reducing general stereotyping of women's roles and responsibilities. Family cohesion projects were grouped in line with three main sectoral outcomes, including the reduction of domestic violence and the provision of protection and support for families affected by such violence. A brief outline of the most important anti-domestic violence features of the national strategy for family cohesion and women's empowerment, and the results achieved since 2011, are set forth below.

### **Reducing domestic violence and protecting and supporting affected families**

132. The Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004) penalizes violence in all its forms such as murder, physical assault, immoral and disgraceful acts, adultery and crimes against honour, which can constitute the culmination of physical, verbal or sexual violence, although the Code does not explicitly use the term "domestic violence". In the chapter dealing with social crimes, the Code refers to the offence of endangering children, to crimes against honour and to immoral and disgraceful acts, while in the chapter dealing with crimes affecting the life and safety of the person it refers to murder, physical assault, abortion, violence, defamation and the divulgence of secrets.<sup>31</sup> The law similarly addresses the issue of psychological violence against women. Article 291 of the Criminal Code specifically criminalizes all forms of indecency against a female, including remarks, gestures or movements, for which the penalty is imprisonment for up to 1 year and a fine of up to QR 5,000.

<sup>31</sup> For further information, see <https://almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=26>.

133. Acts of violence or sexual assault committed within the family by adolescents against women or children are dealt with under existing criminal laws, which penalize any form of physical or sexual violence.

134. Two major projects to combat violence have been adopted under the Second National Development Strategy 2018–2022:

1. *Comprehensive system for protection against domestic violence*: This initiative includes 11 activities, which consist in reviewing the current body of data on violence, including the definition of domestic violence; enacting legislation via the Criminal Code to penalize domestic violence; developing and adopting a legal mechanism to protect victims of violence and persons who report violence; developing and adopting a follow-up mechanism in coordination with the police in order to protect victims of violence; establishing integrated centres and units in different regions to provide domestic-violence protection services; establishing an official reporting and monitoring mechanism; launching a training programme on gender-related violence; launching a programme/campaign to raise community awareness about domestic violence; setting up special units and a hotline to receive reports; opening shelters (safe houses for victims that meet international standards); and continuing to support programmes for the social rehabilitation and integration of victims of violence.

2. *Early warning system for cases of ill-treatment and neglect of children*: This initiative includes three activities: increasing the number of social workers in schools and developing their knowledge and skills in the area of abuse, violence and neglect against children; developing a programme to raise awareness among students about violence and how to protect against it; and launching a hotline for schools to report cases of violence.

### **Role of the community police**

135. Ever since its establishment in 2010, the Community Police Department has been working to increase awareness among the younger generations through cultural programmes and activities and to reduce cultural disparities not only through familiarity with Qatari culture but also by encouraging young people to take the good from the different cultures surrounding them. The Community Police Department performs its functions with a focus on, among other things, protecting families and children in keeping with the international and national norms established in that sphere. It thus stands as one of the State's child protection mechanisms. It intervenes at the pre-offending stage and supports the judicial police in the post-offending stage by increasing community responsibility for reforming offenders so that their future is unaffected, and by promoting integration and prevention through working closely with families.

136. The Community Police Department also promotes awareness about communal security among the general public with lectures and seminars to educate citizens about the dangers of crime. This is a preventive measure that helps to achieve the objective of the Community Police, which is to inform public opinion and promote cooperation with the authorities.

137. The Community Police Department has a social support section, which undertakes the following duties:

- Dealing with cases of domestic violence, which necessitate the filing of an official report or which can be dealt with amicably by promoting mutual acceptance between the disputing partners, without infringing the law;
- Intervening early to resolve, contain and address the causes of minor differences and quarrels, without infringing the law;
- Addressing cases of flight or absence from the family home and undertaking preventive and remedial measures, in cooperation with civil society institutions;
- Providing psychosocial support to victims of violence and crime – particularly women, children and older persons – in various cases and circumstances, and providing them with protection and aftercare, in cooperation with civil society institutions;

- Observing full confidentiality when dealing with social issues affecting families;
- Examining the cases and complaints brought before the unit from a humanitarian and social perspective and determining how to provide the necessary support, in cooperation with civil society institutions;
- Examining, following-up and assessing the cases that come before the unit from a psychological perspective and determining what psychological treatment services to provide;
- Monitoring and examining behavioural and social problems and phenomena and finding the necessary solutions and treatments;
- Promoting partnership and integrating roles with the following civil society institutions involved in protecting families, women and children: the Naufar Centre<sup>32</sup> for treating addiction, the Behavioural Healthcare Centre, the Aman Protection and Rehabilitation Centre,<sup>33</sup> the Wifaq Centre<sup>34</sup> for family counselling and the mental health hospital.

### **The role of the Aman Protection and Rehabilitation Centre<sup>35</sup>**

138. The Aman Centre provides social protection to its target categories by:

- Setting up the 24-hour 919 hotline to receive calls and reports from women and children; the calls are taken by a team trained and qualified to deal with the callers and to provide on-the-spot advice;
- Opening external offices throughout the country in various sectors such as health-care, judicial, security and community institutions, in order to facilitate access to the Centre for the target categories and to expedite legal and judicial proceedings;
- Launching apps such as the “Help Me” app through which girls are provided with assistance and protection to empower them to report any ill-treatment or violence they might face. Another app is “Consult Aman” via which legal, psychological and social counselling is delivered by a specialized team, in cooperation with the competent State bodies;
- Taking the target categories into the Centre where a specialized team provides psychological, social and legal services, examining and assessing each case and dealing with it according to need; guidance is also provided and cases are referred to the competent authorities to help the women resolve their problems and access the services they require;
- Providing legal counselling and support to victims of violence and family rifts, and to persons exposed thereto, with a view to preventing such situations and ensuring effective protection of rights; the Centre has recently signed a protocol of cooperation with the Qatar Lawyers’ Association under which persons in the target categories who are unable to afford a lawyer of their own will be given a lawyer who volunteers to bring and pursue proceedings of all kinds and degrees;
- Documenting information on the cases the Centre receives (either directly or through referral) from women involving violence or family rifts, while maintaining strict confidentiality and privacy. Thus, the Centre is able to examine data and produce statistics which can then be used in studies and plans of action; it also helps to identify shortcomings and problems and to work to rectify them and to optimize services.

139. The Aman Centre provides social care to its target groups through various forms of rehabilitation services (psychological, social, legal and occupational). These are made available to female victims of violence in the form of a package of rehabilitative procedures delivered in accordance with plans that are tailored to the needs of each beneficiary. Once

<sup>32</sup> For further information, see <https://www.naufar.com>.

<sup>33</sup> For further information, see <http://www.aman.org.qa>.

<sup>34</sup> For further information, see <http://www.wifaq.org.qa>.

<sup>35</sup> For further information, see <http://www.aman.org.qa>.

the rehabilitation plans have run their course, beneficiaries also receive integration and aftercare services to ensure their ongoing stability and to obviate the risk of a relapse. Economic, social and educational empowerment services are also made available as well as shelters and residential care.

### **Protecting children and adolescents**

140. The Constitution contains provisions – in articles 34, 35, 21, 22 and 49 – to ensure the welfare of young persons in general, prevent them from offending, cater for their best interests and achieve those interests in the most ideal manner.<sup>36</sup>

141. The Criminal Code provides protection for children from all forms of violence, physical abuse and neglect, and from treatment involving neglect, abuse or exploitation generally, including sexual abuse. In particular, it envisages heavier penalties in cases where the offender is one of the child's ascendants or carers. It also criminalizes the use of children for begging in streets and public places and punishes those who lead or entice children into begging. The Code severely punishes the offence of fornication or offences against honour where the victim is a child of either sex. The Code furthermore punishes a woman who deliberately kills her child from an illicit relationship immediately after the child's birth. The Code punishes anyone who exploits the affection, needs or inexperience of children to secure from them, against their interests or those of third parties, movable assets, a debt bond or a release bond or the cancellation, destruction or modification of such bonds. The penalty is increased if the offender is the child's guardian, trustee or custodian or a person responsible in any capacity for looking after the child's interests. Consent in sexual offences against children is also discounted and a heavier penalty imposed where minors are involved.

142. Articles 11, 12 and 13 of the Births and Deaths Registration Act No. 3 of 2016 include provision for birth registration and the issuance of birth certificates for all children, including those born outside marriage.<sup>37</sup>

143. Under article 56 and 58 of the Family Code, parents are entrusted with full faculty to care for their children and must do their utmost to nurture them and raise them correctly through a good upbringing that serves their interests. Article 166 of the Code stipulates that the right to care for, raise and educate children rests with both spouses (parents) as long as they remain married. If they separate, then the children are cared for by the mother as she is best-qualified to do so, provided that she is reliable and attentive to their behaviour, religion and moral standards, and that the judge has not taken a different view. Article 165 of the Code states that parental custody consists in maintaining, raising, educating and caring for children in their best interests. Articles 167, 170 and 171 make it clear that the interests of a child are not circumscribed to one aspect but include emotional and psychological well-being as a whole, which is fostered by parental empathy and reliability. Parents' material capacity means being able to provide for a child's upbringing, medical treatment, education and leisure activities and to create an enabling environment and atmosphere for the child. Moral capacity means inculcating integrity and protecting children from moral harm, moral dissolution and behavioural decline. Under article 75 of the Code, fathers are obliged by law to provide for their children. In the case of girls, the obligation continues until they marry and resumes if they divorce, whereas for boys it continues until they are able to earn a living or have successfully completed their education. In all cases, the father supplements a child's income if that income is insufficient to meet the child's needs.

144. Act No. 4 of 2004 regulates the custodianship of the assets of minors in order to secure their interests, and charges the General Authority for Minors' Affairs with overseeing, managing and looking after the interests of minors, including with respect to property and matters relating to guardians and trustees.

145. Article 1 of the Juvenile Code (Act No. 1 of 1994) defines a juvenile as any male or female who is over 7 and under 16 years of age when he or she commits an offence or is at risk of offending. The Code is designed to protect all children – including illegitimate or migrant children – and prevent them from offending and falling into crime. It includes

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<sup>36</sup> For further information, see the text of the Constitution <https://almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=2284>.

<sup>37</sup> For further information, see <https://www.almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=6963>.

provision for rehabilitation measures and behavioural change techniques aimed at preventing juveniles from offending and at helping them to become well-adjusted individuals. Legislators have also ruled out corporal punishment for juvenile offenders. In fact, article 8 of the Juvenile Code states that a juvenile under 14 years of age who commits a serious offence or a misdemeanour may not be sentenced to the penalties or measures prescribed for such offences, with the exception of expropriation or closure of premises. The juvenile is instead liable to one of the following measures: a reprimand; delivery into the custody of a guardian; enrolment in vocational training; compulsory fulfilment of specific obligations; probation; or placement in a social reform or medical institution.

