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Newsletter

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IN THIS ISSUE:

A national garment sector strategy

Enhancing Jordanian human capital and the business environment

Bolstering collaboration to advance the garment sector

Joining hands to improve the economic performance and regulatory compliance of enterprises

Supporting EU-Jordan agreement on rules of origin

Promoting decent work and economic growth through the relaxed rules of origin initiative

Capacity building for labour inspectors

A workplan for developing Jordan's labour inspection system

Mental health awareness campaign and policy

Enhancing engagement with workers and guiding garment factories

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Dear Friends,

As 2021 is nearing its end, Jordan is facing fresh challenges brought by a surge in COVID-19 cases. Jordan's garment industry remains resilient as the government pressed ahead with COVID-19 vaccination of Jordanians and non-Jordanians, while taking stricter precautions.

On a more positive note, a significant milestone has been achieved by establishing a Better Work unit within the Ministry of Labour (MoL) under a 2020 joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This achievement was part of Better Work sustainability plan, which gradually transfers assessment tools and methodologies to the MoL.

Better Work Jordan efforts go beyond collaboration with the MoL. The programme and stakeholders seek to develop domestic capabilities and fully take advantage of the economic and social benefits of Jordan's garment sector, as well as selected non-garment sectors such as plastics, engineering, and chemicals. Better Work Jordan and partners are developing a strategy for the next ten years aimed at strengthening Jordanian human capital and advancing the business environment. The sector strategy was discussed during the [13th Annual Multi-Stakeholders' Forum](#), a key venue for collaboration between the tripartite stakeholders and buyers.

Building on these efforts, the Better Work Jordan Phase IV strategy envisions by 2027 a competitive Jordanian garment industry built on stakeholder collaboration, which advances national economic development, lifts people out of poverty and upholds the fundamental rights of all workers.

Since its inception 13 years ago, Better Work has forged partnerships, leading to improved working conditions, particularly in the area of occupational health and safety and forced labour, sound industrial relations through collective bargaining agreements signed between employers' organisations and the trade union, and a robust partnership with the MoL.

Importantly, Better Work and its partners are changing attitudes and behaviours across the industry.

Maintaining and developing these achievements while addressing challenges requires collaboration, dialogue, inclusion, and transparency, as well as stronger industrial relations. This will serve the entire sector while ensuring that no one is left behind.

The Better Work Jordan team



95
Factories



46
Assessment reports



66,568
Workers in registered factories



160
Advisory visits



2,842
Training participants



21
International buyers



A National Garment Sector Strategy

Developing domestic capabilities is necessary to fully take advantage of the economic and social benefits of Jordan’s garment sector.

Better Work Jordan and stakeholders are developing a priority-based strategy for the next ten years to achieve independence, inclusive growth, and widespread benefits of the garment industry.

The strategy, currently under negotiation, is centred on three overarching and interrelated objectives that align with Jordan’s national economic priorities for 2021-2023:

- Improving the business environment, including predictability, transparency, institutional support, and alignment;

- Developing and strengthening Jordanian human capital and promoting employment opportunities; and
- Developing a marketing and growth strategy to attract investment and increase exports.

It envisions increased competitiveness of Jordan’s garment sector in local and global markets by building a profitable, sustainable, ethical, and fair industry that continues to provide decent work opportunities.

To improve the business environment, the strategy proposes modifying existing programmes and policies, proactive and coordinated engagement with donors, strategic investment promotion, shifting the garment industry to new geographic areas, and developing a marketing campaign.

COVID-19 : country update

1,052,868



Total COVID-19 Cases

3,925,650



Double Vaccinated persons

42,835



Active Cases

12,487



Death

COVID-19 : sector update

61,616



Vaccinated persons

7,301



Total COVID-19 Cases

For more details, please check [COVID-19 updates](#).



Bolstering collaboration to advance the garment sector

Better Work Jordan and the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), which is the country's primary business association representing industries in Jordan, including the garment sector, signed a two-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) on September 14, 2021 to improve the economic performance of enterprises as well as their compliance with Labour Law and international labour standards.

