Navigating the AI Revolution: Impacts and Policy Responses for Expatriate Populations in the GCC

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Executive Summary

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly for expatriate labor populations. With AI integration accelerating in key sectors such as finance, healthcare, logistics, and urban planning, labor markets are poised for transformation. This policy brief examines the implications of AI on expatriate workers who comprise a substantial share of the GCC workforce, especially in sectors vulnerable to automation.

Findings indicate that AI adoption is likely to displace low-skilled and routine-based expatriate jobs while simultaneously creating new opportunities in high-skill areas like data science and AI services. Wage polarization may intensify, with lower wages in declining roles and rising demand and pay for specialized skills. Social integration may be strained, and remittance flows disrupted, affecting the economies of expatriate home countries.

Unfortunately, the current data landscape does not allow for a fully robust quantitative evaluation of these anticipated impacts. However, qualitative insights and sectoral trends offer strong indications of potential disruptions and policy gaps.

To address these challenges, the brief offers several key recommendations: invest in accessible reskilling programs for both nationals and expatriates; implement agile labor market policies; establish ethical AI frameworks; promote human-AI collaboration; and build inclusive social safety nets. In addition, continuous data monitoring and international cooperation are essential for informed, adaptive policymaking.

To ensure a just and inclusive AI-driven transition, GCC governments must act proactively, safeguarding economic growth while protecting the rights and livelihoods of all workers, especially the expatriates who have long supported regional development.