



Case Study

Addressing Sexual
Harassment in Jordan's
garment industry



BETTER WORK

Better Work is implementing a pioneering awareness-raising programme to combat sexual harassment in Jordan's apparel sector.

Better Work Jordan, a joint initiative of the International Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation, was established in 2008 at the Jordanian government's request. It is part of the global Better Work programme operating in eight countries to improve working and living conditions in the global apparel industry.

Sixty factories out of approximately 80 in the industry have joined Better Work Jordan benefiting from the programme's on-going collaboration to improve factory compliance with Jordanian labour law and international labour standards as well as a number of

important initiatives at the sector level such as the development of a long-term National Strategy for the Garment Industry and opening of Workers' Centers in selected QIZs.

In recent years, Better Work Jordan has conducted several training programmes for workers and managers on topics including workers' rights and responsibilities to workplace cooperation, human resources management, supervisory skills and occupational safety and health, among others.

Although widely underreported, sexual harassment has long been an issue in the global export-oriented garment industry. Research indicates that it takes various forms and is widespread, with women workers most likely to be affected.

Sexual harassment remains high in factories because it is often large numbers of women, young, inexperienced and in some cases, illiterate, being supervised by a small number of men. Stereotypes of garment workers being perceived as promiscuous and having 'low status' also play a role, as does the intense industry pressure to meet production targets, which can lead to abusive disciplinary practices on the factory floor.

In recent years, serious allegations of sexual abuse have been made across Jordan's apparel industry.

Surveyed in 2011, 20 % of workers said they had very little understanding of what constituted sexual harassment, even while 25 % of workers surveyed were

concerned about behaviour that could be classified as such. 49 % said it was not an issue of concern, while 6 % did not want to answer the question. The latest surveying shows that concern about sexual harassment dropped, with the proportion of participants reporting that sexual harassment is a concern declining by 10%. Fewer workers are feeling so concerned about sexual harassment that they discussed the issue with management (from 16% to 9%) or considered quitting (from 8% to 5%). There remains a concern that workers are not reporting sexual harassment, as the proportion of participants who do not want to answer rose from 3% to 10%.



What is Sexual Harassment?

- Sexual harassment is unwelcome and offensive conduct of a sexual nature that may make workers feel humiliated, intimidated or uncomfortable.
- It is a violation of workers' rights.
- It takes place in all countries around the world; in all levels of the organization, to both men and women.
- It can take various forms, ranging from staring, suggestive comments, unwanted touching or hugging, displaying sexually explicit pictures, to behaviour punishable under criminal law such as sexual assault.
- There are two kinds of sexual harassment in the workplace: Quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment.
- Women workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment.
- Migrant workers are at increased risk.

Sexual harassment is a major area of concern for the Better Work programme and tackling it is a key component of the ILO's efforts towards combating discrimination at work.

In 2012, Better Work established a task force to develop tools and materials to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace. The task force developed a template factory toolkit consisting of a model policy on harassment, an awareness raising poster, a training brochure and a quick reference 'dos and don'ts' to display on the factory floor, as well as a training module for managers, supervisors and workers. Tools are adapted to the specific cultural context in which Better Work countries operate. Better Work Jordan was the first country programme to adapt the toolkit and to implement the training in factories.

Jordanian Law

Not all types of workplace sexual harassment are illegal under Jordanian law. As the ILO's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations points out, quid pro quo sexual harassment and some types of hostile environment sexual harassment are not expressly prohibited in Jordan.

- Sexual assault.
- Attempted sexual assault.
- Physical molestation or touching involving intimate areas of the body. These are defined as those areas, which are customarily kept covered by clothing in public venues and conventional settings.
- Behaviour constituting a breach of public morality such as indecent exposure.

The Jordanian Labour Code gives the Minister of Labour the authority to either temporarily or permanently shut down any enterprise in which an incident of sexual harassment (as defined in the Penal Code) has taken place.



