



**BetterWork**  
Jordan

## 2017 Newsletter A year in review

### Dear Friends,

It has been over eight years since Better Work Jordan established its operations in the country, accepting the challenge of extending its mandate to the garment industry in cooperation with local and international stakeholders.

BWJ has risen to the occasion. After joining forces with all levels of the garment industry, the programme and its partners delivered its promises: improving working conditions and industry respect of labour rights for workers, while boosting the competitiveness of apparel businesses.

The industry now gives work to over 65,000 people, including an ever-increasing number of Jordanian women, with exports reaching some \$1.6 billion. In 2009, the United States Department of Labor included garments produced in Jordan on its Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) list. Last year, Jordan's garment industry was removed from that list.

These great results have been achieved only thanks to continuous commitment and strong action from all of you.

Now, ILO/BWJ and their partners have geared up to help the kingdom win its own bet: creating jobs for both Jordanian and Syrian refugees over the coming years, following the pledge the country made at last year's Supporting Syria and the Region conference in London.

We deem it possible.

We are currently strategizing how to work more closely in the coming months with all our partners to achieve the ambitious goals that are also included in our programme's new, five-year phase.

BWJ strives and campaigns for a Jordanian manufacturing sector that lifts local, migrant and refugee workers out of poverty by providing decent work, empowering women, driving business competitiveness and supporting inclusive economic growth.

A gender strategy across all seven BW offices is forthcoming and focuses on supporting female workers to further advance their careers and in life amid a safe working environment.

There is much to be done, and success is only achievable if all stakeholders join forces.

We want to ensure we can all converge on one set of standards for the manufacturing industry, so that Jordan can become stronger economically and a further model of compliance.

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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## BWJ rolls up sleeves for Phase Three

**B**WJ entered the programme's Phase Three this year, pledging to continue its role as a catalyst for change in global supply chains and its promotion of decent work and socio-economic development.

Since its launch in 2008, BWJ has helped local and international stakeholders improve working conditions and labour standards across the country's garment industry. This intervention has been associated with a steady improvement in working conditions and a significant strengthening of industrial relations through a sector-wide collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

Over the past eight years, the industry has doubled the value of total exports and significantly increased

the number of jobs despite a challenging operating environment in the region.

The new project phase runs through 2022 and is set to consolidate the results achieved so far, and further hone national stakeholders' capacity.

BWJ's main goals include the acceleration of the improvement process inside garment factories and across further manufacturing sectors.

Implementing this strategy will require an even stronger cooperation between the programme, its national and international stakeholders, and the private and public sectors.

## Updates from the government of Jordan, EU, and ILO partnership

**T**he Ministry of Labour, the European Union and the ILO signed a [project agreement](#) in April to provide matching services for Jordanian and Syrian refugee job seekers, connecting them with employers.

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

The project aims at supporting the implementation of the EU-Jordan Compact, including helping Jordanian companies take advantage of the trade opportunities provided by the new trade facilitation, leading to the creation of decent jobs for both Jordanian and Syrian refugees over the coming years.

The ILO and UNHCR, in coordination with the Jordanian government, launched the Za'atari Office for Employment (ZOE) in August, to help the camp's 79,000 residents access formal work opportunities across Jordan.

With the help of the employment office staff, job seekers

submit job applications directly to potential employers.

So far, over 6,500 Syrian refugees in the camp benefited from the office's initiatives, while private companies advertised more than a 1,000 jobs for Syrian refugees during job fairs, mainly in the industrial and agricultural sectors. Over 30,000 entry/exit instances for refugees were recorded since ZOE's opening to enable workers to reach and return from the workplace.

The MOL started to collaborate with BWJ in 2017 to gradually expand the programme's model beyond the garment industry to help Jordanian companies abide by the country's labour law and meet international labour standards. This will allow them to export under the new trade agreement. New sectors span the chemical, plastics and engineering industries.

Also, BW's Compliance Assessment Tool (CAT), which is used by its Enterprise Advisors to assess compliance with core international labour standards and national labour law, has been recently adapted in consultation with ILO experts to match the needs of these new sectors.



