

# News and Updates

International Labour Organization | Better Work Jordan  
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## Dear Friends,

As 2024 unfolds, the escalating Israel-Hamas conflict has exacerbated the **humanitarian crisis** in Gaza, casting a profound impact on the labour market and livelihoods across Gaza and the West Bank. The toll on employment is staggering: approximately 390,000 jobs were lost, as of October 31, 2023, with predictions of worsening conditions if military operations in Gaza intensify.

In contrast, Jordan's garment industry has demonstrated resilience and adaptability amid these challenges and global economic uncertainties, showing signs of recovery after a period of business slowdown.

Under its Phase IV Strategy, Better Work Jordan remains committed to enhancing the industry's sustainability and resilience. This includes close collaboration with national stakeholders and partners, aiming to bolster their capacity, advance industry achievements, and ensure long-term sustainability.

However, the path ahead is not without its challenges. While some national stakeholders and partners have made commendable progress, others are still striving to meet their objectives.

Recognising the unique mandates of each stakeholder, Better Work Jordan is dedicated to empowering these partners to effectively respond to evolving challenges and fulfil their responsibilities with diligence.

Emphasizing the crucial role of cooperation, Better Work Jordan advocates for sustained collaboration among national tripartite constituents. This synergy is key to maintaining the momentum of progress in the garment industry, meeting emerging challenges, enhancing joint efforts, and fostering mutual trust.

Reaffirming its commitment, Better Work Jordan pledges continuous support to the national tripartite constituents and other partners. This includes building capacity, protecting workers' rights, and advancing the industry in alignment with Jordanian legislation and international labour standards.

The enduring goal is to forge a path of sustainable development, ensuring that the gains made in the garment industry are not only preserved, but also built upon for future prosperity.

**The Better Work Jordan team**



**88**  
Factories



**86**  
Assessment reports



**79,000**  
Workers in registered factories



**504**  
Advisory visits



**266**  
Training sessions



**20**  
International buyers

## ► Project Advisory Committee deliberates on new OSH regulations and digital wage payments

The recent [meeting](#) of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) of the Better Work Jordan programme focused on the Ministry of Labour's (MoL) latest regulations on occupational safety and health (OSH). Other discussions included the 2023 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for the country's garment industry, as well as the use of heavy machinery and digital wage payments.



The meeting brought together representatives from the MoL, the Jordan Garments, Accessories, and Textiles Exporters' Association (JGATE), the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment, and Clothing Industries JTGCU, the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), the US Embassy in Jordan, the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR), and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The PAC discussed Regulations No. 31, 32, and 33 of 2023, which pertain to hazard prevention, preventive and curative medical care for workers, and the establishment of occupational safety and health committees, respectively.

The PAC examined the operational risks of heavy machinery in the garment industry, noting the occurrence of significant accidents involving boilers and elevators since 2017. In response, Better Work Jordan initiated workshops and studies to bolster safety practices and legal frameworks regarding heavy machinery use.

The PAC also examined the 2023 CBA, which introduced amendments to production incentive bonus payment dates, transportation allowances, childcare services, meals for Jordanian workers, and clinic licensing requirements.

A highlight of the meeting was the presentation of preliminary survey findings on digital wage payments. It revealed a considerable shift to digital transactions among Jordanian workers, while also identifying challenges, like smartphone accessibility and withdrawal issues due to the distance between cash points and worker residences.

The meeting was a significant step towards enhancing industry standards and worker welfare, reflecting a commitment to align with global best practices.

## ► Better Work Jordan's innovative Factory Ambassador Programme

The Factory Ambassador Programme (FAP), applied by Better Work Jordan in 2022, is a long-term investment aimed at developing potential management leaders at the factory-level. It is a comprehensive program delivered in three phases over 12 months, facilitating the transfer of skills and knowledge.

In February 2022, the programme commenced for 27 factories, with 12 women and 15 men participating. As of this year, 19 factories are participating, including 10 women and 9 men, in addition to a trade union advisor.



The programme includes in-class training, on-job coaching, and the development of a two-year factory roadmap under the guidance of Better Work Jordan. It aims to sustain factory business performance, enhance collaboration with national partners, and develop skills for facilitating improvement processes and social dialogue.

