



Over the past few years, Jordan has experienced rapid growth in the apparel industry, which accounts for nearly 17% of total exports. Most apparel factories are situated in 14 Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs), with the three largest QIZs located in Dulyal, Sahab and outside the country's second largest city of Irbid in the north. Two thirds of the export industry's more than 40,000 workers are migrant workers from South and South-East Asia. The majority of migrant workers originate from India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.

[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 aims to improve the lives of tens of thousands of workers and many more family members by driving sector-wide, sustainable improvement in adherence to Jordanian labour law and international conventions on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as well as promoting the business competitiveness of the apparel sector in Jordan within the global supply chain.

The programme, which is funded by the Jordanian Ministry of Labour and the United States Agency for International Development, is supported by the global [Better Work Programme](#) and is part of the Jordan Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) agreed between the ILO and the Government of Jordan which covers activities in a wide range of labour-related issues.

Objectives

The objective of the Better Work Jordan is to improve labor standards and enterprise performance in the Jordanian apparel industry. This is done through:

- Enterprise assessments against the principles of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental; principles and Rights at Work and Jordanian labour law;
- enterprise advisory and training services designed to support practical improvements;
- stakeholder engagement and sustainability;
- garment union capacity building; and
- sectoral level advocacy.

Main Activities

At the factory level, BWJ's activities are comprised of two stages: Identifying the needs of enterprises in terms of labor compliance; and advisory and training services. It aims to strengthen the quality and consistency of these core services by:

- extending core services to all factories involved in exporting apparel from Jordan including direct exporters and their sub-contractors,

- introducing a systems approach as central to the factory continuous improvement process especially in the area of human resources management,
- offering a variety of training programs for both managers and workers in areas of common need identified through factory assessments that is supported by factories and buyers,
- facilitating stronger relationships between buyers and suppliers to develop joint approaches to improving conditions for workers and factory productivity and competitiveness.

At the industry level, BWJ supports stakeholder organizations representing the government, workers and employers by:

- developing a model for the apparel sector that is more stable and long-term, contributes more to the Jordanian economy and society, and provides decent work opportunities for an increasing number of Jordanian workers particularly those most vulnerable to chronic unemployment,
- promoting social dialogue and sound industrial relations at the factory and sectoral levels including the strengthening of collective bargaining,
- developing Workers' Centers in major industrial zones to provide apparel workers access to legal, psychosocial and educational services and improve apparel workers' well-being by providing access to recreational facilities,
- working with key stakeholders to eliminate practices that can be associated with forced labor and discrimination at work such as nightly curfew, confiscation of legal documents, excessive and compulsory overtime, restrictions on labor mobility, and recruitment fees.

Outcomes

- Launch of the 5-year strategy for the garment industry;
- signing of a sector-wide collective bargaining agreement;
- establishment of labour management Performance Improvement Consultative Committees (PICC) in enterprises;
- release of a labour law guide for the garment sector in Arabic and English.
- pilot training to combat sexual harassment in the garment sector.
- various other 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.
- establishment of the first workers' center in one of the industrial zones.
- a range of awareness raising materials for garment workers on occupational health and safety issues and developed training material on Human Resources Management.
- the Annual International Buyers' Forum, which brings together a range of stakeholders to reflect on the progress made by the BWJ programme and the challenges still faced by the Jordanian garment industry.
- publication of several research papers on the Jordanian garment industry to create a knowledge base that informs an effective national strategy for the sector.
- completion of in-depth enterprise assessments and introduced improvement plans for 60 factories covering over 95 per cent of the apparel sector workforce.
- establishment of baseline measurements of working conditions in participating factories to be used for monitoring and evaluation of BWJ's impact.

- establishment of a programme of collaboration with the Ministry of Labour involving training labour inspectors and developing strategies to address key compliance issues.
- assisting government, employers and workers' representatives on new regulation that paves the way for improving conditions in worker dormitories.
- fostering dialogue between stakeholder organizations through establishment and activation of a Project Advisory Committee composed of representatives of Jordanian government, workers' organizations and employers' organizations.