## Jordan's first job centre for Syrian refugees opens in Zaatari camp

The ILO and the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR inaugurated the first employment office inside a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan on August 21. The Zaatari Office for Employment (ZOE), set up in coordination with the Government of Jordan, will facilitate access to formal work opportunities across Jordan for refugees living in the camp.

“The EU-supported centre will mean refugee workers now have a clear address to resort to when searching for jobs and applying for work permits, where they can receive all necessary information and benefit from expert support,” said Maha Kattaa, ILO Response Coordinator

for the Syria Refugee Crisis in Jordan.

The new job facility is part of an ILO project funded by the European Union (EU) and supports the implementation of the agreement between the EU and Jordan to facilitate access to EU markets by helping Jordanian employers recruit the portion of Syrian labour required in it.

The employment office at Zaatari camp is the first of a wider network of employment offices the ILO and the Ministry of Labour plan to set up, to provide employment services for local Jordanians and Syrian refugees.

[Read more](#)

## BW Management Committee meets in Jordan to strategize future steps

Members of the Better Work Management Committee met in Amman in early December to touch base on the programme’s achievements and set new goals to reach across its seven countries in 2018.

The group, comprised of senior officials from the ILO and the IFC, provides strategic direction and oversight to the overall programme. It also acts as a decision-making body that works closely with BW’s director Dan Rees and his senior management team.

Joined by ILO Director-General for Policy Deborah Greenfield, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Tomoko Nishimoto, and IFC’s Head of Advisory Services for Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Services Tania Lozansky, Rees met with members of Jordan’s garment Project Advisory Committee to receive updates on the local industry.

On its two-day mission to the country, the group visited Jordan’s Za’atari refugee camp to take stock of the collaboration between the ILO and the UNHCR, and with funds from the European Union, to increase employment opportunities for the 79,000 Syrians living inside the camp.



The officials also observed training centres run by the Norwegian Refugee Council and UN Women, where dozens of refugees currently hone sewing skills for possible job opportunities.

The group also toured some of the facilities of the sprawling Classic Fashion Apparel, the largest garment manufacturer in the country counting around 23,000 workers mostly hailing from South and South East Asia. The factory recently started to scale up its trainings for Jordanian workers and Syrian refugees to boost employment and productivity across the country.



## Words from the World Bank: Satellite factories create more jobs for women in rural Jordan

Many countries struggle with creating more and better jobs, especially when they try to increase the number of women in the labor market. Integrating women from more traditional, rural communities is especially difficult. And, if we are talking about a country with the second lowest female labor participation in the world, it might seem like an impossible task. This is exactly the situation that Jordan faced a few years ago, and today they provide an interesting example of how innovative policies can address this challenge.

A project run by the Better Work partnership between ILO and IFC aims to increase the productivity of satellite garment factories—branches of large companies scattered across the country’s rural areas to boost local employment. The project offers training and advisory on

the technical aspects of manufacturing, as well as soft skills of supervisors and workers, to prove that, with the right conditions, rural Jordanian women can use their skills to increase productivity and generate a profit for manufacturers.

To date, Better Work is piloting the initiative in four satellite factories and will roll out to the rest of satellites starting in November. As the program moves forward and as the number of satellite factories in Jordan increases -four more are slated to open this year alone- this programme’s findings will guide manufacturers and the government of Jordan towards creating more productive, sustainable jobs for rural Jordanian women.

[Read more](#)

## BWJ trains Labour Inspectors on Sexual Harassment Awareness

BWJ expanded its Sexual Harassment Prevention Training (SHPT) to the country’s labour inspectors late in 2017 in a move set to boost the ability of the country’s officials to tackle and recognize the emergence of unwelcomed behaviour on the factory floor.

According to UN standards and country laws, any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another – be it from a man or a woman – falls under the sexual harassment definition.

In addition to the damaging psychological and physical effects sexual harassment can have on victims, it can negatively affect workplace communication and overall factory productivity.

“We had a two-session industrial seminar with 30 labour inspectors on assessment guidelines and compliance assessment tools between November and December,” said BWJ Team Leader Ala’a Al Saifi. “This year, we conducted 15 joint assessments, but inspectors accompanied us as observers throughout the year.”