Jordan's Apparel Industry

- Rapid growth over the past decade, with the sector now accounting for nearly 17 per cent of the kingdom's total exports.
- Jordan's apparel factories are spread across 14 free-trade industrial parks called Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs).
- Three quarters of the export industry's more than 45,000 workers are migrant workers from South and South-East Asia - the majority are from India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.
- Women representing 63 per cent of the total labour force. Approximately 65 per cent of these are migrant working women.



Better Work Jordan's Approach

Better Work Jordan encourages factories to create and adopt internally effective policies, which address all forms of sexual harassment.

The policy is a message from management to employees, which states the company's policies, philosophy and commitment to prevent and manage harassment in order to create a positive working environment that is conducive to the enterprise or organization – and which is accepted and observed by all employees, supervisors and managers throughout the workplace.

Better Work Jordan has distributed a model policy on harassment to pilot factories, who have adapted it to meet their needs often alongside Better Work Jordan's awareness poster campaign.

In addition, a specialised training programme to combat sexual harassment was launched by Better Work Jordan in 2013.

Key activities include:

- Raising awareness about sexual harassment through training managers, supervisors and workers on ways to better understand the concept of sexual harassment and the impact it has on workers and the enterprise.
- Providing specialised advisory services to factories in order to help employers develop robust and effective policies and procedures to prevent, identify and deal with harassment at the enterprise level.
- Protecting workers who face sexual harassment by providing them with access to independent counselling and legal services. Better Work Jordan helped coordinate the establishment of a multi-purpose service centre at the Al-Hassan Industrial Zone in a bid to improve the lives of the thousands of clothing factory workers employed there, by offering them different forms of training, legal advice and counselling. It is hoped that the workers center will be able to provide workers with counselling and legal advice.

Tailored training on preventing and combating sexual harassment

In 2013, Jerash Garment & Fashion Manufacturing Co. Ltd. became the first factory in Jordan to take on the sexual harassment prevention training for garment factories.

139 firm's line workers from different nationalities, along with their general manager, five middle managers and 21 supervisors, take part in the training programmes through individual sessions held according to their nationality, gender and role within the factory.

The sessions give participants practical guidance on how to prevent and deal with sexual harassment, including sexual harassment policies, sensitising managers and workers on what constitutes sexual harassment, and deepening managers' and supervisors' understanding of how sexual harassment affects workers and the workplace.

The training defines sexual harassment, identifies its forms, causes and impacts while also providing ways to prevent and resolve it.

The training uncovered a number of challenges including:

- Fear of speaking out: Many workers fear the consequences of openly discussing sexual harassment.
- Cultural differences and ingrained social attitudes: Workers of both sexes often believe women are only sexual harassed if they signal they are sexually available, whether through their behaviour or physical appearance.
- Time constraints: Workers are only permitted to spend a limited time in the training sessions before they are called back to the production line to fulfil their production quota. This often denies workers the time needed to feel comfortable in openly discussing sexual harassment.
- Factory adherence: The key messages of the sexual harassment prevention training need to be put into practice, with the aim of creating a working environment with zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

Benefits of the training - BWJ SHP Training Course Evaluation Summary

For workers:

A pre and post training evaluation form is filled out by participants to indicate their awareness on the issues involved. The pre and post evaluation summary taken from workers employed in at Jerash Garment & Fashion Manufacturing Co. Ltd found that less than half the workers understood what sexual harassment is prior to the training. Following the training, over 80% of those workers said they felt that they got a better understanding of what constitutes as sexual harassment in the workplace, highlighting the different forms of harassment such as physical, verbal and non-verbal conducts of sexual nature.