Zainab Yang, team leader at Better Work Jordan, said the FAP is a vital part of Better Work Jordan's strategy to enhance factory accountability and ownership for sustained social compliance and effective dialogue.

"As the facilitator and trainer for this program, I am thrilled to equip the second group of factory representatives with Better Work tools and methods," said Zainab Yang, team leader at Better Work Jordan. "It is impressive to see the enthusiasm of these 20 new factory ambassadors as they eagerly learn about legal requirements and key soft skills like leadership, problem-solving, and effective communication to promote a win-win situation for both the enterprise and its employees."

Mr. Imran Khan, General Manager Needle Craft Factory said "The Factory Ambassador program is not only a test of your abilities but also a chance to discover new possibilities and techniques to solve the issue. Improve your data analysis and communication skills, and for sure, you will make a positive impact on your organization."

## ► World Mental Health Day: Factories lead with talent and awareness

Better Work Jordan continues to actively engage in its Mental Health Project, initiated in 2021, aiming to improve mental well-being in Jordan's garment industry, particularly for women facing job-related stress. The project enhances awareness about mental health, builds resilience among workers against mental health risks, strengthens factory-level support, and develops accessible mental health referral systems, benefiting workers, managers, and stakeholders.



Artwork, drawings, and paintings by talented garment workers

As part of commitment to this initiative, Better Work Jordan marked World Mental Health Day on October 10th, 2023, under the theme, "Mental Health is a Global Human Right". In a novel approach, garment factories took the lead in organising events, stepping up from the successful programme-led celebrations of previous years. Nine garment factories actively participated, showcasing talent competitions and mental health awareness activities for workers.

The events marked a significant shift, empowering factories to independently coordinate celebrations, thereby involving more workers and enhancing their capacity to lead such initiatives.

The competitions highlighted a diverse array of talents, from singing and dancing to fashion design, all aimed at promoting mental health well-being and inclusivity among employees. The inclusive nature of these events encouraged participation and fostered a sense of unity and community within the workforce.

A total of 74 winners were shortlisted across the participating factories, highlighting the talents and creativity within the Jordanian garment industry. The criteria for participation emphasised positive messaging, well-being, and healthy competition, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive work environment.

This year's World Mental Health Day celebration not only showcased the diverse talents within the factories, but also reinforced the commitment to mental health awareness and worker well-being. The initiative stands as a testament to the power of collective effort in fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.



Garment Factories in celebration of World Mental Health Day

## ► Bolstering mental health support in garment industry

The Mental Health Project has realised significant milestones in augmenting mental health awareness among workers and key stakeholders. This includes specialised training for medical practitioners and factory staff in mental health support, alongside the implementation of novel policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Factories have reported the establishment of effective frameworks for providing mental health services, a development facilitated by the project's role in recruiting psychologists and counsellors.

### Training initiatives

Better Work Jordan has launched critical mental health training courses in Irbid and Amman, targeted at bolstering workforce well-being in the garment sector. The training programme encompasses two iterations of the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) of the World Health Organization (WHO). These sessions are aimed at medical staff within factories, furnishing them with essential skills and knowledge to offer non-specialized care for mental, neurological, and substance use disorders. The first training round, conducted in Irbid, engaged 23 practitioners, while the second, in Amman, was delivered in English and included 26 medical staff from diverse factories.



Furthermore, a psychological first aid training-of-trainers session was conducted, involving 23 mental health focal persons from various factories. Specifically tailored for mental health focal persons in the factories, the training was structured to inculcate essential skills in psychological first aid, particularly pertinent in emergency scenarios. This initiative represents a significant advancement in promoting mental health literacy and skill development within the industry.

Post-completion of the psychological first aid training of trainers, participating factories received recommendations to extend this training to other staff members, such as workers' supervisors. This strategy is aimed at broader dissemination of the acquired knowledge, thereby enhancing the factories' capacity to provide critical psychosocial support during emergencies.

The trainings engaged 72 industry personnel, potentially impacting approximately 45,000 workers in the sector.

