



International
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Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

Despite COVID-19 significant impacts on Jordan's garment industry, the sector rebounded significantly in 2021 as orders rose and the direct effect of the pandemic faded. Exports dropped by 15 per cent in 2020, but rebounded in 2021 with 8 per cent growth. Total exports remain lower than the peak of USD 2 billion in 2019, with USD 1.8 billion exported in 2021.

These facts demonstrate agility and resilience of the sector, thanks to successful stakeholder collaboration, supported by the Better Work Jordan programme.

In its 14 years of operations, Better Work Jordan has made important strides in improving working conditions and industrial relations in the garment industry, where the value of exports has doubled and jobs has significantly increased despite various challenges.

As the industry continues to grow and improve, with enhanced contribution to the country's socioeconomic development, the programme aims to build on these achievements and ensure sustainability. That approach is embedded in the recently launched Phase IV Strategy of Better Work Jordan, which goes beyond its traditional role of core services delivery, and focuses on developing the capacity of national stakeholders.

Devised through a participatory process in partnership with national stakeholders, the five-year Phase IV Strategy strives for a competitive garment industry that advances socioeconomic development, alleviates poverty and protects worker rights.

Better Work Jordan and national stakeholders are committed to strengthening labour market governance in the garment industry, upholding worker rights in line with national labour legislation and core international labour standards, and improving the sector's competitiveness and contribution to the economy.

Each stakeholder has a key mandate, and the programme seeks to empower these partners to implement its core services while ensuring their quality.

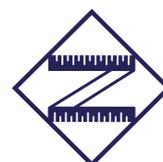
Under Phase IV Strategy, Better Work Jordan will continue to closely collaborate with stakeholders on addressing challenges facing workers, at the policy level and in different areas, such as gender equality, recruitment practices, wages, and working hours. The strategy outlines a roadmap for transition to national stakeholder leadership in promoting decent working conditions, strengthening industrial relations at the factory and industry levels, and advancing long-lasting improvements.

Using the garment industry as an entry point, the programme aspires to make a positive impact on working conditions and labour market governance beyond Jordan's garment industry. Better Work Jordan and its national partners are confident that remarkable progress can be achieved, contributing to a more resilient, more inclusive and more sustainable industries.

The Better Work Jordan team



96
Factories



46
Assessment reports



71,027
Workers in registered factories



160
Advisory visits



1,232
Training participants



21
International buyers



► Phase IV Strategy (2027 - 2022)

Entering its fourth phase, Better Work Jordan aims to consolidate and advance its achievements, while equipping the tripartite constituents in Jordan to take a leading role in maintaining and advancing these achievements. With this approach, the programme aspires to ensure that its impact on working conditions in the garment industry is sustainable.

Phase IV Strategy foresees three main pillars for the garment sector by 2027:

1. An effective system of tripartite-plus labour market governance, in which workers' rights are upheld and protected in line with national labour laws and core international labour standards;
2. Export growth combined with active labour market policies will increase the garment industry's contribution to Jordanian employment;
3. A positive impact on working conditions and labour market governance beyond Jordan's export-oriented garment industry.



These are all working towards a shared vision with garment sector stakeholders for a competitive Jordanian garment industry built on stakeholder collaboration, which advances national socioeconomic development, lifts people out of poverty and upholds the fundamental rights of all workers.

"The garment sector has been steadily improving since 2006, including various aspects in terms of legislation, as well as relations between workers, the government, and employers,"

Fathallah Al Omrani,
President of the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile,
Garment, and Clothing Industries.

"Better Work Jordan will continue to closely collaborate with stakeholders on addressing challenges facing workers, at the policy level and in different areas, such as gender equality, recruitment practices, wages, and working hours."

Tareq Abu Qaoud,
Better Work Jordan Programme Manager

During phase IV, Better Work Jordan will work in close partnership with the tripartite constituents to enable them to promote decent working conditions, enhance industrial relations at the factory and industry levels, and advance long-lasting improvements.