ILO Senior Gender Equality Specialist Emanuela Pozzan complemented BWJ’s expertise on the issue by leading a session with the inspectors on preventing sexual harassment and human trafficking.

According to the independent impact assessment of the BW programme by Boston-based Tufts University, workers whose factories partake in the BW programme steadily report fewer concerns relating to verbal abuse and sexual harassment. Participation reduced the proportion of workers concerned with sexual harassment by 18 percent in Jordan.

This training is funded by and part of an on going collaboration with the European Union.



## BWJ and GAP set to empower women across Jordan's garment industry

**B**WJ joined Gap Inc.'s [Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement](#) (P.A.C.E.) initiative in December to help female garment workers gain the skills and confidence they need to advance at work and in life.

Over 65,000 women in 12 countries have participated in the programme since its launch in 2007, according to the clothing retailer.

The two-year collaboration will target Jordanian and Bangladeshi migrant workers – the latter making up the majority of the sector's workforce in the kingdom.

“Each party is currently identifying the modules to bring to the table to complement BWJ's training, advisory and assessment core services to support the empowerment of women via the P.A.C.E. initiative,” said Tareq Abu

Qaoud, BWJ Programme Manager.

A BWJ local member is being trained on the implementation of the P.A.C.E. initiative among Jordanians, while another Bangladeshi programme employee will begin to deliver the P.A.C.E. content to garment employees early next year, after having engaged with the project back home in previous years.

Last year, P.A.C.E. expanded even further to include a programme for adolescent girls in the 13-17 age bracket in schools and other community settings. The project aims to give them earlier access to valuable life skills and the opportunity to shape their futures. Gap Inc. has committed to reaching one million women and girls around the world by 2020.

## BWJ and LABADMIN/OSH to further build the capacity of labour inspectors across Jordan

**B**WJ is gearing up to expand its collaboration with the country's Ministry of Labour by further spreading the programme's expertise and skills within the ministry's inspectorate department.

The programme will partner through 2022 with the Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health Branch (LABADMIN/OSH), which is responsible for developing and assisting the implementation of the ILO's objectives in these areas through the provision of technical expertise and support on global, regional and national levels.

LABADMIN/OSH combines within one branch the responsibilities previously divided between the former Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork) and the Labour Administration and Inspection Programme (LAB/ADMIN).

The partnership eyes a strategic compliance framework, which will be drawn on the most impactful interventions tailored to the Jordanian context.



BWJ's role will include providing key lessons from the programmes' factory level work and to partner with the ILO's body to advise inspectorates on effective approaches towards preventive action, investigate violations, and supporting factories to take sustainable, corrective action.



## Better Work Forum in Jordan unfolds plans for expansion

**B**etter Work Jordan held its ninth buyer and stakeholder forum in Amman in July, 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.

BWJ 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, BW'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.

The United States Chargé d'Affaires to Jordan, Henry T. Wooster, lauded the well-established partnership between the US and Jordan - a partnership that has already resulted in a free trade agreement worth more than one billion dollars in the garment sector alone.

77 factories enrolled in the programme in Jordan produce goods for American and other international garment brands, providing work for 65,000 people in the Kingdom.

[Read more](#)

## Better Work Jordan and Social Security Corporation sign agreement to improve workplace safety

**B**etter Work Jordan and the Social Security Corporation, a national institution applying insurance schemes across both the private and public sector, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in August. The agreement aims to boost the provision of safer working conditions across the country's factories through a partnership focusing on occupational safety and health.

The agreement, which builds upon an already well-established collaboration, is set to increase the competitiveness of the manufacturing industry by enhancing its compliance with Jordan's labour and social security laws, as well as the labour standards of the ILO.

BWJ Programme Manager Tareq Abu Qaoud said at the signing ceremony that encouraging enterprises to comply with the labour and social security laws was one



of the agency's top priorities.