### Industry-wide seminar

Better Work Jordan organized a seminar with the participation of 24 doctors from 14 garment factories, focusing on mental health challenges in the industry. This seminar was pivotal in augmenting the role of these doctors in mental health support. Discussions centered around the myriad challenges confronted by factory-based doctors in providing mental health support to workers, the mhGAP programme, treatment of mental disorders, and crucially, addressing the hurdles inhibiting doctor support for mental health patients in factory clinics. These challenges include low doctor income, extended worker hours, factory management concerns over work absenteeism, the absence of an electronic system for case tracking within factory clinics, lack of management response, and language and cultural barriers.

This seminar has been a crucial step in fostering collaboration between factories and the mental health clinic in the Dulayl area, highlighting a commitment to improving worker well-being in Jordan's garment sector.



## Project impact soars as mental health professionals multiply

The Mental Health Project has been instrumental in advocating for the recruitment of specialized mental health professionals within garment factories. To date, 13 psychologists and counsellors of various nationalities, including Jordanian, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan, have been employed, benefiting approximately 28,000 workers. This trend indicates an increasing commitment among factories to incorporate mental health support into their workforce strategies. Notably, one factory has extended its psychologist's services to the Better Work Jordan mental health clinic in the Dulayl area, demonstrating a heightened level of social responsibility by the factory management to maintain mental health services.



This initiative is a significant stride towards cultivating a supportive and inclusive work environment in Jordan's garment industry. Both workers and management staff have expressed appreciation for the contributions of psychologists and counsellors. Additionally, non-specialist mental health personnel at factories have augmented their capabilities in identifying workers in need of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

## ► Industrial seminar sheds light on updated OSH regulations

Better Work Jordan, in collaboration with the MoL, conducted an [industrial seminar](#), addressing recently introduced amendments to OSH regulations across the country's industries. The primary objective was to strengthen these regulations, with the goal of improving overall working conditions.



These regulations are No. 31 for OSH and Occupational Hazard Prevention; No. 32 for Preventive and Curative Medical Care for Workers at Enterprises; and No. 33 for the establishment of OSH committees and the appointment of OSH supervisors across enterprises. The amendments encompassed instructions on the classification of risk levels at economic enterprises, risk assessment in the work environment, and the identification of types of occupational hazards, along with necessary precautions and preventive measures.

The seminar specifically focused on the four sectors registered with Better Work Jordan, which include the Garment, Engineering, Plastic, and Chemical industries.

The revised regulations classify sectors into two distinct categories: high risk and low risk, according to their economic activities. All four sectors registered under Better Work Jordan are designated as high risk. In addition, the MoL is committed to conducting awareness sessions for the sectors not yet covered, aiming to complete this initiative by the first quarter of 2024.

Representatives from the MoL, the JGATE, the JTGCU and Better Work Jordan took part in the seminar. To enhance awareness of these amendments, the MoL launched a comprehensive campaign targeting employers and enterprises. The seminar also covered several subjects affected by legislative amendments, such as sick leave policies, the required number of medical staff in enterprises, and specifications for medical clinics. It highlighted the importance of legislation to enhance the efficiency of healthcare services for the workforce and promote the improvement of safety conditions in enterprises.

As a follow-up, the OSH directorate will publish a Question and Answer (Q&A) Guideline in both Arabic and English. This guideline will be accessible on the MoL's website by the first quarter of 2024.

The seminar illustrates the strong collaboration between MoL and Better Work Jordan, highlighting their commitment to improving workplace safety and health standards.

## ► Strengthening technical skills of labour inspectors for enhanced assessments

Better Work Jordan, in partnership with the MoL and based on the sustainability plan with stakeholders, has conducted a workshop aimed at enhancing the performance of labour inspectors in conducting assessment visits.

This workshop, part of a short-term secondment programme with Better Work Jordan, saw 14 participants from various cities in the country (Irbid, Zarqa, Karak, Tafleh, Aqaba, and Amman) engaging in discussions about OSH tours, worker interviews, and avoiding counterproductive practices.

Facilitated by Better Work Jordan specialists, the event focused on sharing critical technical information, handling challenges, and making effective recommendations, all aimed at building the inspectors' capacity for more effective assessments.