The two parties, which signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017, will cooperate on enhancing the performance and competitiveness of companies and factories; exchanging technical expertise on labour issues and on development of the national industry, including small and medium-sized enterprises; and supporting and motivating employers to fully comply

with the Labour Law and core standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Under the MoU, Better Work Jordan and JCI will collaborate on hiring an economic researcher, and local specialist, as well as a team of local and international specialists to prepare a study on the added value of the garment sector.

This MoU covers garment companies registered with Better Work Jordan, and enterprises benefiting from the EU-Jordan relaxed rules of origin agreement, as well as consultative and training services offered to small and medium-sized businesses that are not part of Better Work Jordan.

Better Work Jordan 47th Project Advisory Committee Meeting

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) of Better Work Jordan discussed the state of employment in the sector and have delineated the dormitory update as a priority.

Holding their 47th meeting face-to-face after 18 months of meeting virtually due to COVID-19, PAC members also examined observations from Better Work Jordan about long working hours and inadequate rest periods for workers.

More details can be found from [here](#).





The yearly multi-stakeholder forum is an important venue for collaboration between the tripartite stakeholders and buyers.

For the first time, Better Work Jordan and the Jordan Garments, Accessories and Textiles Exporters' Association (JGATE) jointly hosted the **13th Annual Multi-Stakeholders' Forum** in November 2021. This was a partnership milestone, following years of joint collaboration as Better Work Jordan worked with JGATE on building its capacity.

At the forum, garment sector stakeholders, including government officials, employers, international buyers, and civil society representatives discussed means to improve working conditions, enhance industry growth and attract more Jordanian workers. Industry leaders discussed key achievements, such as drastically reduced forced labour, as well as continuing challenges,

including unemployment and unregulated overtime. Participants examined the National Garment Sector Strategy aimed at improving the business environment as well as institutional capacity. Stakeholders discussed the potential growth of the sector, and the effort to improve workers' access to healthy living and working conditions, including improved dormitories for migrant workers. The forum highlighted the importance of enhancing worker voices in the sector as well as effective worker representation and engagement in the labour market.

Buyers were very active in the sector in 2020 and encouraged factories to respect worker rights and ensure decent working conditions. Better Work Jordan hopes to channel this level of engagement in the future. Buyers play an important role in protecting workers' rights, especially during moments of crisis.

Better Work Jordan Phase IV Strategy

As Better Work Jordan looks forward to launching phase IV of the programme in July 2022, it has been working in close partnership with stakeholders to develop a strategy for the next five years of its operations.

Better Work Jordan's phase IV strategy is guided by a shared vision of a competitive Jordanian garment industry that advances national socioeconomic development, lifts people out of poverty and upholds the fundamental rights of all workers. To realise this vision, stakeholders from government, the private sector and the garment industry trade union have committed to strengthening labour market governance in the industry, to ensuring that workers' rights are upheld and protected, and to improving the industry's competitiveness and its

contribution to Jordan's economy.

By 2027, these stakeholders strive to take a leading role in sustaining and advancing BWJ's achievements in the garment industry. In close partnership with BWJ, they will develop their capacity to fulfil their mandates in monitoring, addressing and remediating labour non-compliances in the sector. Because achieving this objective requires effective tripartite collaboration, they will also work with Better Work Jordan to develop effective social dialogue in the industry. This will involve empowering bipartite worker management committees at the factory level, as well as establishing a sectoral council to enable agile, evidence-based policymaking on sector-wide issues.



Supporting EU-Jordan agreement on rules of origin

In 2002, Jordan entered the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) that enabled a Free Trade Area opening up two-way trade. The agreement was revisited in 2016 when the EU and Jordan agreed to simplify the rules of origin (RoO) requirements as a component of the EU's broader response to the Syrian refugee crisis. The revisions were aimed at boosting Jordan's trade competitiveness, supporting the host communities and promoting job creation for Jordanians and Syrians. Through the relaxed RoO scheme, the European Union has opened up the EU markets to goods made in Jordan's production units with a certain percentage of Syrian refugees in the view to promote employment for Jordanians and Syrian refugees, and to increase Jordan's exports to the EU.

