



**H.E. Hind Al-Sabeeh
Minister of Social Affairs and Labor
Minister for Planning and Development
State of Kuwait¹**

Gulf Affairs: What is the role of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in enriching the role of manpower in Kuwait?

Hind Al-Sabeeh: The role of the Public Authority for Manpower, via the Kuwait Occupational Standards, Assessment & Certification Center, is to set a national strategy and a cohesive structure for all jobs in the Kuwaiti market by doing the following:

- a. Cooperating with educational institutes and occupational training organizations to further enhance their programs, in addition to preparing them for exams before they receive their work permits.
- b. Creating a database of available skill sets to locate where they are needed in the job market.

¹ The interview was translated from Arabic

c. Preparing marketing campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of skills, in addition to distributing educational pamphlets about the importance of skills.

d. Setting tests for foreign labor before they enroll in their jobs to ensure their awareness of job requirements, via specialized centers inside and outside of Kuwait.

Gulf Affairs: The majority of Kuwaiti workers choose the government sector, which is a very saturated market. What is the ministry's plan to solve this problem?

Al-Sabeeh: The ministry set up a number of strategies to solve this problem. One of these is letting employees who move to those saturated sectors rescind the specialization increment (a generous addition to the basic salary) which decreased the number of employees in these sectors successfully. The ministry has also set up a strategy to reshuffle employees in saturated departments across all government entities, placing them in jobs in which they are needed to successfully employ their talent where it is needed.

Gulf Affairs: The private sector is still significantly limited in terms of number of employees and opportunities for investment. How does the ministry intend to revive this sector in order to make it attractive to more Kuwaitis?

Al-Sabeeh: The government has successfully ordered several laws that have actively increased the number of Kuwaiti employees in the private sector, such as article 19/2000 with regards to national labor in the private sector, as well as the cabinet's article 1104/2008, and the amendment 1028/2014.

We see that encouraging national labor towards the private sector through SMEs is indeed beneficial. The Public Authority for Manpower had a designated division which helps entrepreneurs, and is working on establishing a specialized committee with the help of prominent and successful entrepreneurs to set strategies that enhance the workflow of SME owners.

Gulf Affairs: What is the role of the ministry in encouraging Small and Medium Enterprises?

Al-Sabeeh: We place great importance on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and we organized a number of exhibitions to shed light on their work and achievements and reinforce their role in society. We have a dedicated department that handles SME proposals and helps them turn their ideas into profitable projects. We strongly believe that SMEs will be the future of national labor in the non-government sector. The government, via the Industrial Bank and the National Fund of Small and Medium Enterprises, is proving its strong belief in the abilities of local entrepreneurship.

Gulf Affairs: How does the ministry aim to encourage women to participate in the economy?

Al-Sabeeh: We worked with the Supreme Council for Development and Planning, jointly with the UNDP, on an entrepreneurship incubator which targeted women. They were given full training on marketing and advertising the products they offer. Women are also actively participating in the exhibitions we organize, which successfully underscore the role of women and their participation in the economy.

IV. Interviews

Gulf Affairs: Are there any hurdles facing women in reaching leadership positions? How are these addressed?

Al-Sabeeh: Under Kuwait's constitution, women and men are equal. Kuwaiti women have held many leading positions and have participated greatly in the development of the country. Many were appointed ministers and have proved their great success in any field they work in. They face no constitutional or legal hurdles, neither on the career nor on the political fronts.

Gulf Affairs: What are the measures taken by the government to deal with foreign labor?

Al-Sabeeh: The private sector law number 6/2010 gives complete protection to foreign labor, via the initiation of a special committee of arbitration between employees and employers. Additionally, working with domestic labor necessitates full awareness of their rights and obligations towards employers, as well as the true demand for jobs in order to prevent ghost employment. To achieve that, the Public Authority for Manpower issued a number of laws, including the following:

- Codifying the issuance of work permits for foreign labor.
- Reassessing the needs of employers.
- Imposing a financial guarantee paid by the employer.
- Forming a committee between concerned government entities to assess and evaluate the market demand for foreign labor in coordination with the Public Authority for Manpower