146. In article 31 of the Juvenile Code, legislators established procedures to ensure that juvenile court trials are conducted in the child's best interests. Hearings are held in closed session and attended only by relatives of the child, witnesses, lawyers and representatives of the competent authorities. Children may be tried in absentia but cannot be convicted unless it is first explained to them what has taken place in their absence. Article 32 of the Code requires children accused of a serious offence to have a lawyer and allows the court to appoint a lawyer for those accused of a misdemeanour. Furthermore, article 33 of the Code states that the court may adjudicate a charge against a minor only after considering the reports provided by the competent authority at the Ministry of the Interior and by social workers in order to ascertain the minor's physical, mental, psychological and social condition and its relevance to the minor's offending or vulnerability to offending.

147. The Social Security Act No. 38 of 1995, as amended, offers the benefit of a social security allowance for children of unknown parentage and orphans. In its Decree No. 46 of 2014, the Council of Ministers set the amount of monthly allowance payable to beneficiaries under 17 years of age who are orphans or one or both of whose parents are unknown, and to beneficiaries over 17 one or both of whose parents are unknown.

148. The Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) prohibits the employment of children who are under the legally prescribed age and identifies the activities in which the employment of juveniles is prohibited.

149. With a view to penalizing any and all forms of violence and exploitation, article 7 of the Cybercrime Act No. 14 of 2014 envisages penalties for anyone who, by means of information technology, produces, imports, sells, offers for sale or use, circulates, transfers, distributes, forwards, disseminates, makes available or transmits child pornography. It also punishes the possession of child pornography and states that, for the purposes of the article, a child is anyone under 18 years of age.

150. As stated in the Kindergartens Act No. 1 of 2014, the aim of kindergartens is to deliver integrated care services to children and to provide an appropriate environment for the development of their skills and talents, through a sound education.

151. Under the Nationality Act No. 38 of 2005, Qatari citizenship is granted to persons born to Qatari parents, persons who are naturalized as Qataris and persons born in Qatar to unknown parents. Abandoned infants are deemed to have been born in Qatar unless there is evidence to the contrary. A child born to a Qatari mother and a non-Qatari father, however, may obtain Qatari citizenship only if the father is unknown or if the child meets the conditions for naturalization set out in article 2 of the Nationality Act, which states: "In applying the rules for the granting of Qatari citizenship under the present article, priority shall be given to persons with a Qatari mother."

### **Child labour and the protection of children from various forms of violence and exploitation**

152. Article 76 of the Labour Code states that children under the age of 16 may not be engaged in any form of employment. For its part, article 322 of the Criminal Code states: "Anyone who forces or coerces another person to work – with or without pay – shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of up to 6 months and/or payment of a fine of up to QR 3,000. If the victim of the offence is under the age of 16, the offender shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of up to 3 years and/or payment of a fine of up to QR 10,000."

153. The Juvenile Code (Act No. 1 of 1994) considers juveniles to be at risk of delinquency if they “practise a job that does not provide sufficient income to live”. It should be recalled, moreover, that Act No. 1 of 1994 defines a juvenile as any male or female who is over 7 and under 16 years of age when he or she commits an offence or is at risk of offending.

154. A general mechanism for dealing with juveniles who are at risk of delinquency is envisaged in the Juvenile Code (Act No. 1 of 1994). Under that mechanism, if a juvenile is running the risk of falling into delinquency, the Juvenile Police Department has the right to hold that juvenile, if the circumstances of the case so warrant, in an observation centre belonging to the Family Affairs Department at the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. The juvenile is held there until the matter can be brought before the juvenile courts, for a maximum period of 48 hours, unless the court orders an extension. As an alternative to the measures set forth above, the Juvenile Police Department can order that the juvenile be handed over to a parent, guardian or custodian to hold the juvenile and present him upon request.

155. The juvenile courts can apply one of the following measures to a young person at risk of delinquency:

- Delivering the juvenile into the custody of a parent, guardian, custodian or family member, having received the necessary pledges that the juvenile will be well cared for;
- Delivering the juvenile into the custody of a reliable caregiver – if the juvenile has none of the persons mentioned in the previous subparagraph – having received the necessary pledges that the juvenile will be well cared for;
- Placing the juvenile to be accommodated and cared for in an observation centre;
- The Juvenile Police Department can take one of these measures, even in the absence of a court order, if the parent, guardian or custodian consents.

156. Under paragraph 8 of Decree No. 16 of 2010 of the Minister of the Interior, the Juvenile Police Department, in coordination with other competent bodies, is responsible for disseminating awareness in the community regarding the treatment of juveniles. Under that mandate, the Department seeks to make families and other groups in the community aware of the need to protect children from working in dangerous conditions that are harmful to their health and to protect them from various forms of violence and exploitation.

### **Medical services for older persons**

157. The home health-care department of the Hamad Medical Corporation provides high-quality health-care services to patients in their own homes. This ensures the comfort and safety of older patients, allows the delivery of occupational therapy services and enables the attainment of the goals of the Hamad Medical Corporation, which consist in providing safe and effective care to all older patients. In the context of home care, occupational therapists intervene in various ways including physical exercises for everyday activities, home assessments, the supply of devices and equipment and the provision of seating aids for patients with disabilities (sleeping arrangements, wheelchairs, seats for bathroom and toilet, and hoists), to prevent falls. In addition, caregivers undertake to teach and train patients and members of their families and to make them aware of the importance of caring for older persons.

158. The Ehsan Centre<sup>38</sup> is developing programmes to guide family caregivers, help them understand the health-related and psychosocial needs of older persons and make them aware of practical ways to provide such persons with a decent living environment. The Centre offers comprehensive care services for persons aged 60 or over who have no relatives or children of their own, or whose families are unable to meet their needs and care for them in the home in such a way as to ensure protection and social stimulation in a safe environment. The Centre offers three kinds of accommodation: permanent, for persons who have no one to care for

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<sup>38</sup> For further information, see <http://www.ehsan.org.qa>.

them; intermittent, to help families overcome difficulties; temporary, for persons who are unable to travel with their families.

### **Reviewing legislation relating to women**

159. The State has repealed or amended certain laws that discriminated against women. Important pieces of legislation recognizing women's rights in a number of different areas are listed below:

- Act No. 5 of 2009 amending Passports Act No. 14 of 1993, which revoked the requirement whereby the guardian had to consent before a passport could be issued to a woman;
- The Family Code, which gives mothers the priority in the custody of their children;
- The Criminal Code, which includes provision to punish anyone who has sex with a woman without her consent, be it by coercion, threats or deceit; it also envisages imprisonment and/or a fine for acts of indecency against a woman or for intruding upon her intimacy, as well as penalties for incitement to adultery, prostitution or abortion;
- The Retirement and Pensions Act, under which the family of a deceased person have an entitlement to a pension and which envisages the right of the children of a deceased female functionary to her pension, regardless of their nationality;
- Act regulating the custodianship of the assets of minors, which stipulates that Qatari men and women have equal rights vis-à-vis their personal income;
- The Act regulating Central Municipal Council, which envisages full equality between women and men in the right to vote and stand for election to the Municipal Council.

### **Economic, social and cultural protection for asylum seekers**

160. Article 6 of Act No. 11 of 2018 regulating political asylum states: "Acting on a recommendation of the political refugees' affairs committee, the Minister may grant an asylum seeker a temporary residence permit for a period of three months, renewable for an equivalent period or periods until such time as a decision is made on the application." Anyone holding such a permit is covered by article 56 of the Constitution, which reads: "Anyone who is a legal resident of the State shall enjoy protection of person and property, in accordance with the provisions of law." This provision is absolute and unconditional; therefore, protection also covers temporary residents.

161. The concept of protection, furthermore, is not limited to security but also to legal protection. This means that asylum seekers who are granted a temporary residence permit enjoy the economic and social rights that are afforded to residents, for as long as their residency lasts. Under article 9 of the Act regulating political asylum, refugees and members of their families are granted a number of social, economic and cultural privileges and rights, such as job opportunities, health care, monthly financial subsidies, accommodation, reunification with a spouse and with first-degree relatives, travel documents, freedom of movement and freedom of worship.

### **Combating human trafficking**

162. Article 2 of Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 15 of 2011 states: "The offence of human trafficking shall be deemed to have been committed by any person who in any way recruits, transports, transfers, harbours or receives a natural person within the State or across its national borders by means of the use or threat of force or violence, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or need or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person to the trafficking of that person, for the purpose of any form of exploitation. Exploitation shall include the exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, the exploitation of children in prostitution, pornography or begging, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs or human tissue or part thereof."

163. The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking was established in June 2017 to ensure enforcement of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, coordinate the efforts of entities working to prevent human trafficking, raise awareness of the means of human trafficking, and exchange information and expertise with Arab and international organizations involved in the fight against human trafficking. The Committee approved the National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking 2017–2022, which serves as a guide and charter for the Committee itself and for the entities working to prevent, monitor and combat all forms of human trafficking.

164. In January 2018, the Government of the State of Qatar, represented by the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States of America, represented by the United States Department of State, during the inaugural United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue. The two parties agreed to cooperate in a number of spheres, such as furthering the fight against human trafficking in both countries, building their respective capacities, and exchanging legislation and directives on the subject for guidance purposes.

## **Article 11**

### **Right to an adequate standard of living**

165. In addition to the information provided earlier concerning article 9 of the Covenant, replies under this article will focus on four principal themes: the right to continuous improvement in living conditions, the right to adequate food, the right of access to water and the right to adequate housing.

#### **Right to continuous improvement in living conditions**

166. Qatar has taken various steps to turn the pillars, projects and development strategies underpinning the Qatar National Vision 2030 into reality. To that end, the Health and Education Fund Act has been passed, the purpose of which is to provide sustainable financial resources – with a total capital of QR 360 billion – to finance health and education projects in the State of Qatar.

167. The World Bank Group<sup>39</sup> renewed its classification of Qatar as among the highest-income countries for the financial year 2019, on the basis of a number of local economic indicators. The Group has explained that the rankings for next year will be based on per capita gross national income (GNI) and levels of recorded economic growth as well as on inflation rates, the national currency exchange rate, population numbers and demographic composition. According to official preliminary estimates, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) stood at around QR 236,500 (\$64,000) at the end of 2019, while final official statistics for the end of 2016 indicate that per capita GDP stood at QR 212,000 (\$58,000). This points to an annual growth rate – according to preliminary estimates and on the basis of data issued by the Qatar National Bank – of 11.5 per cent.

168. Extreme poverty does not exist in Qatar as there is no one in the country today who lives on less than \$1.9 per day. The reason for this lies in the fact that basic services, particularly education and health care, are provided to citizens free of charge and to residents for only nominal fees. Qatar was, moreover, able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, the first of those Goals: eradicating poverty everywhere and in all its forms. The State has developed social policies to ensure that the categories covered by the social protection system duly receive health-care coverage, and it provides basic services to the entire population. Moreover, it gives both men and women the right to own and utilize land and it provides financial services notably in the form of loans to finance small-scale and microprojects. The State also works to build the capacity of social groups to cope with economic, social and environmental crises while, at the same time, developing its own disaster risk programmes in line with national strategies that have been developed to that end.