Also, in collaboration with the MoL and the trade union, Better Work Jordan organised the second bi-yearly meeting between the 14 MoL inspectors and the 11 JTGCU advisors.

This gathering focused on addressing challenges in the garment sector, enhancing the effectiveness of advisory visits to factories, and standardising procedures for managing union and OSH committee meetings.

Spearheaded by Better Work Jordan specialists, the event highlighted a shared commitment to overcoming sector-specific hurdles and strengthening collaborative efforts.



## ► Celebrating diversity and recognising workers with disabilities: Sajida's story of success

### Human Success Story

Celebrating International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Better Work Jordan honours [Sajida Al-Musedein](#), 26, a resilient Jordanian embroidery artisan with disabilities. Despite physical and vision impairments, Sajida secured a garment factory job and rose to a union committee member, advocating for colleagues, especially those with disabilities.

Jordan's garment industry, employing around 70,000 workers, including many from East and Southeast Asia, boasts over a thousand workers with disabilities, predominantly women. The sector, compliant with national laws mandating disability inclusion, still seeks enhancements in accessibility and vocational training to fully leverage the capabilities of workers with disabilities.

Factories are encouraged to adopt disability-friendly modifications and implement comprehensive training, addressing both technical and soft skills. Overcoming social stigmas and ensuring informed participation in union activities remain key challenges. The sector's union has initiated a strategy to improve engagement, including with workers with disabilities.

Sajida's story, part of a growing trend towards inclusivity, inspires further strides towards a representative and equitable garment industry. Her achievements and those of other workers with disabilities highlight the ongoing journey towards a more inclusive labour market in Jordan.



## ► Collaboration and capacity building: Better Work Jordan and JTGCU empower workers

The Better Work Jordan programme and the JTGCU have bolstered their partnership, signing a comprehensive new implementation agreement to enhance JTGCU's capacity and continue their cooperation. This agreement, following the initial one signed in 2022, involved appointing 7 new JTGCU representatives to cover all Jordanian governorates, including, for the first time, representatives in the southern region comprising Aqaba, Tafilah, and Karak. JTGCU activities included conducting advisory visits, developing its website, establishing a mental health clinic in the Dulayl industrial area, and improving social dialogue in the garment sector through the negotiation of the 2022 CBA, with the assistance of a specialised lawyer.

The programme, however, identified that the first implementation agreement lacked clarity in some respects, notably in defining the specific roles and responsibilities of JTGCU organisers. The new implementation agreement aims to be more explicit and encompassing, covering areas such as mental health, advisory visits, communication enhancement, and the creation of a JTGCU-specific database, set to continue until the end of 2023.



To monitor the activities of newly appointed JTGCU representatives, Better Work Jordan organised many visits to Karak, Tafilah, and Aqaba in the southern region. The aim was to assess the progress and operations of JTGCU committees within factories. The visits identified operational deficiencies in committees and procedural ambiguities at workers' meetings, leading to the development of a standardization guide by the JTGCU. This guide, now published on the JTGCU's website, has been integral in training representatives to improve their effectiveness in committee meetings.

Additionally, Better Work Jordan supported the JTGCU in negotiating the 2022 CBA, involving a specialised lawyer to ensure legal accuracy, and culminating in the agreement's signing and official recording with the MoL.

In a bid to foster social dialogue at the factory-level, Better Work Jordan partnered with a northern region factory to develop a CBA. The initiative involved training Jordanian and migrant workers in negotiation, social dialogue, and problem-solving skills. This training empowered the workers to effectively articulate their demands and negotiate with their employers. The anticipated signing of this agreement, marking the first directly negotiated factory-level CBA in Jordan's garment sector, is expected within the next two months. It aligns with the provision that it maintains the benefits of the sectoral CBA.

Additionally, to highlight labour issues and amplify workers' voices, Better Work Jordan, aided by the JTGCU, and in cooperation with the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation (JRTV), featured a JTGCU representative on-air weekly during October and November. These radio broadcasts addressed crucial worker-related topics, including working conditions, wages, the CBA, and broader sectoral issues.