Using the garment industry as an entry point, Better Work Jordan will closely collaborate with International Labour Organization (ILO) specialists and other programmes to make a positive impact on working conditions and labour market governance beyond Jordan's garment sector. To achieve this, the programme's capacity building interventions have been designed to have positive spillover effects in areas such as labour inspection and combating gender-based violence in the workplace.

"Jordan's garment sector has succeeded, with the support from Better Work Jordan, as well as collaboration among national and international stakeholders, in resolving a number of challenging issues that might otherwise be considered insurmountable and structurally endemic. These issues include wage discrimination between local and migrant workers, pre-hiring pregnancy tests, and migrant labour recruitment fees."

Yusra El Esir,
PVH, Manager, Corporate Responsibility

"The sector has proved its ability to comply with the Jordanian labour law and international labour standards, as evidenced by the presence of top international clothing brands in the country. The presence of top international brands in the in the country confirms this point."

Sawsan Al Habahbeh
J-GATE Executive Director,

Phase IV Strategy was developed through a participatory process conducted in partnership with the national tripartite constituents, and in consultation with other stakeholders including international brands, donors, civil society organisations and international development organisations.



"Very good achievements" in the garment sector, Some companies comply with the Jordanian Labour Law, and are collaborating with the ministry to a great extent to organise labour and ensure work environment consistent with national legislation, Other companies, especially subcontractors, do not comply with the law, which negatively impacts the sector."

"The government seeks to amend labour legislation "to address challenges at industrial zones and worker dormitories, and ensure effective labour inspection"

Haitham Al Najdawi,
Ministry of Labour, Head of the Inspection Directorate

► Better Work Jordan Annual Report 2022

Presenting findings and observations from Better Work Jordan interactions in the garment sector throughout 2021, the 13th annual report showed that exports rebounded with eight per cent growth, as well as progress on working conditions.

Total exports remain lower than the peak of USD 2 billion in 2019, with USD 1.8 billion exported in 2021. Order stability has improved overall.

The “[Annual Report 2022: An Industry and Compliance Review](#)” said compliance with national law and international labour standards improved in some key areas, including accurate and timely compensation and recruitment practices, such as reduced pregnancy tests for migrant workers.

Better Work Jordan reported high non-compliance in areas including accommodation, freedom of association, and access to health services.

According to the annual report, there are numerous non-compliance observations when it comes to worker accommodation, although these have decreased in some areas in the last year. There are between 200 and 300 dormitory buildings in the Jordanian garment sector housing over 45,000 workers.

48th PAC Meeting

Members of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) of Better Work Jordan convened its 48th meeting in March, focusing on report findings. The meeting included representatives of the Ministry of Labour (MoL), which heads PAC, the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT), as well as the Jordanian Garment, Accessories and Textiles Exporters’ Association (J-GATE), the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries, the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) and the US Embassy in Amman.



The report highlighted notable challenges in occupational health and safety (OSH), including worker protection and welfare facilities. However, there was an increased willingness from factories to make improvements in areas of OSH, suggesting an optimistic outlook for next year.

The report also recorded difficult conditions for many workers. Long working hours, a historic challenge, was amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, putting physical and psychological pressure on workers. Migrants worked 61 hours per week on average in 2021, while Jordanians worked an average of 42 hours a week. Migrant workers make up three-quarters of the workforce of 62,963 workers, and nearly 75 per cent of workers are women.

The report draws from multiple sources, including assessment findings from unannounced compliance visits to factories conducted jointly with the Ministry of Labour (MoL); data collected during regular factory interactions; and survey data gathered over three years from workers and managers. The Better Work programme is mandatory for garment factories that export to the US under the US-Jordan Free Trade Agreement. There are 91 factories in the programme, employing around 95 per cent of garment workers in Jordan.

► Mental Health in the Garment Sector

The [Mental Health Project](#), launched by Better Work Jordan in January 2021, continues to address issues impacting the mental health of [garment workers](#), who face many physical and psychological stressors.