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<sup>39</sup> For further information, see <https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/about/annual-report>.

The State provides support to categories covered under the Social Security Act, and the number of direct beneficiaries of social welfare programmes has increased in recent years.<sup>40</sup>

169. Qatar has adopted the same methodology as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which uses the consumption unit of one individual adult as a standard of living indicator<sup>41</sup> with the relative threshold set as the median of that consumption. Using a 2012/13 survey of family income and expenditure, the relative poverty line value was calculated by dividing household consumption by the number of consumption units, then calculating the median consumption per unit. The threshold for a decent life (i.e., the relative poverty line) was set at 50 per cent of the value of that median. In this way, the relative poverty threshold for Qataris was estimated at QR 3,514 (\$950) per month, and thus a person living in a Qatari family that has an equivalent monthly consumption of less than QR 3,514 per month is a person with a low standard of living. The threshold for limited income was set using equivalent income, and the equivalent income threshold was estimated at QR 5,375 (\$1,450) per month.

### **Right to adequate food**

170. The State is rolling out a number of measures to maintain food reserves, and its efforts in that regard have been reflected in the outstanding position Qatar occupies in the Global Food Security Index, where it ranked first among Arab countries and twenty-second globally in 2018. Moreover, Qatar ranks first among States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and twentieth globally – out of 113 countries – on the food security index produced by the Alpen Capital Research Foundation in its annual report on the food industry in GCC States. As the report states, the Government of Qatar remains determined to achieve 40 per cent food self-sufficiency by 2030, as part of the country's national food security programme, which was launched in 2008.

171. In order to promote sustainable agriculture, the State has adopted programmes and projects aimed at preserving the genetic diversity of cultivated seeds and plants and at managing that diversity effectively. The Government is cooperating with international organizations and agencies, and with other States, to distribute the benefits that arise from the use of genetic resources.

172. State policy in Qatar rests on the importation and production of foodstuffs. The following policies and measures have been adopted with a view to promoting self-sufficiency and food security:

- Prime Ministerial Decree No. 13 of 2013 included provision for the formation of a technical committee to encourage the private sector to participate in food-security projects; the committee seeks to develop mechanisms to encourage the private sector to participate in development in general and in food-security initiatives in particular, and it identifies ways in which the Government can support the private sector to play a developmental role;
- The country's national food-security plan, which was adopted in 2013, aims to develop a long-term strategy that will enable Qatar to increase its domestic food production significantly in the coming decades and to improve the security of its imported foodstuffs. This national food-security programme seeks to develop agriculture through the use of technology, to mobilize water resources with the involvement of private institutions and to build potential;
- The Hassad Food company<sup>42</sup> supports the national economy through the management of sustainable profit-making commercial activities that aim to secure food sources. Since its foundation, the company – which has a capital value of QR 3 billion – has adopted a unique investment model based primarily on investing in premier global markets in order to secure food sources for Qatar and meet domestic needs. The company invests in a number of countries around the world with the aim of promoting

<sup>40</sup> See replies regarding article 9 in the present report.

<sup>41</sup> See [http://www.fao.org/docs/up/easypol/326/equv\\_scales\\_subjectmtd\\_033EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docs/up/easypol/326/equv_scales_subjectmtd_033EN.pdf) and [www.oecd.org/social/inequality.htm](http://www.oecd.org/social/inequality.htm).

<sup>42</sup> For further information, see <https://www.hassad.com>.

self-sufficiency for Qatar: Australia, (about QR 500 million in livestock and cereals – wheat and barley) and Pakistan (rice) as well as India and the Sultanate of Oman, all with a view to meeting a part of the State’s external food requirements. The company’s own production focuses on five products covering the needs of the local market: cereals, sugar, rice, meat and chicken, and animal fodder;

- Under the Agrico project, farms belonging to the International Projects Development Company are replacing traditional crops with more modern ones – hydroponics – where plants are grown in limited areas of land with a saving of water consumption of some 80 per cent;
- Decree-Law No. 4 of 2019 was enacted to regulate and manage strategic stockpiles of foodstuffs and consumer goods. It was drafted with a view to addressing the practical problems that arose as a consequence of the unjust blockade against the State of Qatar,<sup>43</sup> which drew attention to the need to keep stocks of food and other strategic commodities. The Decree-Law, which serves to create a shield and to provide legal protection for consumers, sets conditions on the activities of suppliers vis-à-vis the regulation of stocks of food and other strategic commodities, under the control and supervision of the State. One of the more significant provisions of the Decree-Law concerns the creation of an electronic stockage system and the exchange of information concerning the movement of strategic goods. The quantities stored are monitored and preserved as long as possible, regardless of when or where they were produced. The purpose of this is to give decision makers the power to act promptly to address fluctuations in production or in global prices and to react to situations of emergency, catastrophe or crisis.

#### Right of access to water

173. In exchange for a small fee and with State subsidy, Qatar provides safe water for all citizens and residents on its territory, while also striving to preserve water and rationalize consumption. Data on the proportion of the population benefiting from safely managed drinking water services shows that Qatar provides the entire population with safe water, both for drinking and for household use. Several desalination plants have been set up and, in September 2017, the State launched a project of strategic reservoirs to meet its water needs. Work is currently under way to drill 450 wells to hold rainwater and feed aquifers. This is expected to lead to a 30 to 35 per cent increase in groundwater.

Table 7

#### Proportion of the population benefiting from safely managed drinking water services, 2012–2018

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Qatar Electricity and Water Corporation.

174. In the same way, the entire population of Qatar is connected to the sewerage system. Of the around 194 million cubic metres of treated sewage produced in 2016, about 56 per cent was used to irrigate green areas and forage, and in cooling systems, thus helping to promote efficiency and sustainability in water consumption. The Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (KAHRAMAA) managed to reduce overall losses of desalinated water (non-revenue water (NRW)) to 10 per cent in 2016, as compared with the 30 per cent loss of 2011. Rationalization Act No. 26 of 2008 was amended by Rationalization Act No. 20 of 2015 with a view to stopping the wastage of water, addressing low groundwater levels, using non-traditional water sources in agriculture and extending the treated-sewage network to about 800 km.

175. On a separate front, in order to maintain water quality in health-care establishments, the Hamad Medical Corporation monitors the water in the facilities it runs, measuring it

<sup>43</sup> See part III of the present report.

against the standards necessary for treatment and human health. The monitoring also serves to ensure that the water is free from bacterial pollutants and to ensure that contaminants remain within acceptable parameters, depending upon whether the water is destined to be drunk by patients or used in medical equipment. The quality of drinking water in the country as a whole is also monitored, in order to prevent diseases that can be transmitted by contaminated water. To that end, the authorities monitor the quality of water from desalination plants by taking periodic samples at the production stage from all water-producing plants in the country. The samples are then tested to ensure that they conform to local and international specifications.

### **Right to adequate housing**

176. Qatar attaches particular importance to the provision of adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living for both citizens and foreign residents. That right is protected by the Housing Act No. 2 of 2007, pursuant to which Qatar provides housing with mortgages to individuals who are able to repay an agreed loan as well as housing for individuals in need who are covered by the social security system. The Act also envisages, inter alia, long-term financing with convenient repayment plans, the provision of land for construction free of charge, approved construction plans free of charge, basic electricity and water services free of charge and the demolition, reconstruction and renovation of social housing for citizens with disabilities. The Citizens' Housing Department, which is part of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, enforces all laws, regulations and decrees related to housing. It also proposes and applies housing regulation policies and their associated decrees of implementation. In addition, the Department receives and examines for housing applications under current laws regulations and procedures.

177. The State of Qatar provides housing for Qatari citizens under Housing Act No. 2 of 2007. Article 2 of that Act enshrines a noble objective: that the State should contribute to providing adequate housing for its citizens.

178. Decree No. 18 of 2014 of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs determines the parameters of adequate housing for migrant workers in accordance with recognized international standards, and establishes minimum health and housing standards for workers' accommodation. Such accommodation is subject to periodic unannounced inspections by the Ministry's Labour Inspection Department to ensure that it meets established minimum standards. The State is currently constructing several housing complexes that comply with those standards and, in 2015, issued a manual on adequate housing requirements in cooperation with the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Committee for Human Rights, the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Municipalities and Urban Planning.

179. Within the context of the State's efforts to support development projects that address the concrete needs of the country's labour force and improve workers' living standards, Barwa al-Baraha, the country's first workers' city, was inaugurated and began operating in 2016. The project, which covers 1.8 million square meters, is the largest workers' city in the Gulf and can accommodate 53,000 manual and professional workers. The city boasts a recreational and commercial area, the largest cricket stadium in the country, four cinemas and a 17,000-seat theatre that can be used for a wide range of events. The city was built in accordance with international norms and the highest safety standards and is equipped with early warning systems, fire exits and sprinkler systems, guard rooms and maintenance rooms. The city also boasts food halls and kitchens providing healthy meals, recreation halls, gymnasiums, houses of worship and medical clinics.

180. It should be noted that health, education, electricity, safe water, communications, transportation and banking services all have 100 per cent coverage. Progress such as this has contributed to the placement of Qatar in the group of countries that enjoy very high human development. In fact, the country ranked 37 out of 189 States in the 2018 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Table 8  
**Proportion of the population living in households with access to basic services, 2012–2018**

<i>Indicator</i>	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Health water	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Electricity	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Education	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Health	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Communications	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Means of transportation	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Transportation	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Banking services	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source:* Report on Sustainable Development Goals in Qatar – Planning and Statistics Authority, 2018.

## **Article 12** **Right of all persons to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health**

181. As shown below, international health-care indicators give Qatar a high global ranking:

- According to WHO, Qatar has the largest number of doctors per capita in the world, with 77.4 doctors per 10,000 people;
- According to the Legatum Institute, Qatar ranks fourth in the world in terms of health-care satisfaction; this is a consequence of heavy national investment in health infrastructure;
- Also according to the Legatum Institute’s Prosperity Index for 2019, Qatar holds fifth place in the world in terms of health. Moreover, Qatar has taken steps towards achieving self-sufficiency in medicines and medical supplies.

182. Special procedures mandate holders who visited the country in 2019 – including the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education – praised the efforts Qatar has made to ensure psychological, mental and physical health.

183. Public spending on the health sector as a proportion of the State’s total public spending for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 is shown below.

Table 9  
**Public spending on the health sector as a proportion of overall public spending**

<i>Indicator</i>	2017	2018	2019
Public spending on the health sector as a proportion of overall public spending	10.8%	8.8%	9.8%

*Source:* Planning and Statistics Authority.

