

Better Work Jordan Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

As the Government of Jordan acted promptly to limit the spread of the coronavirus with a country-wide lock down, including the closure of all factories, Better Work Jordan has been working to guarantee the safety and well-being of the tens of thousands of garment workers employed in the industry.

After the initial work stoppage at local factories in the second half of March, businesses partially resumed their operations in April only to return to their full activities in May.

Over 76,000 workers make up the garment sector in Jordan— the majority of whom are migrant workers from South and Southeast Asia.

Since the start of the large-scale outbreak of the coronavirus, the programme has distributed COVID-19 prevention awareness material in multiple languages, including Arabic, English, Bangla, Sinhala, Hindi, Tagalog and Chinese in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour. They were distributed across different economic sectors, including the programme's participating factories.

Meanwhile, Better Work Jordan has adopted innovative approaches to maintain its direct line with affiliated factories and their Jordanian and migrant workers during the pandemic outbreak through virtual advisory and training services.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Trade Union, The Jordan Garments, Accessories & Textiles Exporter's Association, and Jordan Chamber of Industry, Better Work Jordan has also been monitoring the condition of Jordanian garment workers across the country throughout the lockdown.

Multilingual Better Work team members have been making regular phone calls to migrant worker representatives inside factory dormitories, in addition to Jordanian and Syrian workers in local communities. Conversations in native languages have been a crucial opportunity to raise workers' awareness about the risks linked to the coronavirus outbreak, share hygiene information, and discuss mental health issues related to isolation, loneliness, and worries about family and friends.

The coronavirus pandemic has directly affected businesses across the Kingdom, leading several garment factories to downsize.

Contracts of hundreds of migrant workers have been terminated, causing them to overstay their residence visas due to the closure of the country's airport and the severe limitations imposed on international air traffic.

Better Work Jordan and its national stakeholders have joined forces to protect workers amid these challenging circumstances.

In addition, Better Work Jordan continued to work with national stakeholders to ensure that workers have received their wages throughout the lockdown. Meanwhile, a digital payment method has been tested for disbursing salaries and remit migrant workers' salaries to their home countries.

Better Work Jordan staff have also been virtually offering advisory services to factories, namely through video calls. Measures taken by the clothing plants to protect their workers, both across dormitories and the factory floor, have become the main focus of the programme. A series of virtual industry seminars were delivered by the Better Work Jordan team to factory managers to shed light on the content of the Defense Orders issued by the government of Jordan, and thus; ensuring the protection of workers' rights during the pandemic.

Initial business uncertainties linked to a wave of cancelled orders by foreign buyers and retailers, prospects of a possible workforce shrinkage by 30 percent, a shortage of raw materials and the threat of factory closures are slowly giving way to some cautious optimism in the Kingdom.

Several brands have recently decided to redirect some of their production orders to Jordan while others have decided to start manufacturing personal protective equipment for hospitals and medical use to be exported abroad in their factories in Jordan.

Better Work Jordan has also increased its communication at a global level during the pandemic through the regular publication of updates on the Better Work COVID-19 response page.

Better Work and its national and international stakeholders will continue to further increase their efforts during the health emergency to guarantee workers' health and financial protection throughout the pandemic.

Thank you, and stay safe!

The BWJ team





BETTER WORK JORDAN and national stakeholders, an ever-growing partnership

Better Work Jordan has continued its close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries and Jordan Garments and the Accessories & Textiles Exporters Association (JGATE)

Ministry of Labour and ILO sign an MoU to strengthen collaboration and support labour inspectors

Jordan's Ministry of Labour and the International Labour Organization signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on May 21 that is aimed at developing the labour inspection system across the country.

The MoU outlines ways in which the two parties can strengthen collaboration to enhance the capacities of inspectors in protecting workers and promoting decent work in the Kingdom.

The ILO will provide technical support to the Ministry of Labour to identify the technical skills and training needs of labour inspectors, and support in the development of an electronic inspection system, which is set to improve the labour inspection's overall efficiency.

