# Terms of Reference

**Consultant to conduct research on use of technological platforms and remote interpretation services to provide support to migrants in the Arab States**

*Applications due by close of business 25 May 2020*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement:</th>
<th>Research consultant</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duty Station:</td>
<td>Home-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget:</td>
<td>Based on financial proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration:</td>
<td>Up to 35 working days between 30 May – 30 August 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td>International Labour Organization (<a href="#">FAIRWAY Programme</a>) and United Nations Development Programme (<a href="#">UNDP</a>) Accelerator Lab Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application details:</td>
<td>Interested applicants should send a technical and financial proposal as well as their CV and writing sample to Sophia Kagan (<a href="mailto:kagan@ilo.org">kagan@ilo.org</a>) and Vrouyr Joubanian (<a href="mailto:vrouyr.joubanian@undp.org">vrouyr.joubanian@undp.org</a>) with the Subject ‘ILO/UNDP research consultant’</td>
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</table>

## Background

The ILO estimated that in 2017, the Arab States hosted 23 million migrant workers, with 9 million (39 per cent) women migrant workers. While some of the workers are from Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Egypt, many are from Asian and African countries, and have limited Arabic language proficiency. For example, there are more than 8.5 million Indian workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries according to the Indian government, most of whom are likely not proficient in Arabic. Amongst particularly vulnerable categories of workers, including migrant domestic workers, the majority are likely to be non-Arabic speakers, with an array of native languages ranging from Sinhala, Nepali, Amharic, Oromo and others.

Language barriers can form a formidable constraint to migrant workers’ and refugees’ ability to know and enforce their rights, particularly their labour and other legal rights. Many workers will only receive their employment contract in Arabic and not understand its contents; few will know how to access legislation (given websites in countries of destination are in Arabic, as is the text of the legislation) to know their legal rights. Most government hotlines for labour issues – where they exist – are only staffed by Arabic speakers. Bringing a legal case against an employer or recruitment agency is often impossible without an interpreter, as all forms to be completed are in Arabic, and as are the oral court proceedings. At the same time, few Ministries of Labour, or civil and criminal courts, support non-Arabic speakers, and it is expected that the worker him or herself will arrange an interpreter. Whilst embassies or civil society may occasionally be able to provide support, the need is greater than can be managed through these channels, and it can be particularly hard to support workers who speak an uncommon dialect, or those who do not have an embassy or consulate in the country of destination.

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2 As well as defending a legal case, for example, where there is a criminal charge against a worker based on an allegation of theft by the employer.
Remote interpreting, which is now common for legal assistance and proceedings in many countries, has a number of advantages, including convenience for users of the service, access to interpreters in less common languages, removal of distance (even across countries), and increased cost effectiveness for both service users and interpreters (e.g. no need to cover time required to travel to the location). Telephone and video interpreting have become a well-established form of remote interpreting, including in a legal context. The first service for telephone-based interpreting was established by the Australian immigration service in 1973, but has since spread to the United States and most Western European countries since the 1980s and 1990s respectively. With the spread of telephone interpreting, the method has seen improvements in the technology used (e.g. dual-headset phones for clients to listen to a remotely located interpreter).

The technology behind telephone interpreting is straightforward and requires little technological expertise. If both parties are in the same room, they will call a telephone interpretation service and specify the language required. Once an interpreter is on the line, the parties can have the phone on speaker mode so that both can speak to, and hear, the interpreter. This can be done as consecutive interpretation or simultaneous interpretation (the latter requires a special device). Various qualitative studies on telephone interpreting have been conducted, including in using this tool with refugees and migrant workers.


Compared to other remote methods, video interpreting is the method which simulates a face-to-face situation most precisely by enabling non-verbal communication and by ensuring that cultural aspects expressed in the form of gestures can assist in accurate interpretation (including interpreting inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal messages to avoid misunderstanding). Today, this system is used by numerous institutions in the healthcare, social, and justice sector in countries such as Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, and covers approximately 72 different languages. Six hundred qualified interpreters are involved in this network across the EU, offering availability in the principal languages spoken in EU Member States for up to 24 hours at only 2 minutes notice.

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5 Ko, above n. 3.
7 www.languageline.com
8 www.lsa.com
9 www.cts.languageline.com
10 www.pacificinterpreters.com
12 Ibid, 4.
In addition to remote interpreting is translation via technology, including computer assisted translation (CAT) and fully automatic machine translation (MT). Although CAT has so far focused on written translation (e.g. Google Translate), spoken-language translation is emerging. Most currently available speech translation systems operate in a consecutive fashion whereby a speaker says a sentence, the system processes and translates the spoken signal and outputs the translation either in written form (speech-to-text translation, STT) or spoken form (speech-to-speech translation, SST). Figure 1 below summarises the different methods of translation and interpreting.\(^\text{13}\) Obviously, given the need for precision in legal instructions and proceedings, most forms of CAT may not be suitable in the short-term, but given the rapid growth of this industry, there could be medium to longer-term opportunities.