184. Domestic law guarantees the right of access to medical services without discrimination on grounds of race, religion, national origin, belief, language, age or disability. Under article 23 of the Constitution, the State is to concern itself with “public health and to provide the means to prevent and treat disease and epidemics in accordance with the law”. Legislators have addressed all aspects of health care in many different pieces of legislation:

- Mental Health Act No. 16 of 2016;
- Act No. 10 of 2016 regarding the control of tobacco and its derivatives;

- Births and Deaths Registration Act No. 3 of 2016;
- Act No. 15 of 2015 regulating human organ transplantation;
- Act No. 7 of 2013 concerning social health insurance;
- Act No. 2 of 2012 concerning autopsies on human remains;
- Act No. 7 of 1996 regulating medical treatment and health services in Qatar;
- Decree-Law No. 17 of 1990 concerning the prevention of infectious diseases, as amended by Act No. 9 of 2020;
- Amiri Decree No. 12 of 2016 regulating the Primary Health Care Corporation;
- Amiri Decree No. 11 of 2016 regulating the Hamad Medical Corporation.

185. Act No. 7 of 1996 deals with medical treatment in Qatar and includes measures for eliminating discrimination in the area of health care. In particular, article 4 of the Act guarantees that no fees or charges may be levied for emergency services, hospitalization for accidents, preventive maternal and child health-care services, preventive health-care services for school students and communicable disease and immunization services.

186. A charter of the rights and responsibilities of patients and their families was drawn up by the Hamad Medical Corporation, establishing the principles for ensuring the right to health, including the right of access to medical services without discrimination, the right to appropriate medical care, protection of privacy and the confidentiality of information. The key elements of the charter are:

- Access to primary health care services regardless of race, religion, national origin, belief, values, language, age or disability;
- Access to health care services with no unjustified delay;
- Access to proper care that is provided at all times in an appropriate and respectful manner that safeguards the dignity of the patient;
- Availability of an appropriate and effective support mechanism in the event of grievance or complaint;
- The right to receive immediate pain assessment and control;
- The prohibition of isolation or restraints on patients unless this is medically necessary.

187. The Ministry of Public Health, in cooperation with the Hamad Medical Corporation, the Primary Health Care Corporation and related authorities, is implementing the National Health Strategy, which was adopted with the aim of achieving the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030 through the realization of seven key goals. These are: the establishment of a comprehensive health-care system providing high-quality services to the entire population; the provision of high-quality integrated health-care services; the provision of preventive health-care services that address the different needs of men, women and children; the creation of a skilled national workforce that can deliver high-quality health care; the implementation of a national health policy that establishes and monitors standards; the provision of efficient affordable health services; and the carrying out of high-quality research with a view to improving the quality and effectiveness of health care. Over the past year, the National Health Strategy has made significant progress in delivering on those goals. It is estimated to have achieved some 71 per cent of its objectives and the coming years will witness significant improvements in services as Qatar moves towards its goal of establishing a world-class health system. Some of the achievements are:

- The launching of a social health insurance system, which ensures the provision of public and private treatment;
- The formulation of an infrastructure plan by the Ministry of Health which, in November 2013, launched a master plan for health-care facilities under which 25 health centres, 11 hospitals and 82 other new or refurbished facilities are to open in the country by 2022. These include all types of health facility that are consistent with the country's new approach to care;

- The Medical Specializations Department has been established in the Ministry of Public Health to monitor all health practitioners and support clinical staff by developing training programmes to facilitate the provision of optimal health-care services;
- The National Health Strategy has provided a methodology for action plans in priority areas. In 2011, in fact, the Ministry of Health launched a national cancer strategy for 2011–2016, which included 62 recommendations; in 2012, the Ministry launched its national cancer research strategy, which had 31 recommendations; and in 2013, it launched its national laboratory integration and standardization strategy 2013–2018, which includes a plan of action under the National Health Strategy as well as 46 recommendations. In June 2013, the Primary Health Care Corporation launched its first comprehensive primary care strategy, namely the National Primary Health-Care Strategy 2013–2018. In 2013, the Ministry of Health also launched a national mental health strategy 2013–2018, which includes a plan of action in line with the National Health Strategy and includes 10 commitments;
- In June 2014, the Primary Health Care Corporation obtained platinum accreditation from Accreditation Canada. This certifies that the Corporation provides services that meet the highest international quality and safety standards.

188. The Pharmacy and Drug Control Department develops drug policies and enforces laws and regulations to ensure the quality and safety of all drugs used in Qatar. The Department also registers pharmaceutical companies and factories in accordance with international standards and it applies regionally and globally approved measures to classify drugs, such as the electronic common technical document (eCTD) interface, the purpose of which is to standardize registration requirements among GCC States using the standards applied by international health agencies. The eCTD interface also enables quality studies and clinical overviews of drugs to be submitted, followed-up and stored electronically, and it is regularly updated in the light of new scientific findings. The Department also issues manuals and publishes guides to ensure compliance with global standards and the permanent availability of high-quality products.

189. In the context of the State's commitment to train health-care workers, the Hamad International Training Centre, which is part of the Hamad Medical Corporation, runs medical training programmes for everyone in the health sector in Qatar, both public and private, as well as for members of the public. Ever since it was founded in 2000, the Centre has been running a number of internationally accredited courses thanks to its association with prestigious international institutions in the field of medical and vocational training.

190. The Ministry of Public Health believes in the importance of educating health workers about human rights principles and the right to health. For that reason, in coordination with the National Committee for Human Rights, it holds seminars and workshops on the right to health and on the provisions of international charters and declarations.

191. The Women's Hospital plays an important role in the promotion of women's health in Qatar. Extensive obstetric services are available within the structure and the vast majority of births in Qatar take place there, with more than 17,000 children being delivered each year, making it one of the busiest of the Hamad Medical Corporation's eight hospitals. The Women's Hospital has 330 beds, an outpatient department, an emergency room, 16 maternity wards and 3 operating theatres. Recent development work has seen the addition of a new observation unit and the expansion of the perinatology unit, which provides care to women with high-risk pregnancies. In addition to looking after women's health, the Women's Hospital also has a neonatal unit that provides intensive care for newborns. The unit is equipped with 111 beds/incubators for babies, including several beds in rooms for mothers and their infants. The Ministry of Public Health conducts programmes and runs websites, in more than 6 languages, with information and regular updates about communicable and infectious disease. Educational materials are also published on a daily basis on the Ministry's own website and social media accounts. Wide-reaching awareness-raising campaigns have been run in partnership with national stakeholders, including press statements and media

coverage with information about precautionary measures to prevent communicable and infectious disease.<sup>44</sup>

### **Raising awareness about sexually transmitted diseases**

192. The Ministry of Public Health runs active awareness-raising programmes on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. The programmes are delivered across various platforms including social media, newspapers, television and direct public interaction at public festivals. These activities take place year-round and are intensified for World AIDS Day.

193. If a disease is detected in a person, it is treated in accordance with the schedule of infectious diseases attached to Decree-Law No. 17 of 1990 concerning the prevention of infectious diseases, as amended by Act No. 9 of 2020.

### **Mental health**

194. Article 3 of the Mental Health Act No. 16 of 2016 reads: “The institutions envisaged in the previous article must ensure that mental patients are able to enjoy the following rights ...:

4. Rights concerning patient independence and confidentiality:
  - The right to accept or refuse visitors, in a way that does not conflict with the treatment plan;
  - The right to be protected against economic or sexual exploitation, against physical or mental abuse and against degrading treatment in any form, be it from health-care workers or from other patients;
  - The right not to be subjected to any form of corporal or mental punishment, or threat thereof, for whatever cause;
  - The right to protection of confidentiality, personal effects and place of residency within the institution; the right to confidentiality of patient information with no one having the right to examine the relevant documentation save members of the medical team and medical records staff, except with written authorization from the patient, the patient’s guardian or the competent authority. This obligation persists even after the patient has recovered.”

195. The Act also lays down rules and conditions relating to the full independence and confidentiality of patients, as follows:

- “On the basis of a reasoned psychological assessment, the doctor in charge or his substitute may prevent mental patients from leaving an establishment they have entered voluntarily, for a period of not more than 72 hours, in either of the following circumstances:
  - If the doctor believes that leaving the establishment would entail a serious possibility of immediate or imminent harm to the patient’s safety, health or life, or to the safety, health or life of others;
  - If the doctor believes that the patient is unable to care for himself, due to the type or severity of the mental illness.”

196. For a mental patient to be subjected to obligatory admission for treatment under the provisions of article 6 of the Act, it is necessary to inform the competent authority and undertake an independent medical assessment. In such a case, the period stipulated in the previous paragraph may be extended by up to seven days if the justifications envisaged in the article persist and if it is not possible to obtain an independent medical assessment within the first three days after the date on which the patient was forbidden from leaving the institution. The competent authority must be informed of the reasons for the extended detention.

<sup>44</sup> Annex 1: Report concerning the efforts made by the State of Qatar to halt the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Obligatory admission for treatment lasts for three months, renewable for one or more equal periods, depending upon the patient's mental state.

197. The patient's guardian, any relatives up to the second degree or, in their absence, the competent authority may, in situations of urgency, inform the institution of the patient's diagnosis and transfer the patient for treatment immediately. In such a case, the institution must submit a report on the case to the competent authority within 24 hours including an initial diagnosis, how and by whom the patient was transported and the reasons for the situation of urgency.

198. The mental patient or the patient's guardian may, at any time, file a complaint against detention or obligatory admission orders with the competent authority. In such a circumstance, the authority must delegate a consultant psychiatrist from outside the institution to determine the patient's mental state. The authority must then rule on the complaint within a maximum of seven days from the date of submission and any rejection of a complaint must be accompanied by reasons. Decisions made by the authorities in regard of complaints are final.

### **Right to health in the workplace**

199. Qatar has taken a number of measures, which are listed below, with a view to preserving workers' health and providing a safe working environment, while also striving to build a positive relationship between workers, the work they do and the surrounding environment. The measures also serve to ensure that employers and workers are aware of workplace hazards (from materials used in, or produced by, the manufacturing process) and know how to protect themselves, thereby reducing the incidence of diseases and injuries that can result from such hazards.

- The Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004), as amended, stipulates the need to apply occupational health and safety standards, both in the workplace and in workers' accommodation. The Code includes several articles obliging the owners of companies to implement the standards and envisaging punishments for those who fail to do so. The occupational health and safety section of the Labour Inspection Department has a staff of trained inspectors who hold judicial authority, as well as medical, engineering and chemical experts who monitor the application of these conditions through periodic unannounced inspections. The section is also involved in awareness raising and media campaigns, its purpose being to reduce workplace hazards as well as vocational illnesses, accidents and injuries and to ensure that workers enjoy proper health care and suitable accommodation. Work is currently underway to draft a unified national occupational health and safety policy in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health.
- Article 100 of the Labour Code states: "Employers are to take the necessary precautionary measures to protect workers from any injury or illness that may result from the activity being performed in the employer's establishment, from any accident, defect or breakdown in machinery or equipment, or from fire." Article 109 of the Code reads: "Workers who sustain a workplace injury are entitled to receive appropriate medical treatment, to be decided by the competent medical authority, at the expense of their employer. Workers are to receive their full pay during the duration of their treatment or for six months, whichever is shorter. If the treatment lasts for more than six months, workers are entitled to half their full pay until their eventual recovery or until it is established that they have a permanent disability, whichever comes first."
- Decree No. 16 of 2007 aims to protect workers from the dangers of sun exposure while working. Under the Decree, workers cannot work between 11.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. between 15 June and 31 August each year. Inspectors from the Labour Inspection Department run campaigns to detect offending companies and take legal action against them.
- Ministerial Decree No. 18 of 2014 determines parameters for adequate housing for migrant workers, in accordance with recognized international standards, and establishes minimum health and housing standards for workers' accommodation. Such accommodation is subject to periodic unannounced inspections by the

Ministry's Labour Inspection Department to ensure that it meets established minimum standards. The State is currently constructing several housing complexes that comply with those standards.