Better Work Jordan, in collaboration with the JTGCU under a knowledge sharing programme with Morocco, has successfully conducted a series of training sessions from September to December 2023. This initiative focused on empowering Jordanian trade union members with vital skills and knowledge to advocate for workers' rights, improve working conditions, and foster better workplace relationships. The training covered key areas such as trade union principles, communication strategies, gender perspectives, and the legal aspects of trade union membership in Jordan. It also addressed the importance of social dialogue, collective bargaining, building trust with workers, and managing employer relationships effectively. The programme's aim was to equip participants with a comprehensive understanding of their roles in the dynamic field of worker representation and engagement.



In an effort to enhance the employment of workers with disabilities in Jordan's garment sector, Better Work Jordan, in collaboration with national partners and stakeholders, is devising comprehensive guidelines. These guidelines are designed to help factory owners at both the institutional and technical levels, promoting an inclusive work environment. They include tools and recommendations for policy formulation and practical workplace adjustments, such as physical modifications and fostering a culture of diversity. The initiative aims to recognise the potential of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their fair treatment and integration into the production process. The next phase involves endorsing these guidelines across the sector and conducting training sessions to facilitate their effective implementation.

## ► Advancing grievance handling: Stakeholders collaborate on new mechanism

Better Work Jordan, in collaboration with the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), recently convened a **meeting** with garment industry stakeholders, including JGATE, JTGCU, MoL, representatives from the Embassy of Bangladesh, and civil society organizations, to deliberate on a draft worker grievance mechanism, aimed at strengthening working conditions in line with Jordan's national objectives.

The meeting discussed proposed procedures for submitting worker grievances, the role of the JTGCU, and the proactive involvement of the MoL platform, "Hemaya", in addressing and following up on grievances.



The mechanism is designed to bolster existing national laws, including the Jordanian Labour Law, by establishing standard procedures that align with both international and national labour standards. It focuses particularly on addressing challenges, such as tackling gender-based violence, enhancing work environments, safeguarding workers' rights, and fostering healthy labour relations.

Under the draft mechanism, workers, either individually or as groups, can submit grievances to the union or the "Hemaya" platform. It also includes provision for referring grievances to external legal service providers, including civil society organisations, thereby ensuring fair treatment for all complainants.

"Hemaya", an electronic complaints platform, is dedicated to "upholding workers' rights and obligations towards employers, while also ensuring the resilience and sustainability of private sector operations".

A key recommendation from the meeting was to initiate comprehensive training programmes for middle management in garment factories. A trial implementation of the draft grievance mechanism is proposed, with refinements to be made based on feedback from workers and employers. The JTGCU plans to initiate an awareness campaign aimed at educating garment workers on standard grievance handling procedures.

According to the 2023 annual report of Better Work Jordan, 22 per cent of garment factories lack effective grievance handling processes. In contrast, factories with established dialogue and grievance mechanisms are more adept at pre-emptively addressing worker concerns, thereby fostering a more productive and harmonious work environment.

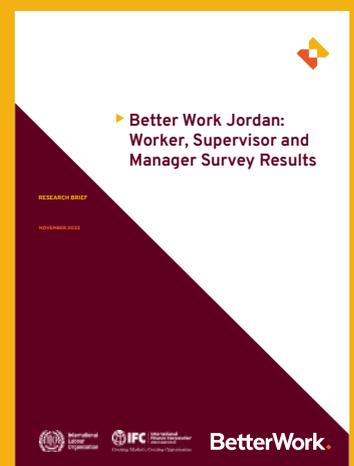
## ► Voices from the factory floor: 2023 insights from key survey feedback

Better Work Jordan is dedicated to enhancing the working conditions and business competitiveness of the Jordanian garment sector. The programme actively conducts surveys as a part of its ongoing efforts to gather comprehensive data about the industry's state.

This brief summarizes responses to key questions in the surveys implemented between 2019 and 2023.<sup>2</sup> Aligned with the BWJ Phase Four strategy aimed at developing the capacity of national stakeholder, this brief presents the progress of stakeholders' engagement over time. This information not only offers valuable insights into stakeholders' readiness to fulfil their mandates but also identifies gaps where additional effort is required to ensure the sustainability of the Better Work programme in Jordan.