Better Work Jordan, National Partners Step Up Mental Health Efforts

In early 2022, programme specialists, Ministry of Health (MoH) officials, and representatives of the J-GATE, the trade union, and garment factories met at a workshop to set priorities for project activities.

During the workshop, the participants examined the status of the project, and discussed the need for direct communication and engagement with workers, offering a series of mental health-related recommendations to industry stakeholders, like diplomatic missions of labour exporting countries, the trade union, factories, and workers.



Supporting and guiding garment factories, the project has developed a [first version of Mental Health Policy](#) in the Workspace, and provided training for mental health focal points.

Creating Sustainable Mental Health Services for Garment Workers in Jordan

In a [separate workshop](#), Better Work Jordan discussed with national partners and Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) service providers the need for sustainable MHPSS service delivery to garment workers, increased awareness, and improved working conditions.

The workshop discussed key findings of the study, "[Assessment of Knowledge, Perceptions, and Attitudes of Mental Health: The Garment Industry in Jordan](#)". The study was conducted in partnership with the Information and Research Centre at the King Hussein Foundation between June and November 2021.



The assessment aimed at highlighting the need for providing garment workers with MHPSS services, and for increased awareness of mental health as well as improved workplace facilities.

The Mental Health Project has organised two different training-of-trainers (ToT) courses for workers, focusing on potential root causes of mental health problems.

Financial Education

The first ToT, developed with the ILO Global Programme on Financial Education, centred on improving worker financial literacy, one of the issues contributing to good mental health. It was followed by Training of Beneficiaries (ToBs). Fifteen participants took part in the ToT. The ToT contributed to positive and responsible workplaces and increased productivity. The number of final beneficiaries was 160 workers, who agreed that ToBs enabled them to make informed financial decisions about earning, spending, budgeting, using financial services including loans, savings, insurance, payments, and money transfers.



Sexual Reproductive Health

The second ToT, in collaboration with Ministry of Health, was on sexual and reproductive health rights to improve worker knowledge and behaviours concerning family planning, abortion/unwanted pregnancy, and menstrual hygiene. The ToT was held for three groups of trainees, with a total number of 41 participants from 12 garment factories in Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ). The number of final beneficiaries was 1,055 female workers, and 30 male workers.



► SRH Training Manual



► Partnership for Decent Work, Inclusive Growth

Bolstering their partnership to advance decent work and inclusive growth, Better Work Jordan and the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries have recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on the implementation of 2021-2026 union strategy.



Under the two-year MoU, the two partners will exchange expertise in [strategy](#) execution that entails objectives, such as improving communication and engagement with garment workers; advancing sector industrial relations and worker participation in collective bargaining; and enhancing worker grievance mechanism, as well as trade union governance and organisational capacity.

In accordance with the renewable MoU, Better Work Jordan and the trade union have agreed to work together for advancing workers' right to mental and physical health. With planned support from the programme, the trade union will establish a mental health clinic for garment workers. Better Work Jordan intends to hold train-the-trainer courses for union staff capacity building in mental health care. The two parties will collaborate on raising worker and employer awareness of mental health issues.

The MoU also covers gender-based violence, as the programme intends to support the trade union in organising [gender](#)-based violence case management training for union staff, and creating follow-up procedures, including first aid and referral systems, as well as a complaints mechanism.

The two sides will cooperate on enhancing the knowledge of [collective bargaining agreement \(CBA\)](#) and grievance procedures among union factory-level committee members. With support from legal specialists, Better Work Jordan intends to provide workers in the sector with legal assistance and advisory services. The trade union will collaborate with these legal specialists, refer cases to them without charge, and keep records of workers referred to legal aid centres.

The MoU stipulates a plan of action that Better Work Jordan and the trade union will prepare, defining mechanisms and procedures required for joint coordination and collaboration, as well as roles for each party in strategy execution.

