

2017 Newsletter Mid-Year review

Dear Friends,

Jordan has spent the last 15 years building a robust garment industry that today, we can proudly say, competes at a global level. If we look back at 2009, when BWJ started operations, the sector employed just some 40,000 workers. The industry now gives work to over 65,000, including an ever-increasing number of Jordanian women.

Our mandate has given us the chance to build dynamic relationships with crucial stakeholders over the years. These developments were displayed with the expansion of our collaboration with the Labour Ministry last December and in the 2017 signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Jordan Chamber of Industry. The latter we hope will improve the economic performance of local enterprises.

Unfortunately, Jordan still faces high unemployment rates, especially when it comes to the participation of women in the local market.

BWJ wants to challenge this!

Through the so-called satellite units, small branches of factories outside the industrial zones, stakeholders and our programme are working on boosting female employment by overcoming the societal challenges that prevent potential workers from joining the industry.

Also, Jordan's resilience has been severely tested over the years by the protracted effects of the regional turmoil. The ILO and BWJ have offered their expertise to the different stakeholders trying to meet the ambitious requirements drafted in the Jordan Compact, and their support in the implementation of current policies related to the Syrian refugee response.

Accordingly, BWJ will expand its mandate to more sectors spanning chemical, plastics and engineering industries, among others, in order to create more jobs for Jordanians and support efforts to include the Syrian population within the local workforce.

We are proud to be able to offer the appropriate stakeholders of these additional manufacturing sectors the compliance and working condition experience gained over the years in the garment industry.

As Better Work Jordan moves towards its next phase, we must be ready to roll up our sleeves.

We must ensure our impact is sustainable and our focus set on building the capacity of national stakeholders, thus helping build a solid labour market in Jordan that provides decent working conditions and abides by international standards.

Thank you and enjoy the read!

The BWJ team

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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Better Work forum discusses ways to tackle issues beyond factory compliance and unfolds plans for expansion

Better Work Jordan held its ninth buyer and stakeholder forum in Amman on July 6, exploring ways to address compliance with international labour standards beyond the garment sector and announcing its upcoming expansion.

Some 15 members from international brands attended the forum, alongside a hundred representatives from the national and international garment and industrial sector partners from government, the employer associations and the union.

Better Work Jordan is part of a new agreement struck between Jordan's Ministry of Labour, the European Union and the ILO. The agreement aims to help Jordan further access the EU market, create decent jobs for Jordanians and include Syrians within the country's workforce.

Accordingly, Better Work's mission will expand to more manufacturing sectors, helping local companies abide by the country's labour law and meet international labour standards.

The Jordanian Minister of Labour Ali Ghezawi attended the event and highlighted the ILO/BWJ's efforts throughout the past period with its contribution and interventions in the

Jordanian labour market, and work in the garment satellite units that give jobs to Jordanian women in areas where unemployment is high, highlighting that unemployment in the Kingdom currently accounts for 18 percent and around 33 percent among women.

Ghezawi said he was proud of what Jordan was doing concerning the refugee issue.

"Having 1.3 million Syrian refugees in the country is a huge burden. The Jordanian economy has managed to absorb the largest number (of the past waves of refugees), but the current circumstances are very difficult and we are facing a so-called 'hosting-country fatigue.' This why Jordan needs help implementing the relaxed rules-of-origin agreement with the EU."

International partners also showed their support and appreciation for the upcoming policy of publicly disclosing factory-specific compliance information and proposed that BWJ communicates crucial points on the transparency portal to all factories.

[Read more](#)

Stakeholders discuss strategies to boost Jordan's business climate at BWJ's Forum

The second panel of BWJ Stakeholders' Forum saw local and international stakeholders discussing upcoming policies to attract investment to the country, strategies to ensure the best outcome of the relaxed rules of origin (RoO) agreement between Jordan and the European Union, and the ILO/BWJ role in helping the success of this agreement.

Minister of State for Investment Affairs and Chairman of the Jordan Investment Commission (JIC) Muhannad Shehadeh, said his organisation's strategy focused on creating a better investment environment. He said he hoped to see Jordan move from "good to better."

The official stressed that Jordan saw the EU market as a great opportunity and complement to an already well-established trade agreement with the US.

But Shehadeh said improving working conditions in the country was an ingredient of paramount importance to attract investment.