![Figure 1: Information that users want to have translated (Source: Carl and Braun, 2018)](image)

Objectives and deliverables
The ILO Regional Office for Arab States (under the FAIRWAY Project) and the UNDP (Community Security and Access to Justice Project) wish to carry out a study on the use of technological platforms and remote interpretation services, which could be utilized to provide legal support to migrants in the Arab States. Currently, there is an interest to explore cost-efficient and good quality interpretation services, which could be offered in the Arab States – either by utilizing existing initiatives or encouraging the development of new initiatives (including possible social enterprises), which replicate or learn from existing services offered in other regions.

The findings of the research could have immediate relevance in the context of the UNDP’s legal aid project in Lebanon, which will provide free and quality legal aid services to the most vulnerable, including (non-Arabic speaking) migrant workers. For the ILO, which provides assistance and guidance to Ministries of Labour in the region, there is also an interest to explore what cost-efficient platforms could be promoted for use, with a view to potentially piloting remote interpretation in the context of dispute resolution in one country in the region in 2021-2022.

\(^{13}\) Id.
Thus, the key objective of this study is to advise the ILO and UNDP on currently available remote interpretation platforms (free and for-fee), which could be accessible to stakeholders in the Arab States and which could be used in interpreting interviews with migrant workers. The study should also seek to understand what remote interpretation platforms would be acceptable in the legal systems of Arab countries, e.g. are there any actual legal impediments to using such platforms?

Specifically, the consultant will be required to carry out desk research and comprehensive (remote) stakeholder consultations on a shortlist of possible platforms, to provide information and guidance. The research will include the following tasks:

**Global mapping**

The consultant will be required to conduct a global mapping of specific remote interpreting initiatives and platforms (including both those operating in the Arab States as well as in other regions). If there are existing, reputable CAT services, these could also be included in the global mapping.

**Shortlisting**

In consultation with ILO and UNDP, the consultant will develop a shortlist of criteria and research in-depth those initiatives meeting the criteria. These could include criteria such as whether the platform (a) is – or could be made- available in the Arab States (i.e. both in terms of logistics as well as the Arabic language capability of the pool of interpreters); (b) utilizes ‘simple’ and easily-accessible technology (e.g. phone, VOIP or video), etc. Some review of whether these types of remote interpretation platform would be acceptable in the legal system could also be explored.

For the shortlisted initiatives, the consultant will provide a comparative basic description of the functionality, cost and availability of each initiative platform (including languages offered).14

**Assessment**

Based on semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (platform implementers, users of the platform), the consultant will provide a comprehensive assessment (success metrics) of the platform/initiative’s usability including:

- **Learnability**: How easy is it for users to use the platform and accomplish tasks the first time they encounter the interface?
- **Efficiency**: Once users have learned the platform/initiative's interface, how quickly can they perform tasks?
- **Memorability**: When users return to the platform after a period of not using it, how easily can they re-establish proficiency?
- **Satisfaction**: How easy is it to use the platform?
- **Feedback**: Does the solution provide a feedback loop for users?

Where possible, the consultant may conduct simple user testing of the platform, or aim to interview users of the platform (for example, if there are civil society organizations that utilize the platform).

**Conclusion**

Based on the availability, cost and quality comparison, the consultant will provide strategic advice on which platforms could be most promising for adoption (immediate or with future support) by stakeholders in the Arab States.

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14 Keeping in mind that most migrants in the Arab States are from South and South East Asia as well as African countries (West, East and South African sub-regions in particular).
Deliverables
The deliverable will be a well-researched and written analytical report, in English, of around 20-25 pages based on the above outline.

The approximate timeline is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Approximate number of working days</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desk review</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15 June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of draft report</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of final report (following technical feedback by ILO and UNDP)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
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Payment
The consultant will be paid based on the number of working days specified in the technical proposal (up to 35 working days) in two instalments:
- 50% following the submission of the draft report;
- 50% following the submission of the final report meeting the criteria of this TOR and instructions by ILO and UNDP.

Qualifications
- Relevant academic experience in law, social science, migration, economics or related subject areas (preferably Masters’ level qualification);
- Extensive research experience;
- Excellent writing and research skills.

Selection
Interested applicants should send a technical and financial proposal as well as their CV and writing sample to Sophia Kagan (kagan@ilo.org) and Vrouyr Joubanian (vrouyr.joubanian@undp.org) with the Subject ‘ILO/UNDP research consultant’.

The technical proposal should provide tailored information on the consultant’s research approach, possible challenges faced in the research and how these will be addressed.

Selection will be based on:
- Quality of the technical proposal
- Level of experience and writing ability (based on CV as well as the written sample); and
- Cost efficiency of financial proposal.