The Ministry of Labour (MoL), the EU and the ILO signed a collaboration agreement to support the scheme's implementation and to ensure decent working conditions in companies exporting to the EU.

In its first phase (December 2018 - December 2020), the EU-ILO collaboration provided an overall framework for the ILO for support, monitoring and provision of technical assistance. The ILO partnered

with national stakeholders and the private sector to strengthen capacity and facilitate decent job creation for Jordanians and Syrians. Interventions helped build communication networks between job-seekers and private sector companies through employment services. This built on ongoing cooperation between the ILO and the Ministry of Labour, and supported the ILO's Better Work Jordan in expanding its core services to non-garment sectors.

The second phase (January 2021 - November 2022) seeks to scale-up efforts to advance opportunities under the RoO agreement. Support will be extended to include building the capacity of a national party for collecting and analysing RoO related data/information, in a bid to address challenges for more effective benefit of the RoO agreement. It will also provide the MoL with inspection capacity building, enhancing efficiency of labour inspection.

Beneficiaries are Jordanian and Syrian jobseekers; workers of all nationalities; key government stakeholders, including the MoL and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply (MoITS); private sector employers; and trade unions.



Capacity building for labour inspectors

Better Work Jordan's sustainability plan focuses on building stakeholders' capacity to implement programme core services while ensuring their quality. Each stakeholder already has a key mandate, and Better Work Jordan is focused on increasing capacity, effectiveness, and responsibility of these partners.

In line with its plan, the programme is gradually transferring its assessment tools and methodologies to the MoL. A major milestone was reached in May 2020, when the ILO and the MoL signed an MoU establishing a Better Work section within the ministry.

"The ministry hopes that the Better Work section encourages the private sector to comply with legal standards for decent work in all sectors. The initiative started in the garment sector, and we look forward to expanding this initiative to all other sectors," said Haitham Al Najdawi, head of MoL Inspection Directorate.

This unit is now part of MoL organisational structure, under the Directorate of Inspection, and three Better Work units are being established in the capital, Amman, the northern city of Irbid, and the southern city of Karak.

Better Work Jordan will support the capacity building

of the section in addition to continued training and a secondment programme for labour inspectors.

Labour inspection team of enterprise advisors and EU project team within the Better Work unit will ensure ongoing coaching and training within the secondment programme and the **EU-ILO collaboration** project, which will also pilot a quality assurance/control tool to ensure the performance of labour inspections.

Technical and non-technical behaviours of 181 labour inspectors and division heads in the Inspection Directorate will be tested and assessed before enrolling some of these inspectors in a needs-based capacity building programme.

Under the MoU, ILO/Better Work Jordan will provide the MoL with technical assistance to computerise inspection activities through an electronic inspection system, establish an inspection control room, and create an effective mechanism for receiving and addressing worker complaints and grievances.

This Better Work Jordan-MoL plan of action will be backed by advocacy activities, strengthening relations with the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), and the JCI, and raising awareness of the Labour Law and international labour standards.



Mental health awareness campaign and policy

Over the last several years, worker mental health has become a prominent issue in the garment sector that Better Work Jordan is addressing through its Mental Health Project, launched in early 2021. The project aims for garment workers to become more resilient against mental health risks, including seeking psychosocial support when necessary. It seeks to establish a mental health referral system, ensuring that workers have available mental health and psychosocial support services. Improved mental health and psychosocial support will help workers become more confident to seek support and resilience while increasing productivity, boosting profits, improving workplace stability, and preventing absenteeism.

In June 2021, Better Work Jordan introduced the mental health project at a key meeting with garment industry representatives in the country, presenting how the initiative seeks to support and help improve the mental health of workers in the sector.