Programme Manager for Trade and Private Sector Development in the Cooperation Section of the Delegation of the European Union to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Maria Iarrera said the EU was adopting a two-fold approach to facilitate the implementation of the RoO.

Iarrera said that the EU had an "outside enterprise approach" on one hand, and an "inside enterprise approach" on the other.

In the "outside enterprise approach," she said, the EU was working with the GoJ, the JIC, IFC and the World Bank, among others, to improve the business environment by facilitating its access.

The "inside enterprise approach," meanwhile, was currently helping enterprises export by increasing their competitiveness through innovation and the creation of incubators to help both Syrian refugees and Jordanians launch start-up projects.

When the EU was negotiating the RoO agreement, Iarrera said, officials were looking at the reality of the garment sector and at the role of BWJ. The industry represented a good model that could be adopted in further manufacturing sectors. The goal, she said, was to look at how to implement this model to the 52 products subject to the RoO and how to help other sectors reach the same standards.

Jordan Chamber of Industry Director General Maher al Mahrouq said the RoO agreement was an opportunity to be seized. Without increasing the level of exports, Jordan's local market would fail to grow and the creation of new jobs for either Jordanians or Syrians would be impossible.

He added BWJ was playing a major role in promoting the principle of decent work across the country—an effort appreciated by parties across private sector.



Examining Barriers to Workforce Inclusion of Syrian Refugees in Jordan

Under the umbrella of the EU-BWJ cooperation, a team of researchers from New York's Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) published in July a BWJ-backed research on the challenges preventing the successful integration of Syrian refugees within Jordan's workforce.

The eight-people team looked at the legal and administrative hurdles limiting the large-scale entry of Syrians into the exporting manufacturing sector as well as the social, economic, and cultural barriers. The report also analyses specific barriers that have limited the formal employment of Syrian refugees in the Development Zones,

particularly in the export industry.

Having conducted interviews with refugees within and outside camps, national and international stakeholders, the researchers have now shared their findings and recommendations for meaningful strategies to increase the formal participation of Syrian refugees in the Jordanian labour market.

The team's expertise spanned political economy, humanitarian policy, international business, trade and gender issues.

[Read more](#)

The straight story of Maha al Ghazo

BWJ Stakeholders' Forum had the pleasure of learning the story of a worker from one of Jordan's garment satellite factories located in Ajloun's rural area, where unemployment runs high.

Working today as a recorder in charge of indexing items produced in the firm, the 24-year-old born with speech and hearing impairments shared her journey of self-assertion and independence with the audience.

Using sign language translated by her sister Rahma, she went through the significant events and challenges she has faced throughout her life. Dropping out of school at ten, Maha had been long looking for a job, but employers kept turning her down because of her disability.

Located a few paces from her house, the satellite factory appeared as an opportunity. She instinctively decided to apply for a job as machine operator, knowing other people with similar disabilities were already employed there.

Maha told the audience she initially had problems communicating with her colleagues. But this was no longer the case.

After three years as a tailor, she recently advanced in her career by becoming a recorder. Today, she would describe



herself as a confident woman thanks to her job, her financial independence and the trust of the management.

On a funny note, Maha told forum participants the work at the factory helped her overcome her biggest problem: getting up in the morning. A former sleep lover, she now wakes up easily, ready and motivated to head to the factory for a full eight hour shift.



Better Work and the Jordan Chamber of Industry collaborate to support businesses

Better Work Jordan and the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Amman on April 13 aimed at improving the economic performance of local enterprises while increasing their compliance with the country's labour law and the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Tareq Abu Qaoud, Programme Manager of Better Work Jordan said this will take the already long-established relationship with the JCI to the next level by engaging with exporting manufacturers beyond the garment sector.

“Better Work and the JCI will collaborate closely to build the capacity of employers in the broader industrial sector, sharing the lessons and the successes achieved in Jordan's garment sector over the previous years and drawing on the ILO's expertise in providing

decent working conditions,” Abu Qaoud said.

The Jordan Chamber of Industry Director General Maher al Mahrouq said the agreement came as a result of continuous cooperation with the Better Work since 2008.

“This agreement is set to enhance the role of companies in the industrial sector while exchanging expertise with the ILO office and its programmes here in Jordan, especially with Better Work,” al Mahrouq said.