The agreement will benefit workplaces spanning the garment, chemical, plastics and engineering industries, among others, following [the upcoming expansion of the UN programme to further manufacturing sectors](#). The initiative is part of efforts to help the Kingdom further access the European Union market following last year's Simplified Rules of Origin Agreement that allows Jordan to export tariff-free to the European bloc.

[Read more](#)



## UN agencies join forces to help Syrians work in Jordan's manufacturing sector

Jordan, despite facing a grim 18 per cent unemployment rate itself, became the first country from the Arab region to facilitate issuing work permits to Syrian refugees.

Some 650,000 Syrians are currently registered with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Jordan. In 2016, UNHCR joined forces with BWJ to conduct a pilot project to match refugees with formal jobs in the garment sector.

While the project was useful as an advocacy tool to reduce administrative barriers for the issuance of work permits to refugees, very few Syrians found employment in the

garment sector, said Laura Buffoni, Senior Livelihoods Officer for UNHCR Jordan.

Hailing from a conservative background, women believe working long hours outside their homes is inappropriate.

But the situation seems to be slowly changing.

Around 200 Syrian workers are currently employed in garment plants across Jordan (as of December 2017) and many more are expected to join the sector in the next few months.

[Read more](#)

## News breakdown from the sector

- Exports exceeded **\$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 **18 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. **13 satellite** units are participating in BWJ accounting for about **3,400 workers**.
- Since the start of the programme in 2009, Better Work Jordan has conducted **457 assessments** and **2,597 advisory visits**.
- It has also conducted some **1,010 trainings** for over **10,300 workers** and about **1,200 managers** in **74 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**.
- **79 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**.



## Voices from the factory floor

### **Naser, 46, helper, from the city of Zarqa, Jordan**

Though I am a pensioner, I need to work because of financial responsibilities. I am married, my wife is a housewife, and have three boys and two daughters. All my children are in school. One recently graduated with a degree in Mathematics. One of my daughters is in university and will soon become a teacher; another one just earned his high school diploma. I am really proud of them.

### **Asgar, 42, assistant production manager, from a village in Bihar\*, India**

I came to Jordan in 2002 as a machine operator. Before, I used to have a small tailor's shop in my village. My father didn't have a stable job and I had to provide for both my mother and my wife. Following the birth of my son eighteen years ago, I decided to go work abroad to earn more money and make sure he wouldn't find himself in my same, dire financial situation. I wanted him to receive a good college education to reach a distinguished position one day.

### **Kanchha, 47, cutting department, from a village of 300 inhabitants in the Chitwan district in Nepal, a six-hour drive from the capital Kathmandu**

I was elected union member for the participation committees to represent Nepali workers within our multicultural workforce for the past four years. The Nepali workers recently had an issue with food. We were not getting fish because it is difficult to get and expensive in Jordan. I raised the issue with the management and worked with them to find a solution. Now, Nepali workers eat fish during their meals. This is one of our achievements.

Once I return home, I will open a chicken farm. This is quite a profitable business in my region, which is famous for its chicken soups.

[Read more](#)

### **Majda al Afif, 22, machine operator, from the village of Anjara, Jordan**

I live in Anjara, some 100 km far away from the capital Amman. I started looking for a job but it is kind of difficult outside of Amman. I started working here some two years ago. This has changed my life and personality. At the same time, I can now cover the needs of my family. I hope all women in the world would start to look for a job because the mentality in Jordan is that the only work for a woman is to be a housewife, nothing more.

### **Dua'a al Boul, quality controller, 22, from the Ajloun governorate, Jordan**

After graduating from university I started looking for a job but couldn't find it, so I joined this factory, where I am currently working as a quality controller: I check the pieces following my colleagues' work. I looked a lot for a job across the governorate, but it is difficult because we are outside the capital Amman.

### **Tumpa Akter Md Ful Miah, 22, quality controller, from Dhaka, Bangladesh.**

My father's business suffered a big loss. I came to Jordan to support my father.

I came here 4 years ago, and, thanks to my salary, we managed to repay the full amount of my father's loans. Now, I have my own dream: To go back home and open a beauty parlour. I want to employ women like me, help them become independent by having them earning their own salary. I'll open a parlour so that they can also be successful.

[Read more](#)

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