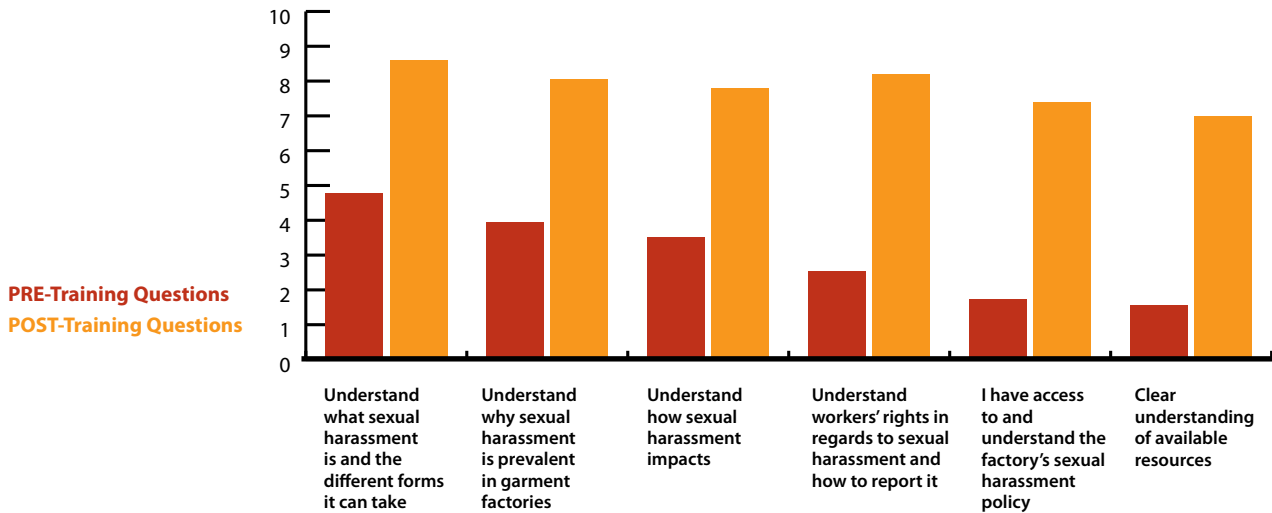
Furthermore, while less than 40% of workers said they understood the different implications of sexual harassment prior to the training, the majority (80%) said that they had a better understating of how sexual harassment impacts workers on individual and collective bases following the training.

Prior to the training over one worker in three felt that they did not know how to prevent and address sexual harassment. While after the training four out of five said that the training gave them a much better understanding on ways to address sexual harassment quickly.

While only about 17% of those participating in the programme said that they had a clear understanding of the factory's sexual harassment policy, a significant 74% of those workers felt the training helped them better understanding the factory's internal policy.

It is important to note that the training also touches on some of the cultural differences that exist in the factory where cultural diversity is common and where certain behaviour could be misinterpreted.

BWJ SHP Training Course Evaluation Summary (Workers)



For supervisors:

The training teaches supervisors about their rights and responsibilities regarding sexual harassment. While only 33% of supervisors said they understood these responsibilities prior to the training, a significant 80% said that had a clear understating of their responsibilities to address sexual harassment quickly after the training.

The training also gives supervisors and managers information on how to protect their workers from sexual harassment and avoid inappropriate behavior themselves. While only 30% said they knew what to do before the training, over 70% said that they understood the 3-step system that supervisors should follow after completing the training programme.

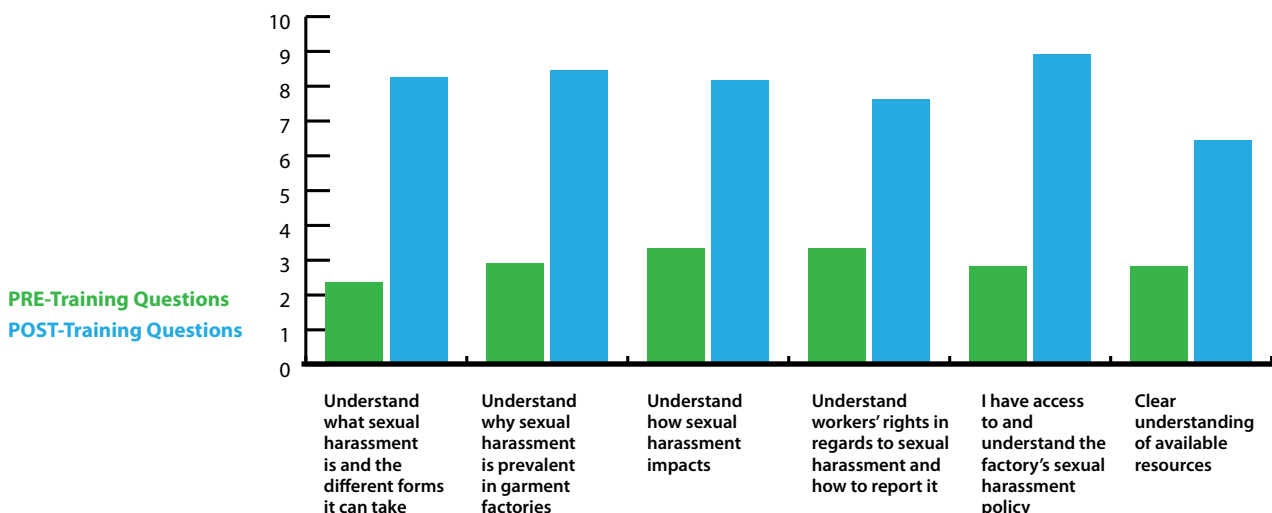
Through the training, supervisors learn how to deal with allegations of sexual harassment. Almost 90% of