- In order to protect the health of migrant workers, the Hamad Medical Corporation, which is part of the Ministry of Health, has opened Beit Aman, a health facility dedicated to caring for workers who are recovering from injuries and who no longer require medical supervision in the long-term care and rehabilitation facilities of Hamad Medical Hospital. Beit Aman provides a safe and healthy environment in which workers can recover their strength before returning to their own countries.
- Article 1 of Decree No. 16 of 2005 regulating medical care for workers in companies states: "Medical care for workers in companies covers the following: medical examinations; laboratory analyses and X-rays; medicines for non-hospital treatment; obstetric care for female workers during pregnancy; immunization against common diseases in accordance with the relevant guidelines issued by the national health authorities; prevention programmes against the risks of occupational illnesses and injuries with a view to early detection, follow-up and treatment; monitoring of the food given to workers and the food offered in health facilities as well as awareness-raising among workers about health and the importance of individual protection; studies to improve working conditions and using the results of such studies when undertaking medical examinations of workers; opening a medical file on each worker containing the results of preliminary medical tests and any health problems (ordinary or occupational illnesses and injuries), time spent off work and stages of treatment." Under article 2 of the Decree, employers are required to provide a first-aid cabinet containing sufficient drugs and medical supplies, as set forth in the table annexed to the Decree. Employers must ensure that such cabinets are fitted in all the establishments they run and must provide one of their workers with first-aid training. These norms apply to establishments employing between 5 and 25 persons. In establishments with more than 25 workers, a first-aid cabinet is to be available for each group of between 5 and 25 persons. Under article 3 of the Decree, employers in establishments employing more than 100 workers must have, in addition to the first-aid cabinets, a full-time nurse. Establishments with more than 500 workers must have a medical clinic with at least one doctor and one nurse as well as an emergency room. Articles 4 to 6 of the Decree envisage training for a certain number of workers so that they can provide first aid to injured persons while awaiting the arrival of an ambulance or doctor. The articles also stipulate certain requirements for treatment areas and state that company-based medical clinics are subject to inspection by the competent authorities to ensure compliance with the necessary guidelines. Legislators have laid down penalties for any violations of the norms contained in the Decree.

### **Treatment of addiction and associated behavioural disorders**

200. The Council of Ministers issued Decree No. 4 of 2020 to set up a standing addiction-treatment committee. The committee coordinates national governmental and non-governmental efforts to treat and monitor addicts.

201. Established in 2017, the National Committee to Combat Drugs has the primary aim of preventing drug use, which is one of the main themes of the Committee's drug control strategy, a strategy it is putting into effect via a range of well-thought-out and evidence-based programmes and activities. In this way, it seeks to put a stop to the use of drugs and other prohibited and harmful substances, prevent their consumption, raise awareness about the harm drugs can do and the risks of addiction and intervene early to address the causes and factors that lead to drug abuse. These programmes are consistent with the United Nations International Standards on Drug Use Prevention and with the "Unplugged" initiative developed by the European Drug Addiction Prevention Trial. The National Committee also raises awareness via social media and works to build strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the State including the security, health, education, sports, cultural, social, media and religious sectors and civil society institutions. They all participate in educating the community, with a particular focus on children and adolescents to prevent them experimenting with drugs or falling into addiction. They also help different groups in society,

especially the young, to build a comprehensive and science-based understanding of the perils of addiction. The programmes, activities and events target families, schools and society as a whole, as explained below.

### *I. Families*

202. Authorities in Qatar are keen to activate and promote the role families can play in preventive activities and in monitoring their own children, via the following:

- Developing and running training programmes to develop families' skills in drug prevention. The programmes aim to build the skills of fathers and mothers in monitoring and supervising the activities of their children. Studies have demonstrated that such programmes do more than merely preventing drug abuse; they actually help to improve educational outcomes for the children involved, reduce various risk behaviours and problems with the criminal justice system, as well as improving family interactions in general;
- Organizing meetings and lectures to educate parents so that they avoid delegating the education of their children and participate in the selection of their children's friends;
- Organizing workshops and specialized courses to train and sensitize parents about how to help their children avoid drug problems, how to detect early signs of abuse and how to behave if their children do fall into the snare of drugs.

### *II. Schools*

203. Educational institutions play a vital role in the sound social education of today's young generation who will be tomorrow's leaders, and in creating a resurgence rooted in the strong foundations of a human capital that is capable of shouldering responsibility and building society. Young people are the cornerstone of all development and Qatar attaches great importance to investment by educational institutions in preventing pathological behaviours. This has become a national priority and has led to the formation of authentic partnerships between police and schools, as well as to consolidated efforts to provide a clear vision of the dangers of negative phenomena that can circumscribe the role educational institutions have in protecting young people. Qatar has also acted to disseminate educational messages in the face of increasing challenges and of the cultural and intellectual encroachment brought about by the development of information technology and its power to establish values and to open channels of communication with the family, society and schools. The purpose is to achieve sustainable human development as one of the pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and to protect young people in a modern and advanced society.

204. In cooperation and coordination with other stakeholders, the General Directorate for Drug Enforcement runs preventive programmes, initiatives and projects as well as awareness-raising and educational activities within the school system. The objective is to intervene early, raise cultural awareness, develop positive trends and build personal and social skills among young people. It also seeks to enlighten the young, protect and distance them from drugs and other dangerous substances and help them to form a negative view thereof.

205. Community partnerships between schools, families and security agencies are forged thanks to workshops, seminars and lectures, which aim to protect young people from negative practices within the educational environment. In that regard, emphasis is given to the role played by social workers, psychologists and specialized teams within schools, who monitor any deviant behaviour on the part of students and intervene promptly to address it. They also conduct research and field studies to monitor youth behaviour in schools.

### *III. Society*

206. A large number of programmes, projects, activities and media campaigns are run to protect society from drugs and to draw attention to the dangers they pose and the harm they can cause. Scientific studies and research are conducted to identify the causes and factors that lead to drug and psychotropic substance abuse in order to lay solid foundations from which to address the scourge and protect society.

207. Qatar has formed – as part of its National Committee to Combat Drugs – a subcommittee with membership drawn from the education, health, social, religious, sporting, cultural, media, justice and security sectors as well as from civil society institutions. The subcommittee develops, implements and monitors programmes and plans of action to sensitize and raise awareness in society on all matters related to drugs.

208. As concerns treatment and rehabilitation for drug addicts and support for their families, the authorities in Qatar look upon addicts as sick persons in need of treatment, in line with United Nations drug treaties and international instruments and conventions. Treatment has an important and effective impact on the reduction of drug use which, in turn, leads to a reduction in trafficking and importation. For these reasons Qatar attaches great importance to treating, rehabilitating and healing addicts, providing them with aftercare, reintegrating them into society and preventing any relapse. It works to achieve this end via treatment and rehabilitation centres, including the Naufar Centre<sup>45</sup> for treating addiction. The Centre, which is the largest of its kind in the Middle East, operates as a kind of integrated health and psychiatric resort offering the highest levels of comprehensive treatment, rehabilitative and preventive services, integrated community care and education programmes. It also conducts applied research on addiction patients.

### **Legislative mechanisms to treat addicts rather than subjecting them to criminal penalties**

209. A number of mechanisms and procedures are applied, under which drug addicts are treated with complete confidentiality and which are used as an alternative to criminal penalties. Addicts are encouraged to seek treatment of their own accord and no measures are taken against them. The mechanisms and procedures consist in the following:

- The courts can order that addict be placed in an addiction treatment centre rather than face a criminal penalty;
- Addicts can be encouraged to seek treatment for themselves without fear of facing criminal prosecution;
- The spouse or a relative up to the second degree can request treatment on behalf of the addict, without any measures being taken against that person.

210. Programmes are being run the aim of which is to integrate treatment, rehabilitation and correctional plans during the period detainees are serving their sentence. These include the “Second Chance” programme wherein a specialized medical team seeks to rehabilitate drug addicts being held in correctional facilities. Recovered addicts continue to be monitored after leaving prison and measures are taken to ensure that they are not stigmatized, receive the necessary aftercare, are reintegrated into the community without relapsing and become upright citizens who contribute to the advancement of society.

211. Awareness-raising programmes and activities include provisions intended to modify the negative social perception of drug addicts and to combat stigmatization. This makes it easier to persuade and encourage addicts throw off their addiction and to enter treatment programmes. Those provisions consist in the following:

- Intensifying efforts, activities and campaigns – in the form of seminars and lectures – to raise awareness, prevent social marginalization and promote non-stigmatizing attitudes towards addicts, who are to be seen as sick persons in need of treatment. Emphasis is given to the negative effects of stigmatization and to the obstacles that prevent addicts from accessing social health services. The importance of treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration for addicts is also underlined, to help them become a productive force that contributes to the advancement of their communities;
- Producing educational materials to throw light on addiction-related issues for the wider community. This material covers themes aimed at improving the image of addicts – who are to be seen as sick persons in need of assistance, care and treatment – and it includes information about how to deal with such persons;

<sup>45</sup> For further information, see <https://www.naufar.com>.

- Holding workshops, running interactive training courses, organizing meetings, carrying out social visits with a view to building skills within families, promoting non-stigmatizing attitudes towards drug users, underlining the importance of the family's role in the early detection and treatment of drug abuse and training families in how to deal with such situations;
- Signing a cooperation agreement between stakeholders to enhance the availability of health and social care services for drug users;
- Providing recovered addicts with vocational training courses, in coordination and cooperation between various State bodies;
- Providing support, assistance and care to the families of drug addicts.

212. After visiting Qatar in 2018, the International Narcotics Control Board recorded in its annual report for that year that Qatar was committed to implementing international drug control treaties and it commended the State for the efforts it was making to ensure that controlled substances remained available for medical and scientific purposes, through the national health services. The report also praised the efforts being made to provide the population with evidence-based treatment and rehabilitation services.