As a result of the agreement, a Better Work section will be established within the Inspection Directorate

throughout the health emergency. Find below an update concerning the activities the programme and its stakeholders have been carrying out throughout the ongoing pandemic.

to maintain the impact achieved by the Better Work Jordan programme over the years.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Minister of Labour, Nidal Al-Batayneh, and ILO's Country Coordinator for Jordan, Patrick Daru.

"Signing the MoU is a part of the Ministry's priorities in enhancing the occupational safety and health inspection system in accordance with the international standards, which will ultimately promote decent work in the private sector," said Minister of Labour Nidal Batayneh.

"The MoU will also help overcome challenges, improve the inspector's productivity and reach a consensual formula to unify and enhance inspection procedures across the kingdom in regulating the Jordanian labour market," Al-Batayneh said.



Better Work Jordan -The labour inspectors secondment programme

The third round of the secondment programme, launched by Better Work Jordan in cooperation with the EU in January has resumed in July and involves 12 labour inspectors.

Meanwhile, five labour inspectors who took part in previous trainings have conducted both joint and independent visits to garment factories as of May 2020.

Also, and so far this year, 29 labour inspectors have received Better Work Jordan training. Training topics vary from BW services, assessment guidelines, national and international labour standards, sexual harassment prevention (SHP), virtual facilitation skills, advisory services and labour-related defense orders.

Better Work Jordan and Jordan's Garment Union join hands amid health crisis

Supported by the Labour Program of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the close collaboration between Better Work Jordan and the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries has continued throughout the health crisis.

Despite the closure of the union offices in the industrial zones as per the announcement of a nationwide lockdown in March, Better Work Jordan stepped up its efforts to maintain contact with workers inside their dormitories and across local communities. During the country's lockdown, three Bangladeshi union organizers have joined Better Work Jordan to support migrant workers living and working in Jordan's industrial zones.

The task force coordinated with the factories to obtain the contacts of dormitory supervisors and worker committee representatives. The team then began to contact workers over the phone to carry out awareness-raising campaigns about the new coronavirus in the workers' native languages.



"Signing the MoU is a part of the Ministry's priorities in

The first calls had a snowball effect, leading to an increase in the number of workers directly calling the Better Work-run task force with questions.

About 1,4000 calls have been made so far. A document on the outcome of this action is available [here](#).

Better Work Jordan and the country's union have recently resumed their joint advisory visits virtually to the programme's affiliated factories, checking on the workers' well-being, the implementation of safety measures to limit the risk of contagion across the factory floor and the training needs of workers' representatives.



COVID-19-related legislation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Better Work Jordan has recently conducted a series of legal industrial seminars to provide a general overview of the legislative developments in light of the coronavirus outbreak in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Governmental decisions and announcements are continuously being published, legislations are being updated and the situation is evolving based on the global evolution of the pandemic.

Fifty-six factory representatives attended the programme's multilingual seminars, meant to shed light on the nature of some of the country's newly issued

labour-related Defense Orders. Better Work Jordan-run seminars mainly focused on Defense Order No. (6), which was issued early in April. The order outlines measures related to employment conditions, payment of wages, temporary closure of entities/institutions that are unable to cope under the current circumstances, and making reference to the government Economic Protection Programmes.

Also, the programme's seminars touched on Defense Order No. (9), through which the government has introduced a number of measures to safeguard the economy - and workers alike- through symbiotic programmes.

The Endorsement of Unified Contracts for Jordanians, Syrian Refugees and Migrant Workers in the Garment Sector

Stipulated by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) signed on December 2, 2019 between the apparel employers' associations and the garment union, Better Work Jordan facilitated the discussions between the trade union and JGATE on modifying the unified contracts for migrant workers and Syrian refugee workers in the garment industry, as well as a new unified

contract for Jordanian workers. The unified contracts are designed to replace the practice of garment workers signing multiple contracts. The contracts also clarify employment conditions. The contracts were endorsed by relevant parties on 25 June and then submitted to the Industrial Relations Department of the MOL, pending publication in the official gazette.