A crucial aspect of this endeavour involves obtaining direct feedback from workers, supervisors, and managers in garment factories. This approach is essential for accurately tracking, understanding, and fostering the sector's development, ensuring a holistic view of the industry's dynamics and needs.

Find out about this year's Worker, Supervisor, Manager Survey Results 2023.



## ► Assessing digital wage payment systems in Jordan's garment industry

The longstanding tradition of cash payments in Jordan's garment industry, predominantly observed among workers, and notably confined to a minority within larger exporting factories, has experienced a significant shift.

This practice underwent a rapid transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, marking a pivotal moment that extended across the entire sector.

The move towards digital payments was greatly facilitated by robust governmental support, spanning various ministries, along with necessary regulatory adaptations, making the adoption of digital methods more feasible and widespread.

Better Work Jordan, in collaboration with the JTGCU, has embarked on a rapid [assessment](#) of digital wage payment systems within satellite units in the garment sector. This study is designed to conduct a swift yet thorough assessment, aiming to capture a broad spectrum of insights into the workers' experiences and viewpoints regarding the current wage payment methods.

In addition to focusing on the procedural aspects, the study, launched in August 2023 under Better Work Jordan [Phase IV Strategy](#), takes a deeper dive into the complex financial realities faced by both female and male workers in these factories. It aims to uncover the diverse economic landscapes prevalent in the industry, providing a nuanced understanding of the impact of this transition on different segments of the workforce.

### Study findings

- **Near-complete transition:** The study revealed that the shift from cash payments to digital wages was nearly complete, with less than 4 per cent of workers still receiving cash.
- **High worker satisfaction:** Despite the change in wage distribution being primarily determined by factories, an impressive 91 per cent of surveyed workers expressed satisfaction with the transition.
- **Accessibility challenges:** One of the major challenges identified was the limited accessibility to ATM and money providers. Only one surveyed factory reported frequent ATM usage on its premises, while workers from other factories often had to bear the cost and invest time in traveling to distant facilities for cash withdrawal.
- **Financial costs:** Cashing out salaries often came with a financial cost for workers, with over 40 per cent of those surveyed spending JOD 1-3 monthly for this purpose. Additionally, 22 per cent spent around JOD 5, which amounts to over 2 per cent of their minimum wage. These costs, albeit seemingly small, can add up and impact the disposable income of workers.
- **Gender disparities:** The study highlighted gender disparities in wage advancements and financial decision-making. Women, despite having fewer outstanding loans, tended to seek wage advancements more frequently.
- **Limited financial autonomy for women:** Furthermore, the research indicated that women have lower financial decision-making autonomy compared to men, with 13 per cent of women excluded from the decision-making process regarding their own earnings. This lack of control over their financial resources makes them more vulnerable and raises concerns about financial empowerment and gender equality.



## ► Workforce dynamics: Study highlights Jordanians' success in garment industry's middle management

Better Work Jordan is set to publish a comprehensive study that delves into the increasing integration of Jordanian employees in middle management roles within the nation's rapidly growing garment industry. This sector, integral to Jordan's economy and a major employer, has traditionally been reliant on migrant labour, with about 77,800 workers in 2022, predominantly from South Asia and other regions. However, approximately 25 per cent of this workforce consists of Jordanians.

The study underscores a significant shift, spotlighting garment factories' success in attracting and retaining Jordanian talent in middle management. It examines key elements contributing to this success, such as improved working conditions, career advancement opportunities, competitive compensation and benefits, and progressive management policies.

Further, the study aims to illuminate various factors that influence employee satisfaction, including work environment, career growth opportunities, remuneration, workplace culture, governance practices, and prospects for professional development.

The conclusions and recommendations from this case study are poised to be an invaluable asset for industry players, governmental agencies, and relevant organizations. These insights are geared towards strengthening the hiring and retention of Jordanians in middle management positions, thereby fostering the sustained development and expansion of the garment sector in Jordan.

Aligning with Jordan's ten-year Economic Modernization Vision, which focuses on enhancing employment, income, and global positioning through investments in green technology, new services, and high-value sectors like the garment industry, the comprehensive report will be released in January 2024. It is expected to offer a wealth of data and actionable recommendations to further these goals.



Better Work Jordan 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. Better Work Jordan 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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