### **Article 13** **Right to education**

213. The State of Qatar is attaching ever greater importance to education in all its forms. Its actions in that regard are grounded in the Constitution, article 25 of which reads: "Education is one of the fundamental pillars of social advancement and the State shall provide, foster and endeavour to disseminate it." According to article 49 of the Constitution: "All citizens have the right to education. The State shall endeavour to make education compulsory in accordance with current regulations and laws." The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is developing a world-class education system with a view to achieving the objectives set forth in the Education and Training Sector Strategy 2011–2016, which was formulated to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030. Human development is the cornerstone of that Vision, as no development or progress can be achieved without advanced and high-quality education and training programmes that address the needs of the labour market and that reflect the aspirations and abilities of each individual.

214. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education, who visited the country in 2019, commended Qatar for the efforts it had made to promote and protect the right to education.

215. Public spending on the education sector as a proportion of the State's total public spending for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 is shown below.

Table 10  
**Public spending on education, 2017–2019**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
Public spending on education as a proportion of overall public spending	10.5%	9.3%	8.7%

*Source:* Planning and Statistics Authority.

216. Qatar is eager to ensure that all children receive an education, and a number of steps have been taken to achieve that objective, including the following:

- The Compulsory Education Act No. 25 of 2001 was amended by Act No. 25 of 2009, which contains 13 articles setting forth the procedures for enrolling a child in school, the authorities responsible for implementing the amended Act and penalties and sanctions imposed in cases of non-compliance. In that regard, the amended Act prescribes a penalty ranging from between QR 5,000 to QR 10,000 for failure to enrol a child in compulsory education without a good reason;

- Ministerial Decree No. 10 of 2010 establishing a committee to examine violations by parents of the Compulsory Education Act has been adopted. Article 8 prescribes the tasks and functions assigned to the committee, which consist in enumerating cases, studying the reasons why some parents prevent their children from attending school, taking appropriate action, identifying the role of the authorities represented in the Decree and developing proposals and procedural steps;
- Act No. 6 of 2013 concerning the Health and Education Fund has been promulgated. It aims to provide sustainable financial resources to support health and education services and determines which authorities are responsible for administering the Fund;
- The Schools Act No. 9 of 2017 serves to regulate schools and the State's obligations vis-à-vis education. It also explicates the various stages of education, the range of specialized schools and the educational system as a whole. Legislators' overall aim was to provide quality and varied education to keep pace with national development and the needs of the labour market, and to achieve educational equality between citizens and residents. Legislators also sought to take account of students with specific learning difficulties or with disabilities, and to make the education of that category of persons one means towards their social integration. Article 2 of the Act ensures that the right to education can be exercised effectively. It also requires the State – out of its own belief in the contribution education makes to the progress and prosperity of the nation – to fulfil its obligations in that regard by setting up schools and providing them with financial support to enable them to play their role, which is to educate the young, encourage creativity and promote academic excellence. Article 4 of the Act recognizes the right of all citizens and residents to receive an education in State-run schools, while articles 5 to 10 refer to the various stages of general, specialized and technical education. General education, which officially begins for students around the age of 6, is preceded by a period spent in kindergarten from the age of 4, as per regulations issued by decree of the Minister of Education and Higher Education. General education lasts 12 years, the first 6 at the primary level followed by 3 years each at the intermediate and secondary levels. Specialized education is addressed by legislators in article 8 of the Schools Act, which envisages general and specialized education for students with learning difficulties or with disabilities, in accordance with their abilities and preparedness. It also covers students with special gifts and capabilities, in which case the aim is to develop and refine their talents. Technical education is based on imparting vocational and technical skills and information at both the applied and theoretical levels with a view to building the capacity of students and preparing them to work in industry, trade or tourism, depending upon the needs of the labour market.

217. Qatar also strives to provide education to the children of residents, whom it presents with various options and enrolment possibilities, be it in State-run or private schools. Qatar has opened schools for different communities, in addition to international schools and private schools. They now number 160 schools and 85 kindergartens and account for more than 58 per cent of students currently enrolled in school.

218. New State-run and private schools are being opened every year to meet the population's educational needs in the light of the increasing human mobility in Qatar, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education strives to provide appropriate educational opportunities to all students, without discrimination. By way of example, the services the State offers to private schools include exemption from electricity and water charges, customs clearances and land grants for schools that have gained national, local or international accreditation. In addition, the Ministry acts to ensure that agreements with the competent authorities (the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Interior) are upheld so that children of citizens are duly able to exercise their right to education. The Ministry also oversees the enrolment of migrant students, even after the expiration of the enrolment deadline, and it guides them and facilitates procedures in order to ensure that all residents in Qatar are able to enjoy access to education.

219. As part of its educational development initiatives, the State has prevailed upon a number of foreign private schools to open branches in Qatar. The parity of educational opportunities is evinced in the table below.

Table 11  
**Student numbers in State-run schools according to educational level, disaggregated by gender and nationality, academic year 2015/16**

Level	Qataris			Non-Qataris			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Pre-primary	3 439	3 920	7 359	452	495	947	8 306
Primary	12 679	14 443	27 122	11 106	11 803	22 909	50 031
Intermediate	6 374	7 250	13 624	5 462	5 761	11 223	24 847
Secondary	6 802	7 320	14 122	5 433	5 257	10 690	24 812
<b>Total</b>	<b>29 294</b>	<b>32 933</b>	<b>62 227</b>	<b>22 453</b>	<b>23 316</b>	<b>45 769</b>	<b>107 996</b>

Source: Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Table 12  
**Student numbers in private schools according to educational level, disaggregated by gender and nationality, academic year 2015/16**

Level	Qataris			Non-Qataris			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Pre-primary	3 715	3 356	7 071	15 806	14 765	30 571	37 642
Primary	9 546	6 953	16 499	37 688	34 497	72 185	88 684
Intermediate	2 867	1 887	4 754	12 233	11 229	23 462	28 216
Secondary	1 897	1 035	2 932	8 032	7 398	15 430	18 362
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 025</b>	<b>13 231</b>	<b>31 256</b>	<b>73 759</b>	<b>67 889</b>	<b>141 648</b>	<b>172 904</b>

Source: Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

220. Although the rate of illiteracy in Qatar is very low, just 0.1 per cent, the State does not overlook that matter in the programmes it runs, which include the following:

- Working with different sectors to design and launch a comprehensive media campaign to promote the value of education with parents and with Qatari society more generally;
- Providing a variety of opportunities for learners who wish to overcome illiteracy, in order to enable them to acquire basic skills; likewise, providing a variety of learning opportunities for students who have dropped out of school whereby they can enrol in classes for adults – which run in parallel with formal education – and thus continue their schooling and eliminate their educational deficit;
- Providing a variety of continuous-learning opportunities whereby everyone can access knowledge without having to fulfil any requirements regarding age or time period;
- Developing teaching methods and educational equipment in illiteracy and adult education centres; also, introducing an online registration system which has helped many people to enrol in those centres;
- Opening educational centres in areas distant from the capital: to wit, Al-Khor and Al-Shahaniya;
- Opening an adult-learning centre that provides evening classes in technical subjects between tenth and twelfth grade, as well as specialized technical courses, thereby ensuring that a variety of educational programmes is available.

Table 13  
**Literacy levels among young persons between the ages of 15 and 24**

<i>Year/Category</i>	<i>Level among males</i>	<i>Level among females</i>	<i>Overall level</i>
2016	98.7	99.3	98.8
2017	98.9	99.3	99
2018	99.12	99.83	99.3

*Source:* Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Table 14  
**Literacy levels among adults aged 15 and above**

<i>Year/Category</i>	<i>Level among males</i>	<i>Level among females</i>	<i>Overall level</i>
2016	98.5	98.5	98.5
2017	98.8	98.8	98.8
2018	99.07	98.96	99.05

*Source:* Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

- Strategic plans include provision to enhance the delivery of quality education. One aspect of this is “enrolment”, which envisages quality education for everyone irrespective of sex, age or capabilities. Another aspect is “citizenship and values”, wherein students may assess the values and culture of their own society while understanding and respecting other cultures and showing tolerance. The outcomes of the second education and training strategy have shown that all students should acquire the skills and competencies necessary to realize their potential in a manner consistent with their ambitions and abilities and in such a way as to promote the values and heritage of Qatari society while showing tolerance, respect and understanding for other cultures;
- Strategic goals emphasize the provision of equitable, varied and quality education to learners regardless of gender, nationality or abilities while at the same time consolidating Qatari values and culture, and inculcating an understanding of other cultures among students at all levels. Another goal is to improve academic outcomes in basic subjects such as mathematics, Arabic and English in addition to providing scientific knowledge and twenty-first-century competencies at all levels of study. Numerous initiatives and programmes have been rolled out with a view to achieving those goals. They include the “Ambition” programme, the development of curricula and study methods, the “Attractive school environment” initiative and a prize for scientific excellence.

221. Like other countries in the world, Qatar has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and the associated plans of action, including Goal 4, which states: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” In accordance with the commitment Qatar has made in that regard, the National Education Commission 2030 was formed pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 47 of 2016, bringing together representatives from different bodies. Qatar has submitted its initial report on the Sustainable Development Goals and has rolled out a number of activities and programmes to develop an operational framework and a road map to achieve Goal 4.

### **Gender Equality in Education**

222. The Constitution envisages equality between men and women in all areas of life, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has been working to make that a reality and to involve all persons in the development process. This emerges clearly in the equality of educational opportunities. The following table shows the numbers of people enrolled in general education in the academic year 2018/19, disaggregated by gender.

Table 15  
**Overall student distribution disaggregated by type of education and gender**

<i>Type of education</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
State-run schools	58 799	63 227	122 026
Private schools	103 865	92 108	195 973
Adult education	4 629	4 029	8 658
<b>Total</b>	<b>167 293</b>	<b>159 364</b>	<b>326 657</b>

*Source:* State of Qatar, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Educational Policy and Research Department.

223. As concerns specialized vocational education for female students in Qatar, the Qatar School of Banking Studies for Girls opened its doors in the 2015/16 academic year to provide high-quality specialized schooling in banking and business administration and to create a qualified female workforce to integrate into the economic sector. The School qualifies its students to go on to university to study business administration and banking or to enter into the labour market and work in finance. Plans are currently being developed to open other specialized technical schools that reflect the inclinations and ambitions of young women, such as a science and technology school.

224. The State has taken a number of steps, including the following, to encourage women to enrol in this kind of specialized vocational education:

- Monthly allowances for female students as an enrolment incentive;
- Annual awareness-raising campaigns for female students at the intermediate level to inform them about school programmes and encourage them to enrol in this kind of education;
- A commitment to providing female school graduates with jobs.

Table 16  
**Enrolment levels of Qatari female students in the Qatar School of Banking Studies and Business Administration for Girls over the academic years 2016/17 and 2017/18**

<i>Number of Qatari students in the Qatar School of Banking Studies and Business Administration</i>	<i>Academic year</i>	
	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>
Number of boys enrolled	605	602
Number of girls enrolled	49	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>686</b>
<i>Proportion of Qatari girls enrolled in the Qatar School of Banking Studies and Business Administration</i>	7%	12%

*Source:* Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Educational Policy and Research Department, Statistics Division, 2017.