Enhancing the structural integrity of dormitories in Jordan's garment sector

With the support of the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Better Work Jordan is set to develop a roadmap based on recommended actions to upgrade existing dormitory buildings across the country's garment industry to make sure safe and decent living conditions are provided with full respect of human rights.

This roadmap will be supported and developed through comprehensive research on national codes on dormitory building integrity, electrical and fire safety, health issues and life safety, and aligning them with international codes and best practices across the sector. Migrant garment workers make up around 75 percent of the total 76,220 workers in the country's sector. Bangladeshi nationals make around 60 percent of

the sector's foreign workforce, followed by Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepali, Burmese and Pakistani workers.

Up to eight migrant workers share rooms in factory housing units located in the proximity of Jordan's industrial zones, where they live and work on fixed-term contracts.

Following the establishment of a harmonized reference and protocol for assessing structural integrity in dormitories, Better Work Jordan and its technical consultant company will assess the current situation across a sample of dormitories. They will then produce a report identifying the current situation of the housing units, and recommendations on the areas for improvement in the current and future dormitories.

Better Work Jordan and Better than Cash Alliance: from cash to digital payments

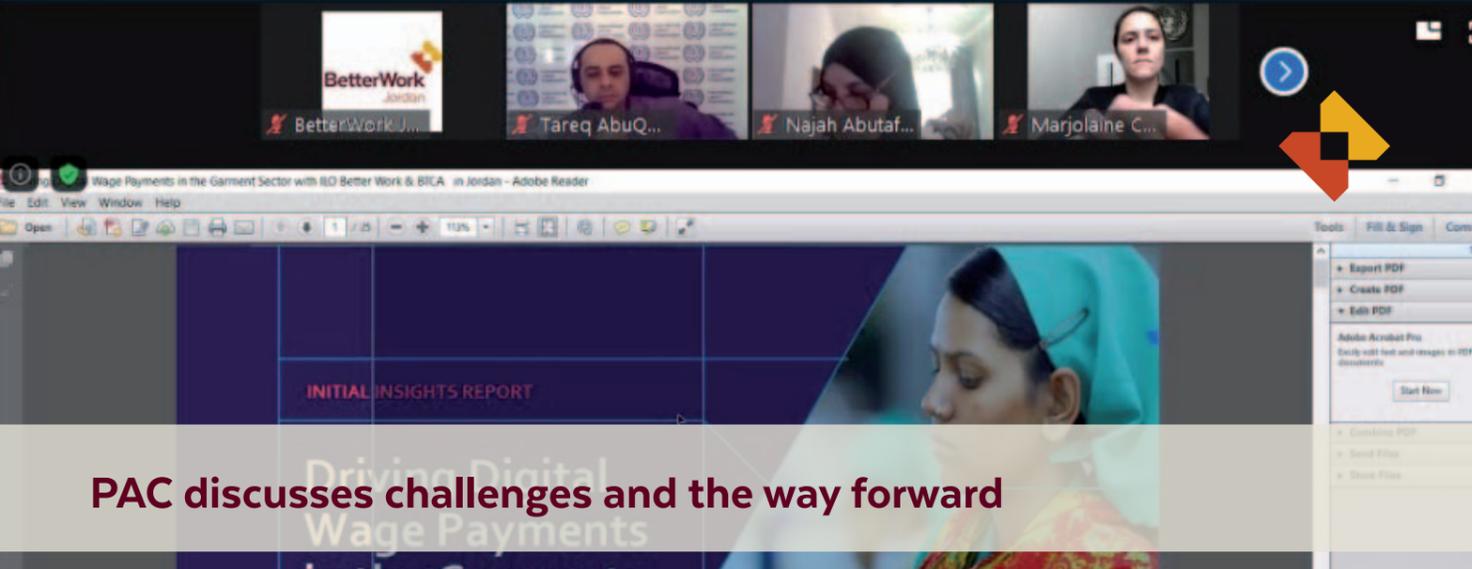
Better Work Jordan has joined hands with the Better than Cash Alliance (BtCA) to trigger the acceleration of digitization of wages across the country.

