



## Winning on and off the pitch

In January 2019 Nakheel Landscapes tasted glory in the Workers' Cup for the third consecutive season, an unprecedented achievement – but it's the company's commitment to workers' welfare that deserves the most recognition.

Since being hired to work with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) four years ago, Nakheel have dominated the Workers' Cup – their most recent victory coming in front of nearly 10,000 fans against Taleb Group at Al Sadd Stadium.

While Nakheel is winning on the pitch, it is the company's commitment off the pitch that's setting a positive example for contractors across the country. Thanks to close collaboration with the SC, Nakheel has introduced a raft of changes to improve working conditions – changes which highlight Qatar's commitment to workers' rights, not to mention delivering a proud legacy for the FIFA World Cup 2022™.

Ghassan Oueijan, Managing Director of Nakheel Landscapes, said: "We take the Workers' Cup seriously. We have a good team, have won the tournament twice before and will give it our best shot this year too. Our commitment to workers goes far beyond football though. Our workers are here to secure a better future for their families and it is our duty to support them to the best of our ability."

By working closely with the SC's Workers' Welfare Department and applying the Workers' Welfare Standards as a blueprint, Nakheel has made significant progress in improving the lives of workers, including those engaged on non-SC projects.

The SC has recognised Nakheel's commitment on a range of issues, including improving accommodation facilities, launching Workers' Welfare Forums and the reimbursement of recruitment fees. In addition, Nakheel has committed to providing an annual flight ticket for all 5,000 of its staff from 2019 – a mandatory requirement of the standards.

Oueijan said: "The standards serve as the template for best practice and since adopting them, we have improved accommodation facilities, eliminated passport retention and tried to tackle ethical recruitment. Nakheel received criticism in the past, but we are committed to making a difference. As a local company our mission is the progress of Qatar. Everything is not perfect, but we are proud of



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our progress and we are committed to looking after our employees."

In late 2017 the SC commenced the process of tackling the complex issue of recruitment fees, which are often paid by workers in their home countries in order to secure a position abroad. The fees – which are illegal under Qatari law – can mean a worker starts a job heavily indebted to a recruiter in his home country.

Through the efforts of the Workers' Welfare Department, 134 SC contractors have agreed to pay back more than QAR 81.6 million in recruitment fees over the next three years. As of today, QAR 48 million of that will be paid to 15,710 workers on SC projects, with the remainder going to 16,560 workers not engaged on SC projects.

Nakheel is one of the companies which committed to reimbursing all its workers – irrespective of the projects they are working on.

Oueijan said: "We have around 400 workers on SC projects, but we've rolled out the recruitment fees reimbursement to approximately 5,000 workers. We are repaying QAR 20 million to our workers."

Nakheel has also seen merit in the SC's determination to give workers a voice by launching Workers' Welfare Forums and running elections.

Oueijan said: "We've had around 80% turnout in our workers' elections. These forums are crucial because they give our workers a platform to share their concerns and grievances and have a say in issues that impact them."