225. The table shows that, in the academic year 2017/18, Qatari girls in the Qatar School of Banking Studies and Business Administration accounted for 12 per cent of the 686 enrolled students. This represents an increase with respect to the academic year 2016/17, when they accounted for 7 per cent of a total student body of 654.

226. At the university level, all universities give women the same opportunities as men to choose whatever specialization they wish on condition that they fulfil the standard admission requirements, which are the same for both sexes. For example, Qatar University, which is the country's national institution of higher education, has colleges that currently accept only women, such as health sciences and pharmacy, reflecting the needs of the national labour market in those specializations.

227. The table below shows the fields in which students go abroad to pursue a scientific discipline, disaggregated by gender. It shows that female students pursuing scientific studies abroad outnumber males in more than one field. This is further evidence of the State's concern to ensure parity between the sexes in scholarships and, particularly, in scientific specializations, which are so important for the State.

Table 17  
**Students pursuing scientific and professional specializations abroad from 2005/06 to 2017/18, disaggregated by gender**

<i>Specialization</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Females (%)</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Males (%)</i>
Agriculture, agronomy and related sciences	8	80.0	2	20.0
Architecture	24	58.5	17	41.5
Biology and medical sciences	46	71.9	18	28.1
Chemistry	2	100.0	0.0	0.0
Information technology and support services	9	69.2	4	30.8
Computer science and support services	176	47.8	192	52.2
Engineering	522	31.2	1 149	68.8
Engineering and technology	15	20.0	60	80.0
Health professions and related health sciences	150	75.0	50	25.0
Mathematics and statistics	4	66.7	2	33.3
Mechanical technologies	1	100.0	0.0	0.0
Medicine	54	64.3	30	35.7
Natural resources and their conservation	4	66.7	2	33.3
Nursing	5	100.0	0.0	0.0
Science and technology	3	37.5	5	<b>62.5</b>

*Source:* State of Qatar, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Scholarship Department, 2017.

228. The policy governing scholarships – be it to study abroad or within the country – is characterized by equality and transparency. No distinction is made between students in allotting scholarships or in the choice of specialization. Quite the contrary, both males and females are encouraged to enrol for all specializations, in the light of the country's requirements and of their own academic inclinations and abilities. When handing out scholarships, the primary focus is on the needs of the labour market, irrespective of the sex of the candidate concerned.

229. The table below shows that scholarships are allotted to female students at a high rate, almost equal to that at which they are allotted to male students.

Table 18  
**Statistics regarding students admitted to scholarships over the last five years, disaggregated by gender and year of admission**

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women</i>
2017/18	232	227	459	49.4
2016/17	513	454	967	46.9
2015/16	692	586	1 278	45.8
2014/15	646	598	1 244	48.1
2013/14	732	661	1 393	47.5

*Source:* State of Qatar, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Scholarship Department, 2017.

## **Article 14**

### **Guaranteeing free and compulsory basic education**

230. In addition to the information provided in the reply under article 13, above, the Compulsory Education Act No. 25 of 2001 contains 13 articles setting forth the procedures for school enrolment and the authorities responsible for their implementation. According to article 2 of the Act, education is compulsory and free for all children from the beginning of the primary stage until the end of the intermediate stage, or until reaching the age of 18, whichever is earlier. The Act also sets forth the measures to be taken and the sanctions applied against transgressors. The penalties envisaged in the article have been amended and the fine has been increased to between QR 5,000 and QR 10,000.

## **Article 15**

### **Right to participate in cultural life and enjoy the benefits of scientific progress**

231. The right of all persons to participate in cultural life is enshrined in article 24 of the Constitution, which reads: “The State shall cultivate, conserve and help disseminate science, literature, arts and national cultural heritage, and to encourage scientific research.”

232. One of the goals of the Second National Development Strategy 2018–2022 is to use culture as a platform to consolidate national identity and to increase mutual understanding between cultures. The Strategy also seeks to protect the country’s own cultural heritage and develop it with a view to consolidating national identity; to use culture to improve young people’s knowledge, build their self-confidence and help them achieve their full potential; to attract and nurture high-quality talents; to stimulate the growth of the cultural sector; and to encourage greater interest in culture through research and information.

233. The State has created a number of cultural spaces to promote community participation in the culture sector. These include:

- Katara Cultural Village, which was set up pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 38 of 2010 establishing the Cultural Village Foundation. The purpose of the Foundation is to administer and use the buildings and facilities of the Cultural Village to advance cultural activities. The Village contains a number of open spaces where the general public can attend or participate in cultural events. These spaces include an opera house, an open-air theatre and the Katara Arts Centre. The annual programme includes artistic performances, seminars to present different aspects of world culture and expressions of national cultural heritage. The spaces are available to innovators and artists of different kinds. In 2019, the Village played host to a number of cultural activities, which were open to the public at large. They included: the sixth edition of the Katara European Jazz Festival, the Qatar International Arts Festival, a concert by the *Teatro dell’Opera* of Rome and the Katara Prize for the Arabic Novel.
- Cultural centres, which were set up by the Ministry of Culture and Sports pursuant to Decree-Law No. 5 of 1984 regulating clubs. The centres – which are administered by general assemblies made up of members of the centres themselves – are building blocks in the discovery and development of artistic and cultural talents, being open spaces where any member of the public may participate. Qatar has more than 10 cultural centres distributed across the country thereby enabling the inhabitants of any region to benefit from the services they offer. The centres embrace all forms of artistic and cultural expression, including music, poetry and others. They receive support from the Ministry of Culture and Sports, which allocates an annual budget for their activities and provides means whereby they can fulfil their cultural mission. One of the centres is the Visual Arts Centre, which concerns itself with the visual arts and seeks to discover and support talented young artists, helping to nurture their artistic gifts via workshops run by the Centre itself. Another is the Centre of Music Affairs which seeks to disseminate musical culture and to create a new generation of composers in the nation through musical courses and workshops. The Theatre Affairs

Centre also seeks to nurture and develop theatrical talents through courses and workshops.

- Doha Film Institute, which is a private institution that serves the public interest, was set up under the law that regulates such institutions. Its purpose is to establish a competitive and enduring system to oversee all matters related to filmmaking, such as education and training, media, production, financing, development, distribution, promotion, screening, etc. It also works to provide local and regional talents with resources and means to share their stories, heritage and artistic visions with the world. To that end, the Institute holds an annual global festival, known as the “Ajyal” Festival, at which young filmmakers from around the world come to compete.

234. The Ministry of Culture and Sports, along with other cultural institutions, organizes annual cultural events most of which are held in public spaces so that all groups in society can benefit therefrom. Some events are offered to the public free of charge, such as the Spring Festival, which takes place in Souq Waqif and is open to everyone. The Festival, which is held annually, features a number of cultural and artistic activities from around the world.

235. Within the framework of its general support for sport, and in view of the beneficial effect it has on public health, the State seeks to encourage community involvement in sporting events. In that connection, the Ministry has set up the Qatar Sports for All Federation which seeks to provide means and possibilities for all persons and all groups on society to enjoy sports, in line with its philosophy of universal access to sports. The Federation organizes several sporting events and initiatives, including the “Step” initiative, which aims to motivate society to take up walking as a sporting activity.

#### **Encouraging children from different social groups to engage in cultural activities**

236. Under article 22 of the Constitution, the State is to protect young people, shield them against corrupting influences and protect them from physical, mental and spiritual exploitation or neglect. It is also to provide an atmosphere conducive to the development of their gifts as part of a sound education.

237. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Qatar seeks to enhance children’s skills across various areas of culture. To that end, it has created the Childhood Cultural Centre, which has child members and works to develop the cultural capacities of the young. Various cultural institutions in the country organize events that include activities for children. These events are offered free of charge and without discrimination or any kind of restriction on the children’s participation. In that context, the Cultural Village Foundation organizes the annual Children’s Festival, which includes activities such as drawing, sculpture and handicrafts as well as events in the planetarium such as film screenings and initiatives for “little engineers”. The Festival programme also includes a “before the camera” project in which children can develop their broadcasting skills in a mini studio.

#### **Using modern technology to protect and promote access to cultural heritage**

238. Qatar seeks to protect the physical and non-physical manifestations of its cultural heritage through legislation and institutions. Legislation to regulate the excavation and preservation of monuments includes the Antiquities Act No. 2 of 1980, while the institutions involved with this kind of cultural legacy are:

- Qatar Museums Authority, which concerns itself with the protection of physical manifestations of cultural heritage. According to article 4 of Amiri Decree No. 26 of 2009, which regulates the Authority, the purpose of the institution is to promote, manage, supervise and develop museums, monuments and excavation projects. It is also responsible for gathering, cataloguing and protecting artefacts using all available means and preparing them for public display, and it oversees the conservation of items held in museums. In the context of its responsibility to protect cultural heritage and make it available to all groups within society, the Authority has established the National Museum of Qatar and the Museum of Islamic Art where entry fees are such as to make them accessible to all groups in society. The Authority also organizes annual exhibitions to present the cultural heritage of different civilizations. These have included the 2019 “Imperial Threads” exhibition, which focused on the

decorative arts and crafts of Turkey, Iran and India. Also in 2019, an exhibition was held featuring works by Picasso and Giacometti. In addition to this, Qatar has a number of archaeological sites, including Barzan Towers, Al-Wajbah Fort and Zubara, the latter having been designated a World Heritage Site in 2013.

- Qatar National Library was established pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 11 of 2018. Its purpose is to facilitate access to the intellectual, literary and scientific fruits of human civilization; to acquire and display books, manuscripts, documents and periodicals; to revitalize intellectual and cultural heritage in all its forms; to facilitate the study and appreciation of that heritage by collecting manuscripts, publications, periodicals, photographs and other documents of local, national and world history; and to acquire and preserve other forms of knowledge and learning, by any means. The Library has a wing known as the “Heritage Library” where rare and valuable archival documents are stored. With a view to making the Library’s holdings available to the general public using modern technology, a service has been set up whereby users of all ages can browse online resources covering a variety of topics, free of charge. In addition, there is a website called the Qatar Digital Library, which is also accessible to the public free of charge.
- Institutions concerned with non-physical manifestations of cultural heritage. Legislators have designated the Ministry of Culture and Sports as the body responsible for protecting, promoting and preserving non-physical manifestations of cultural heritage. In that connection the Heritage and Identity Department collects, catalogues and documents instances of popular heritage, which it examines and studies then makes available to researchers and other interested parties in the form of a national bibliography. As part of its policy to preserve and promote non-physical manifestations of cultural heritage and to make them better known among the general public, the Ministry organizes festivals, which are open to all groups within society. It has also established the Nomas Centre, which runs workshops and teaches authentic Qatari customs and traditions in various areas of life, thereby contributing to the development of skills among the young and helping to imbue them with a sense of being an essential component of national identity.