Based at the United Nations, the BtCA is a partnership of governments, companies and international organizations that accelerates the transition from cash to digital payments to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

Better Work Jordan and BtCA are committed to digitizing payments across the local garment sector in order to boost efficiency, transparency, women's

economic participation and financial inclusion as well as contributing to building an economy that is digital and inclusive.

To achieve that, Better Work Jordan and BtCA are assisting a group of garment factories in exploring different ways to move from cash to digital payment methods. The project was signed early 2020 and aims to bring together key stakeholders to achieve responsible digitization of wages across the local garment sector. The 10-month project is anticipated to be concluded towards the end of October 2020.



PAC discusses challenges and the way forward

Better Work Jordan 44th Project Advisory Committee Meeting was held in July. Participants discussed the garment sector's latest challenges, its protracted ones and ways to overcome them.

The Committee, which includes members of Jordan's Labour Ministry, apparel employer associations and the country's garment union, talked through improving the structural integrity of dormitories' in Jordan's garment sector, issues linked to methods of digital payment and

the unified contracts for Jordanian, Syrian refugees and migrant garment workers.

Initially planned to take place in March, the meeting was eventually held virtually in July due to the pandemic. During the second quarter, partners and stakeholders took part in a series of virtual meetings to discuss the findings of the Better Work Jordan's Eleventh Annual Report programme.

Better Work publications

Better Work Jordan Annual Report 2020: An Industry and Compliance Review

This year, Better Work Jordan released its Eleventh Annual Compliance Report, which presents findings and observations from 81 factory assessments completed in 2019. The Annual Report also highlights trends in non-compliance rates over the past three years. Compliance findings are complemented by additional observations through factory engagement and the programme's collaboration with industry stakeholders.

In 2019, Better Work Jordan observed improvements across several compliance areas, including effective worker training on the safe use of machinery, accurate social security payments, and overtime pay. There are also a growing number of factories implementing the sectoral CBA.

Better Work Jordan continues to be concerned about verbal abuse in factories. With limited improvements, participating factories are encouraged to give greater attention to address such issues. Short lead times

and production pressure remain concerns in the global garment industry. In addition to training employers and supervisors on stress management and communication, buyers also need to take an active role in combatting such practices.

Although there have been some improvements, many areas under the OSH cluster still need to be further addressed. Better Work Jordan will continue to advocate for a 'systems-based' approach to tackle such issues. Better Work Jordan - along with other Better Work country programmes - also released its annual report in a new format, focusing on the programme's key initiatives, partnerships, achievements and challenges. The new format also showcases the programme's and stakeholders' shared efforts to achieve sustainable and scalable change.

Follow [this link](#) to download the Annual Compliance report in both English and Arabic, and [this link](#) to download the new formatted annual report in English.



Better Work Jordan: Worker and Manager Survey Results

On 3 July, Better Work Jordan launched the third round of an ongoing survey the programme began last year. The survey aims to gather insights from around 1,700 workers on questions concerning their well-being and to better understand their psychological needs in the workplace.

A briefing paper highlighting the survey's results will be published in the coming months.

Over the course of a month from mid-December 2019 to mid-January 2020, Better Work Jordan collected survey responses from a representative sample of nearly 1,700 workers in Better Work Jordan participating

factories on issues related to working conditions, stakeholder awareness, and personal life. At the same time, the program captured the opinions of managers from 71 of the total of 81 participating factories. This data collection represented the second round in an ongoing data collection effort from June 2019 and builds on past impact assessment research.

Results from this section of the survey can be found [here](#).

Additional insights gathered from the survey data can be found in Better Work Jordan's Annual Report 2020.

Better Work is a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in collaboration with local and international stakeholders. It unites the expertise of the ILO in labour standards with that of the IFC in private sector development

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