The trade union will benefit from [advisory services](#) offered by Better Work Jordan to enterprises registered with the programme, including training, coordinated joint factory visits, and collaboration on factory improvement plans.

Designed in partnership with Better Work Jordan, the strategy is designed to strengthen union governance and democracy, enhance mechanisms for communication with workers, advance industrial relations, and secure the financial future and equity of the trade union. The union is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the rights and interests of workers in the sector. This applies for both members and non-members of the union.

► Capacity Building of Labour Inspectors, Workers

Better Work Jordan is focused on increasing capacity, effectiveness, and responsibility of stakeholders. The programme will gradually transfer its assessment tools and methodologies to the MoL.

With support from the ILO/Better Work Jordan, the MoL is developing the national labour inspection system.

"Behavioural Change and Communication Skills at Work" Training

As part of this process, the MoL has provided comprehensive training for 170 labour inspectors, who took part in a course on behavioural change and communication skills at work. The training is aimed at enhancing the means used by inspectors to communicate and deal with workers and employers.

In March, Better Work Jordan organised a capacity building training for labour inspectors on advisory services, including areas of occupational safety and health.

The training was funded under "the EU-ILO Collaboration in the Monitoring of Labour Aspects in the Implementation of the EU's Rules of Origin Initiative for Jordan - Phase II", which aims at promoting decent work opportunities and promote inclusive economic growth.



Training of Trainers (ToT)

Under the same EU-ILO collaboration initiative, workers, managers and supervisors from garment, plastic, chemicals and engineering factories completed in May a five-day training of trainers (ToT) course organised by Better Work Jordan. Aimed at enabling these employees to deliver training courses at the factories, the training equipped the participants with effective communication, coaching, and employee engagement skills.



Jordanian Labour Law Seminar

Moreover, the programme organised a seminar for middle management staff at factories exporting to the EU from Jordan's garment, chemical, plastics, and engineering sectors. The seminar explained to the participants the Jordanian Labour Law and its amendments. Topics included employment contracts, worker responsibilities, parental leave, and regulations on nurseries.

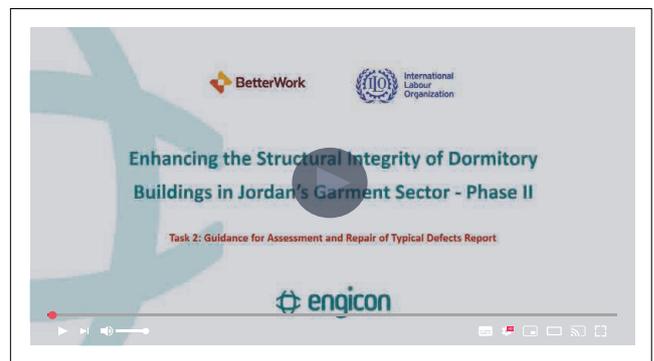


► Structural Integrity of Worker Dormitories

Better Work Jordan collaborates with stakeholders, and works with an engineering firm to produce detailed reports on the issues in dormitories and solutions for improving them, under the project, “Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan’s Garment Sector”, currently in its second phase. The project aims at raising awareness among factories about typical building safety requirements and identifying national requirements for dormitories as well as safety issues not covered by national codes, in line international good practices.



Task 1: Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan’s Garment Sector



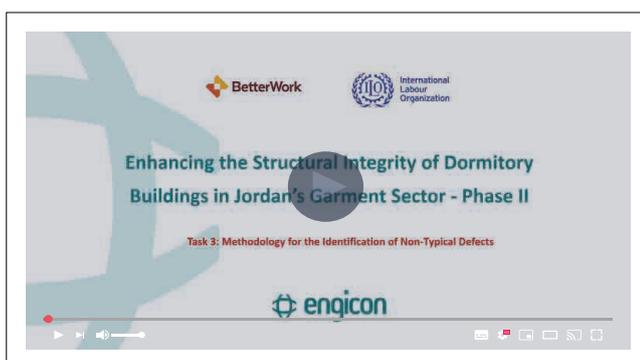
Task 2: Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan’s Garment Sector