In celebration of the International Mental Health Day (October 10th), Better Work Jordan launched the

#Your_mental_health_matters campaign. Aiming at raising awareness about mental health through public art, this campaign tackles the rampant stigmatization of such issues among the workers in the garment factories. The campaign started with painting a large-scale mural on one of the Jerash Garments and Fashions buildings in Sahab-Amman, titled “Swan of Sahab”, encouraging a positive outlook on mental health.

As part of the awareness-raising campaign, the project organized social events for workers in industrial zones in Irbid and Dulayl to raise that awareness about mental health, through the encouragement of self-care activities, and interactive games to manage work-related stress, in addition to the safe use of social media. Around 1,000 male and female workers from 5 different nationalities actively participated in these events, where Better Work Jordan handed out brochures and guides on mental health. For more information about the social event, please check from [here](#).





In October 2021, Better Work Jordan and stakeholders, including factory management, conducted an industrial seminar, where the program presented the first version of Mental Health Policy in the Workspace. The policy supports and guides garment factories to enhance workers' mental health.

National stakeholders have shown commitment to worker mental health as evidenced by the inclusion in the 2019 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) of specific roles for employers in supporting the mental health needs of workers. Article (11) of the CBA stipulates that the factories need to provide physical and psychological health to workers. All employers and managers are obliged to take appropriate steps to

eliminate and minimize health and safety risks in the workplace. Similarly, and in terms of mental illness, the employer should identify possible workplace practices, actions, or incidents that may cause, or contribute to, the mental illness of workers and take actions to eliminate or minimize these risks.

According to Rapid Assessment of Garment Workers in Jordan, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on garment workers, and workers' mental health, already an area of concern, has suffered as a result. Survey data gathered in 2020 from 1,500 workers found that 33 percent of workers in the sector probably have depression or anxiety.

Swan of Sahab

#Your_mental_health_matters This Mural seeks to encourage the positive outlook on mental health. It's particularly unique because it approaches the topic of mental health in a way that makes the issue somewhat lighthearted and therefore easier to talk about, rather than something that should be hushed up with stigmatization.

One female worker said, "When I saw the swan, I wished I was a bird capable of flying to Bangladesh to see my daughter, whom I hadn't seen in three years."

Other workers, on the other hand, felt positive and refreshed when they saw the mural while walking to work in the early morning or after a long day. "I'm not sure who did it, but this painting makes me happy every time I see it," a male worker said.





Enhancing the structural integrity of dormitories

The structural integrity of dorm buildings is crucial to the health and safety of workers. The issue of worker accommodations came to the forefront with the COVID-19 pandemic, both because of worries of spreading the virus in crowded dormitories and because workers spent more hours in their dorms because of curfews and lockdowns. Factories provide migrant workers accommodations while they work in Jordan, and the quality and safety of dorms is a big part of the experiences of migrant workers in Jordan. The conditions in dormitories cannot be separated from the conditions on the factory floor – if workers have a problem in one area, it will most likely bleed over to the other. By a recent count, there are between 200 and 300 dorm buildings that house migrant workers in the sector.

Better Work Jordan covers the state of living conditions in the dormitories in compliance assessments and advisory visits, seeking to improve dormitory conditions through advocating for and prioritising dormitory building safety; strengthening capacity to monitor and maintain standards; working with national stakeholders to strengthen their capacity to inspect worker dormitories; and promoting the development of guidelines for dormitories.

Under its project, Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan's Garment Sector, the programme hired engineering consulting firms to assess the structural integrity of existing dormitory buildings, identify areas for upgrades, and propose guidelines for future dorm construction.

The project, currently in its second phase, aims to set guidelines related to assessing and mitigating defects against certain health and safety measures within existing dormitories, as well as develop design regulations related to building new dormitories in the future, to ensure surpassing previously identified mistakes and defects which can form risks to the health and safety of inhabitant workers.

Its main objectives are:

- Awareness raising among factory owners on typical building safety requirements.
- Guidance to identify safety defects and the level of expertise needed for rectification.
- Identification of national codes requirements for dormitories.
- Identification of safety issues not covered by national codes, with reference to international good practices.