### **Full access to cultural life for persons with disabilities and older persons**

239. The Ministry of Culture and Sports supports the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life and has established cultural centres especially for them. These include the Social and Cultural Centre for the Deaf, which organizes activities to build the social and cultural capacities of its members. Another such institution is the Social and Cultural Centre for the Blind. On a separate front, institutions for persons with disabilities play an active role in ensuring the involvement of such persons in various kinds of cultural activities across the country. The Mada – Assistive Technology Centre,<sup>46</sup> which is one of the most effective institutions in that field, works to empower environments for persons with disabilities and to ensure that they have everything they need to access, enjoy, integrate into and benefit from cultural venues or services such as theatres, museums and libraries. Qatar ranked fifth in the world on the Digital Accessibility Rights Evaluation Index (DARE Index), issued by the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, which is a reflection of the high level of commitment and concern the State has shown towards the digital accessibility rights of persons with disabilities and others.<sup>47</sup> There is a government portal for persons with disabilities, which acts as an accessible online platform via which such persons can access important services and information provided by a number of public and private entities in Qatar. The design of the portal is consistent with the global approach to human rights.<sup>48</sup> The Mada Centre has provided 100 free memberships for persons

<sup>46</sup> For further information, see <https://mada.org.qa>.

<sup>47</sup> For further information, see <https://g3ict.org/country-profile/qatar>.

<sup>48</sup> For further information, see <https://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/portal/disabilityqa>.

with disabilities to use the e-books and accessible resources on the Bookshare global platform.<sup>49</sup>

240. The digital accessibility services offered by the Mada Centre have enabled an optimal use of technology on the part of persons with disabilities and older persons in contexts such as public spaces, websites, mobile apps, electronic documents, electronic vending machines and automatic teller machines. Those services help to evaluate, classify and rank government agencies and institutions in Qatar in terms of the extent to which their websites and platforms are consistent with national digital accessibility policy. The Mada Centre certifies and approves websites and platforms using the Monitor accessibility-E Qatar tool, which is based on international standards, most notably the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1). Accessibility rates in the education, culture and government sectors stand at 94, 92 and 90 per cent respectively.<sup>50</sup>

241. The Mada Centre has launched a number of initiatives to empower older persons, including the following:

- Publishing a guide entitled “Aging and Technology” for policymakers, institutions and carers. It is intended to improve the lives of older persons and empower them to continue to engage with society and with their families, through the use of assistive technology;<sup>51</sup>
- Establishing a partnership and rolling out a plan of action thanks to collaboration between the Mada Centre and the Ehsan Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly. The initiative aims to make older persons aware of the importance of using technology and the positive impact it can have on their lives, to train them in the use of social media and to show them how to use technological devices to enhance their own independence;
- Running training programmes for older persons in the use of smart devices and applications for accessing health and cultural services online; also, running training courses in the use of social media in collaboration with the Ehsan Centre and the General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority;
- Creating a location within the Ehsan Centre to store assistive technological devices for use by older persons;
- Creating a location to store assistive technological devices for use by older persons when conducting business at the General Directorate for Passports and Borders, which is part of the Ministry of the Interior;
- Launching the “Access to Employment” programme in partnership with the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. The aim of the initiative is to use assistive technology to empower, support, guide, counsel and train people with disabilities and thereby enable them to work. A number of persons with disabilities have already successfully completed the programme and have qualified for the labour market;
- Producing a number of best-practice guides in order to enable everyone – including deprived and marginalized individuals and groups – to benefit from scientific progress and its applications. These include the following:
  - A best-practice guide for supporting high-functioning and gifted children with autism in education;
  - A best-practice guide for supporting people with disabilities to move from supported education to vocational education or employment;

<sup>49</sup> For further information, see <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/about/news/press-releases/bookshare-and-mada-launch-accessible-arabic-ebook-collection>.

<sup>50</sup> For further information, see <https://mada.org.qa/digital-accessibility-services>.

<sup>51</sup> The guide is available on the Mada website here <https://mada.org.qa/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mada-Elderly-Guide-Digital-Ar.pdf>.

- A guide to assistive technology to support students with learning disabilities in education;
- A guide to education for all through assistive technology;
- A guide to best educational practices for students who are deaf.<sup>52</sup>

### **Part III**

## **Challenges, obstacles and outlook for the future**

242. In general terms, all States face challenges in establishing a framework for monitoring and evaluating the results of any project they undertake, then in identifying those challenges and resolving them through institutional channels based on partnership and cooperation between all State bodies. Perhaps the most important element that the system in force in Qatar needs to possess in order to operate successfully is coordination between the different branches of government, and for those branches to work effectively. Despite numerous initiatives to evaluate the effectiveness of government performance in Qatar, levels of institutional culture continue to fluctuate between one body and another.<sup>53</sup>

243. The promotion and protection of human rights is a strategic option for Qatar, forming the backbone of its policy of sweeping constitutional, economic, social and cultural reform. This is reflected in the Qatar National Vision 2030, which includes a focus on core human rights issues in the areas of education, environment, migrant workers' rights and the empowerment of women. It also reaffirms the State's constitutional commitment to respecting and implementing its international undertakings, including its human rights obligations.

244. The State has made substantial progress in enhancing legislation, building institutions and raising awareness in line with its treaty obligations and with the observations and recommendations of treaty bodies, the universal periodic review mechanism and special rapporteurs who have visited the country. It nonetheless faces short-term challenges, including the unprecedented increase in the population, which has more than doubled in recent years, and the technical capacities of its human resources when dealing with human rights mechanisms that are still being built and developed. In working to overcome these difficulties and challenges, the State benefits from the human rights programmes run by the United Nations Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, which was opened in Doha in May 2009.

245. National human rights mechanisms are continuing to review and amend the country's legislation to bring it into line with international instruments, propose laws for strengthening human rights protection and make suggestions concerning accession to international treaties.

246. As part of efforts on the part of the State of Qatar to implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Council of Ministers, at its ordinary meeting held on 10 October 2018, issued Decree No. 27 of 2018 establishing a committee to assess the country's current legislation and its conformity with the provisions and articles of both instruments. The committee is chaired by the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and comprises members drawn from the relevant national institutions. In its initial meetings, the committee identified the domestic legislation that is potentially incompatible with those two instruments and that its members will therefore discuss and examine in order to express their views on the matter and propose ways forward. The committee is still in the process of gathering further information from various State authorities.

247. The State is committed to the fulfilment of its international human rights obligations, which it considers to be an important duty. Under Decree No. 44 of 2007, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs established a section for human rights treaty bodies

<sup>52</sup> The guides are available on the publications page of the Mada website, here <https://mada.org.qa/publication-category/guides-best-practices>.

<sup>53</sup> For information about the challenges, see here <https://www.psa.gov.qa/ar/knowledge/Documents/NDS2Final.pdf>.

in the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The section is in charge of drawing up plans and proposals for implementing the recommendations of treaty- and non-treaty-based human rights mechanisms. Qatar is currently examining the possibility of creating a standing national committee responsible for submitting reports to international and regional human rights treaty bodies and for implementing the recommendations those bodies make. It is important, in fact, to have a government body responsible for monitoring the enforcement of recommendations issued by those mechanisms.

248. Qatar is currently developing a national plan of action on human rights, in line with a decree issued by the Council of Ministers at its ordinary meeting No. 19 of 2014. The plan will help to define the country's human rights priorities and to trace a road map for the future protection and promotion of human rights.

249. While progress has been achieved for women, the biggest challenge is to further increase their role in the community, expand the opportunities available for them to engage in all walks of life, promote their participation in economic activity, and lay down policies that build and support their capacity to assume their responsibilities as fundamental partners in the development process.

250. The State hopes to benefit from the important role being played by the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities, which was set up in May 2019. The National Committee works to support the enactment of a number of pieces of human rights legislation and the review of other laws to bring them into line with international treaties Qatar has ratified, including the Covenant.

### **The unjust blockade**

251. Since 5 June 2017, Qatar has been subjected to unilateral coercive measures and an unjust blockade by certain States of the region, resulting in serious ongoing violations of human rights. These include violations against the freedom of movement, residency and private property; the right to work; the right to education; freedom of opinion and expression; the right to health; freedom of belief; and the right to development. All this is in addition to other violations related to social rights such as the separation of families, which are among the worst of the violations. The State has created a committee to demand compensation for the effects of the blockade. The centralized committee receives information about persons who have suffered damages as a result of the blockade, examines them and seeks to define the best way to address each case. Despite all this, Qatar has still endeavoured to protect and promote human rights and to ensure that the rights of citizens and residents are not infringed. Accordingly, the State has turned to international mechanisms to ensure that the blockading States are held responsible for human rights infringements. Qatar has brought a case against the United Arab Emirates before the International Court of Justice regarding the obligation to implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Court issued its ruling in regard of interim measures on 23 July 2018 ordering the reunification of Qatari families separated by the measures implemented by the United Arab Emirates. The ruling further stated that Qatari students affected by the measures should be allowed to complete their education in the United Arab Emirates or to obtain their educational records in order to continue their studies elsewhere, and that Qataris affected by the arbitrary measures should be given access to the courts and other judicial organs of the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, Qatar has submitted a complaint against both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and it has submitted communications to nine special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council. On 14 June 2019, the International Court of Justice delivered an order to reject the request for the adoption of provisional measures submitted by the United Arab Emirates for Qatar to withdraw its communication submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. After visiting the State of Qatar in November 2017, the technical mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report containing an objective and systemic account of the human rights violations accompanying the imposition of the blockade on the State of Qatar.

**Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic**

252. Qatar is keen to adhere to the highest international standards when promoting and protecting the rights of its citizens and residents during the current global health crisis brought on by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. According to article 23 of the Constitution, the State is to concern itself with “public health and to provide the means to prevent and treat disease and epidemics in accordance with the law”. The right to health is also enshrined in domestic legislation, while the National Health Strategy 2018–2022 defines what are to be the State’s priorities in defending the health of its citizens and residents. Qatar has also ratified a number of international and regional treaties, which explicitly or implicitly envisage the right to health. These include the Arab Charter on Human Rights, article 39 of which recognizes the universal right to health, including controlling diseases by means of prevention and cure in order to reduce mortality.<sup>54</sup> The Qatar Supreme Committee for Crisis Management has launched a new smartphone app called “Ehteraz” (Precaution), which is intended to help halt the spread of COVID-19. The app has features to enable users to identify and take preventive measures, to make them aware of the most recent developments and statistics and to provide them with guidance. An updated version of the app has been released that protects the privacy of users. This was done following a call from Amnesty International, which then praised Qatar for responding promptly to its call to intervene in favour of user privacy.

253. Qatar is also acting at the international level to counter the spread of the disease,<sup>55</sup> and the State is careful to ensure that the pandemic does not have a negative impact on the rights of citizens and residents and that they can continue to enjoy all their rights under international and regional treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

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<sup>54</sup> Annex 2: Efforts made by the State of Qatar at the national level to halt the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

<sup>55</sup> Annex 3: Table showing the aid given by the State of Qatar during the COVID-19 pandemic, up to 18 May 2020.