Under the agreement, valid for two years, Better Work and the JCI will exchange technical expertise on labour affairs to help develop both the country's industry as a whole and the individuals companies taking part in the project.

[Read more](#)

Productivity project takes off in Jordan's rural areas

BWJ started implementing in May an International Finance Corporation-funded project that aims to improve labour standards and productivity among Jordan's rural female workers, while promoting inclusive industry growth over the long term.

According to the project, that started this January and runs through June 2018, the ambition is for the number of satellite factories—branches of large companies scattered across the country's rural areas to boost local employment — to increase to 20 from the current 12.

BWJ is focussing on how to make the subcontracting model sustainable and more productive, while making sure decent working conditions are provided.

The project emphasizes the need to consult with local communities, and aims to close the knowledge gap on how to sustainably improve productivity and labour standards compliance among factories.

This will mitigate risks for private investors by offering preventative solutions, while boosting Jordan's working conditions and living standards.



Ministry of Labour, EU and ILO start cooperation to boost job matchmaking services under EU trade scheme and promote decent working conditions in Jordan

The Ministry of Labour, the European Union and the International Labour Organization (ILO) signed a project agreement on April 26 to provide matching services for job seekers among Jordanians and Syrian refugees, connecting them with employers.

Under the project, the ILO will be facilitating the implementation of the relaxation of the rules of origin scheme agreed by the EU to help Jordan further access the EU market.

Through this project, the ILO will be extending the core services of one of its flagship programmes, Better Work Jordan (BWJ), to further manufacturing sectors, aiming to help Jordanian companies abide by the country's labour law and meet international labour standards.

The project will help Jordanians and Syrian refugees alike enter the local job market under decent working conditions, and will be carried out in collaboration with the MOL and national stakeholders.

It will apply to new jobs created following the relaxation of the rules of origin for Jordanian companies to enhance their exports to the EU market. The project aims at supporting the implementation of the EU-Jordan Compact, including assisting Jordanian companies to take advantage of trade opportunities provided by the new trade facilitation, leading to job creation for both Jordanian and Syrian refugees.

[Read more](#)

BWJ attends Brussels meeting on Relaxation of the EU-Jordan Rules of Origin Agreement

Better Work Jordan attended a high-level event on new trade and business opportunities in Jordan "Relaxation of the EU-Jordan Rules of Origin Agreement" at the EU headquarters in Brussels earlier in May.

According to the organisers, the event showcased the advantages resulting from the new agreement on the relaxation of rules of origin for Jordanian products from 52 Harmonized System chapters and introduced the trade opportunities between the two regions.

Over 90 participants attended the event to discuss new trade, investment and business opportunities in Jordan with representatives from government, the private sector and Business Support Organisations including chambers of commerce and industry.

The meeting followed the newly signed agreement between Jordan's Ministry of Labour, the European Union and the International Labour Organization (ILO) set to facilitate the implementation of the relaxation of the rules of origin scheme agreed by the EU to help Jordan further access the EU market.





Factory dormitories open to inspection: A milestone for tens of thousands of garment workers in Jordan

In October last year, Jordan's Ministries of Health and Labour signed a breakthrough agreement that entrusts government officials to inspect the housing units where garment migrant workers reside.

The agreement is seen a positive step in improving the living conditions of the sector's workforce.

Better Work hailed the agreement as a long-awaited step in ensuring the health and safety of workers.

"Though this agreement has been signed between two governmental agencies, the Jordan Garments,

Accessories and Textiles Exporters' Association and the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing played a crucial role in convincing the government of Jordan of its importance," said Tareq Abu Qaoud, Better Work Jordan Programme Manager.

"Better Work believes the ultimate goal of signing this agreement is to make sure worker accommodation is safe and that decent living conditions are provided, guaranteeing the full respect of human rights," he said.

[Read more](#)
[Watch the video](#)



BWJ Annual Report 2017

The Better Work Jordan Annual Report 2017 was published in February and is available [online](#) capturing the present compliance status of its participating factories and the garment industry in the country.

The data collected illustrate compliance with labour standards according to eight clusters: four based on the ILO core labour standards regarding child labour, forced

labour, discrimination, and freedom of association and collective bargaining.

The four remaining indicators are instead based on the national law regarding working conditions (compensation, contracts and human resources, occupational safety and health, and working time).