Responsible shift to digital wages

Traditionally, workers in Jordan's garment industry were paid in cash, but this has started to change in recent years. COVID-19 has accelerated the transition to digital wages across the entire country, including in the garment sector. This transition was supported by multiple government ministries, and several changes in rules and regulations made it easier to adopt digital payments. Better Work Jordan /ILO is collaborating with the UN-based Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA) and the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) to study the costs, benefits and factors of adoption for digital wages in the garment sector. In late October, representatives across the garment sector, the government, the finance sector and development organisations gathered to reinforce their commitment to

scaling wage digitisation to help protect workers' rights. The high-level event, chaired by the Central Bank of Jordan, announced a new report, Promoting Decent Work by Digitizing Wages Responsibly in Jordan, launched by the Better Work Jordan /ILO, GIZ, and BTCA. Every month, over two-thirds of the garment sector workforce in Jordan receive their wages in cash, which can cost factories up to USD 1,000 per month, equivalent to the monthly wages of 4.4 workers. Receiving wages digitally not only provides companies with opportunities for enhanced productivity, efficiency, and transparency, but it is also an important step toward increasing financial account use and greater financial capability. The latter is particularly important for women, who make up 73 percent of Jordan's garment workforce.

Independent performance evaluation

By 2022, the Better Work Jordan programme strives to accelerate improvements in the working conditions and business competitiveness of Jordan's garment industry as well as the exporting industrial sector at large. It also aims to boost scalability and sustainability of impact by strengthening the capacity of national stakeholders, aligning new strategic and operational partnerships, and shaping national policies. Accordingly, Better Work Jordan intervention in the country is two-tiered: the factory level and the institutional and policy level. At the factory level, it delivers an integrated service model to improve working conditions and business competitiveness, and at the institutional and policy level, Better Work Jordan works with national tripartite partners – i.e., government, trade union, and employer organizations – to inform and strengthen domestic laws and institutions. The purpose of the interim performance evaluation is to assess the relevance of the programme in the cultural, economic, and political context in Jordan, as well as the validity of the programme design and the extent to which it is suited to the priorities and policies of the host government and other national stakeholders. The

evaluation seeks to determine whether the programme is on track toward meeting its objectives, identify the challenges and opportunities encountered in doing so, and analyse the driving factors for these challenges and opportunities. It assesses the effectiveness of programme strategies and its strengths and weaknesses in implementation, and identifies areas in need of improvement. Finally, the evaluation provides conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations, and assesses programme plans for sustainability at local and national levels and among implementing organisations, identifying steps to enhance its sustainability. The evaluation was participatory and transparent in approach and methodology. The evaluation methodology included document review, fieldwork including key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), which were conducted mostly remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, and quantitative analysis of secondary data. A total of 36 interviews were conducted: 5 face-to-face and 31 online interviews, encompassing 81 persons (51 females and 30 males).

Publications

- [Mental Health Policy in the Workspace](#)
- [Rapid Assessment of Garment Workers in Jordan](#)
- [Promoting Decent Work by Digitizing Wages Responsibly in Jordan](#)
- [Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan's Garment Sector – Deliverable #1](#)
- [Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan's Garment Sector – Deliverable #2](#)
- [Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan's Garment Sector – Deliverable #3](#)
- [Better Work Jordan Gender Strategy: 2021 Progress Report and Update](#)
- [Independent Interim Evaluation – Better Work Phase III in Jordan](#)
- [Better Work Jordan: Worker, Supervisor and Manager Survey Results](#)

Better Work Jordan (BWJ) is a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The ILO flagship programme brings together stakeholders from all levels of the global garment manufacturing industry to improve working conditions, enhance respect for labour rights, and boost competitiveness. BWJ began operations at the request of the governments of Jordan and the United States over ten years ago. Better Work country programmes regularly prepare public reports synthesising industry updates and highlighting non-compliance findings and trends in order to increase transparency and to communicate observations to a wider audience. For more information and updates, visit the website of [Better Work Jordan](#).

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