supervisors said that they had a clear understanding of the factory's sexual harassment policy after discussing it in the training.

According to the evaluation summery, less than 30% of managers and supervisors understood the concept of sexual harassment and its implication prior to the training. More than 80% said they had a clear understanding of the concept of sexual harassment and the adverse impact of such behaviour on workers upon completion of the training.

The training also provides information on ways to address sexual harassment, including information on how to conduct interviews, impartial investigation tactics, and confidentiality issues.

BWJ SHP Training Course Evaluation Summary (Supervisors)



Management

"It is difficult for us to conduct such training on our own, so we wanted to work with Better Work Jordan on this in order to raise the awareness of staff,"

said Sanil Kumar, compliance officer at Jerash Garment & Fashion Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

"The awareness that was created, especially for the middle management and on the supervisors level, is one of the biggest successes of the training. BWJ played a great role in training our workers and our middle management in particular. We will ask BWJ to do follow-up sessions because people tend to forget. And it is good to have updates on the subject. We welcome any posters or other tools that could further assist us,"

said Farhan Ifram, general manager of Sterling Apparel Manufacturing L.L.C.

Next Steps

After proving to be a success, the training programme was initiated at two other apparel factories - Sterling Apparel Manufacturing L.L.C and Mustafa and Kamal Ashraf Trading (Jordan) Garment Ltd - with plans to roll out the training to other factories across the country.

Voices from the factories

Workers

"I always thought that when women spoke about being sexually harassed, they meant they were raped. But now I understand that sexual harassment can take place in many different forms," said Indrani, who works at Jerash Garment & Fashion Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

"We are foreigners in Jordan, so we do not know much about the laws, rules and procedures, but I now have a better idea of how to deal with the situation if something happens," said factory worker Priyadorshani, Jerash Garment & Fashion Manufacturing Co. Ltd

"We didn't know before the training how to report sexual harassment or what it means, its different forms. I will tell my friends what I learnt in the course. It is important for everyone to know what to do if they are sexually harassed," said Sriyani Wikramaarachchi who works at Sterling Apparel Manufacturing L.L.C

"Before the training, I did not know that using bad words or talking to girls in the wrong way is considered sexual harassment. I also understand now how to prevent it or stop it, such as reporting it to HR," said male worker Pradeep Kumara from Sterling Apparel Manufacturing L.L.C

Union

"We try to raise awareness on the issues among female workers in factories but there are many challenges, such as cultural barriers and language barriers. And sometimes factories try to internally solve these problems before we can find out about them. So there are a number of issues which hinder our efforts to raise awareness on sexual harassment but it is definitely a high priority for us and we need more support from organizations like Better Work Jordan to conduct more awareness raising programmes in a diversity of factories," said Mervat Abed Al Kareem Al Jamhawi,

a member of The General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing.

Better Work Jordan

"The sexual harassment prevention training is vital in raising awareness especially among workers and women in the factories. Understanding what sexual harassment is and what it entails is vital in ensuring that workers know what their rights and responsibilities are and how to protect themselves. Everyone has the right to human dignity and this course is a step further in combating harassment and ensuring people's rights are protected in the workplace," said Farah al-Azab, Better Work Jordan training specialist.