News breakdown from the sector

- Exports reached some **\$1.6 billion** – almost double than in 2007.
- There are currently **23 international buyers** sourcing from Jordan and who are engaged with Better Work Jordan, a unique partnership between the International Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation.
- Jordanians make around **25 percent** of the total workforce.
- There are currently **12 satellite factories** in areas across Jordan, including Madaba, al Karak, Irbid, Ajloun, Jerash, Tafileh and Shunah, employing **4,000** Jordanians working in the garment industry (four additional satellite factories will be operative by the end of the year).
- Since the start of the programme in 2009, Better Work Jordan has conducted **383 assessments** and **2,235 advisory visits**.
- It has also conducted some **833 trainings** for over **8,000 workers** and about **750 managers** in **69 factories**. The trainings cover topics such as Basic Rights and Responsibilities of Workers, Supervisory Skills Training, Sexual Harassment Prevention, Financial Management, Occupational Safety and Health, Fire Safety, Personal Hygiene, Workplace Communication, Pre-departure training.
- As of its latest compliance report, Better Work Jordan completed assessments of 67 factories.
- **77 exporting factories** and their subcontractors participate in Better Work Jordan's programme, employing **95 percent of the industry's workforce** and accounting for **95 percent of Jordan's apparel exports**.



2017 Vision: BWJ Stakeholders

Ali Ghezawi, Minister of Labour

We need to find a mechanism to employ young women. In the first quarter of the year unemployment reached 18 percent in Jordan and around 33 percent among young women (new ILO findings showed). The satellite units can vastly contribute to give jobs to young women across the country's rural areas.

Henry T. Wooster, United States Chargé d'Affaires to Jordan

"I want to commend the Government of Jordan, the ILO and BWJ and all the stakeholders for raising the climate and the standards of labour in Jordan and to make it an attractive market. The ILO and BWJ have contributed to the garment and industrial sector growing successes. In September 2016, the USdol removed Jordan's garment sector from its forced labour list. Though, like the ILO colleagues said, there is still progress to be made, we were delighted that Jordan was removed from that list."

Andrea Matteo Fontana, Ambassador of the European Union to Jordan

"We are working on multiple levels: the regulatory level-through the adoption of the Rules of Origin agreement - but also directly with the enterprises to ease their access to the market and their compliance with our standards, and through the ILO to guarantee that these job opportunities are part of the decent work initiative."

Edward Oakden, British Ambassador to Jordan

"The work that the ILO/BWJ has been doing will make the Jordanian brand more attractive to consumers in Europe and in America. I am struck by the degree to which particularly younger people in Britain look at where a product has been made that with influence the choice of what they buy. Jordan primarily stands for values that we in the EU really support: inclusion, diversity, decency, respect for the individual. This is portrayed in the work that the ILO is pushing forward and that BWJ epitomises."

Daniela Cicchella, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Assistant Representative for Protection to Jordan

"The collective work with the GOJ and the ILO/BWJ in

mapping the skills of the Syrian refugees has been an important element that puts Jordan ahead of what other countries in the region have done.

Also through the work with ILO/BWJ, we have identified areas where more work should be done, like the creation of work for women and to identify challenges and opportunities."

Muhannad Shehadeh, Minister of State for Investment Affairs Chairman, Jordan Investment Commission (JIC)

"What the ILO is providing us with is the branding Jordan needs. Improving working conditions in the country is an important ingredient to attract investment. Helping Jordan obtain a sort of "stamp" for its good working environment is good, but what the ILO and other agencies really do is providing an added value to create the standard we look for in the manufacturing sector."

Maher al Mahrouq, Jordan Chamber of Industry Director General

BWJ is playing a major role in promoting the principle of decent work and its work over the years has been quite appreciated by the private sector and, especially, the garment sector.

Maria Iarrera, Programme Manager - Trade and Private Sector Development, Cooperation Section, Delegation of the European Union to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

"When the European Union was negotiating the Rules of Origin agreement, officials were looking at the reality of the garment sector in the country and at the role of BWJ and thought this was a really good model to be expanded to further manufacturing sector."

Garment Sector International Partner Representatives

"We commend the agreement between Jordan's Ministries of Labor and Health delegating dormitory inspections to the Ministry of Labour, and are the sector's progress in establishing daycare facilities also thanks to the support of BWJ."

Better Work Jordan works with the following partners:

Read and see more