At a recent seminar, the programme and J-GATE discussed assessment of structural integrity of worker dormitories, conducted by engineering consulting firm, Engicon,

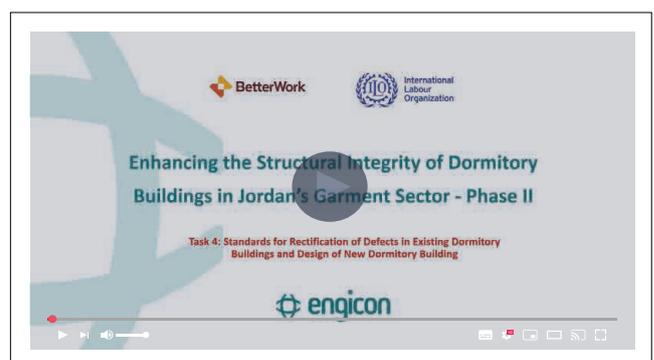
Engicon was tasked with preparing a typical defects identification report; providing guidance for assessment and repair of typical defects; setting a methodology for identification of other non-typical defects; and suggesting standards for rectification of defects in existing dormitory buildings and design of new dormitories.

The MoL has formed a committee comprising the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MoPWH), Ministry of Municipals Affairs (MoMA), the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), and other governmental entities, to draft a national building code for worker dormitories.

Engicon has identified several problems in a sample of buildings surveyed, and came up with many recommendations for improving cleanliness, food and hygiene standards, safety and health as well as power, ventilation, and fire safety systems.



Task 3: Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan’s Garment Sector



Task 4: Enhancing the Structural Integrity of Dormitory Buildings in Jordan’s Garment Sector

Building Culture of Learning

Better Work Jordan seeks to create a learning culture, fostering transfer of knowledge from garment exporting factories to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the country in a bid to develop their capabilities.

As part of its effort, Better Work Jordan, in collaboration with J-GATE, has organised a tour of a major programme-registered factory for a group of fashion designers enrolled in DeZain Space, a platform mentoring designers.

The visit aimed to help the designers understand operational, technical, and technological aspects of large-scale garment manufacturing.

The visitors learned about the business, operations, products, and clients of the company, located in Al Hassan Industrial Estate, in the northern governorate of Irbid, as well as the stages of fashion cycle.

Company staff and management walked the designers through processes of production and printing facilities, and answered questions about working conditions and environment

"I have visited many factories with various sizes, and this one is the largest I have seen. I did not expect that," said Ammar Abu Tarbush, a designer who runs an online business.

The garment industry in Jordan is primarily driven by large exporting factories who export to the US under the US-Jordan Free Trade Agreement.



Factory Ambassador Programme

In another training, 27 management staff from 10 garment factories completed in March a five-day capability building course under Better Work Jordan Factory Ambassador programme. The training enables the staff to implement Better Work Jordan methodologies and techniques, acting as change agents who sustain business performance, facilitate social dialogue, and enhance collaboration with national partners.

The Factory Ambassador Programme is designed to transfer knowledge, skills and experience to middle managers and other factory representatives in order to better address non-compliance issues and enhance social dialogue in their factories.



Engaging with Civil Society Organisations, Media

Better Work Jordan collaborates with civil society organisations (CSOs) and media outlets in Jordan as they play important roles in fostering decent working conditions.

The programme has recently held discussion meetings with representatives of local CSOs and journalists, focusing on industry updates, improvements, as well as programme observations and findings of the its 2022 annual report.

Better Work Jordan called on CSOs and the media to highlight labour issues and challenges facing workers in order to support workers' voices and rights. It briefed them on Phase IV Strategy efforts to help national stakeholders fulfil their mandates more effectively.

The discussion meetings aimed at making workers' voices heard, enhancing collaboration with CSOs and media outlets, and providing them with transparent information and data, in order to raise worker and public awareness.



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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