



International
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RISE for Impact: Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in the Cotton Supply Chain – A New Phase, A New Vision

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Women working in a textile factory, Uzbekistan. © ILO / Anatoly Zuev

► At a glance



Partners

Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction; Federation of Trade Unions; Confederation of Employers; Council of Farmers, Dekhkan Farms and Owners of Household Lands; UN agencies; business associations; cotton growers and local communities; media, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other actors involved in the cotton supply chain.



Donor

Industria de Diseño Textil, S.A (INDITEX)



Duration

2 March 2023 - 2 March 2026



Target beneficiaries

Cotton producing communities (farmers, workers and their families), Government, provincial departments and other agencies, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society organizations.



Geographical focus

Following the meeting with the tripartite constituents on 25 November 2024, the project will focus its implementation in Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions. Other regions might be included in agreement with tripartite constituents.

► Background

Uzbekistan is among the top 10 leading cotton producers in the world with almost two million people recruited each year for cotton harvesting. Like most agricultural workers, those employed in cotton cultivation have informal work arrangements that do not guarantee their labour rights.

Uzbekistan has managed to completely eradicate systematic child labour and forced labour in the cotton sector. The Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) conducted jointly by the ILO and the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation since 2015 found the 2021 harvest "free from systematic forced labour and child labour". The ambitious programme of economic reform that was initiated in 2016 by President Mirziyoyev to open the country to private enterprise is replacing the system of State imposed quotas for cotton production with market-based procurement. However, there are reports of lack of respect of the new rules and of abuses.

In 2017, INDITEX, one of the world's largest fashion retailers, entered into partnership with the ILO to promote recognition of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW) in the cotton supply chain.

The first phase of the project carried out in three countries (India, Pakistan and Mali) has produced useful insights in promoting FPRW in the lower tiers of the cotton supply chain. The second phase will build on this experience, replicating successes in India and Pakistan while addressing specific concerns in Uzbekistan.

In Uzbekistan, the project will be part of the ILO joint Programme on Cotton, Textile and Garments, and will support the promotion of FPRW in targeted cotton growing communities including ILO's work to support the independent monitoring of the cotton harvest. This will be done in direct coordination with other ILO Programmes and projects (such as the Better Work Programme¹) and ILO experts.

1- The Better Work Programme, a joint initiative of the ILO and the World Bank Groups' International Finance Corporation, focuses on the textile industry and has developed a series of instruments for employers and workers to engage and cooperate effectively in improving labour standards through self-assessments of compliance that enable them to fix problems themselves. It has effectively demonstrated the business benefits of decent work.

► Objective

Enhanced knowledge of cotton growing communities, district branches of constituents, farmers' unions and concerned CSOs on the five Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

► Main activities

The project will contribute to achieving the aims of Uzbekistan's Decent Work Country Programme (2021 – 2025). It will contribute to promoting FPRW in cotton growing within the wider national ILO Programme on Cotton, Textile and Garments in Uzbekistan, implemented jointly with Better Work, the ILO FUNDAMENTALS Branch and other concerned departments. It will also support the independent monitoring process of the cotton harvest within the ILO's mandate for the elimination of forced labour and child labour in the country. The project is also aligned with the outcome No. 3 of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Uzbekistan (2021-2025). Below are some key project activities:

- Increasing capacity of cotton growing communities, district branches of constituents, farmers' council and concerned CSOs on FPRW.
- Training workshops for farmers on sustainable, nature-based cultivation techniques, record keeping and farm management, efficient input purchase, microcredit and insurance provision and marketing channels.
- District-level training for staff of public employment services, recruitment agents and labour intermediaries on fair recruitment, digital wage payments and worker protection.
- Support to the independent cotton harvest monitoring in collaboration with Better Work and ILO Technical Experts.

► Project outcomes

1. Cotton growing communities are better aware and empowered to assert FPRW.
2. Institutions (ILO constituents and other stakeholders) are capacitated to realize FPRW for cotton growing communities in a sustainable manner.
3. Global stakeholders have better access to knowledge and tools to promote FPRW in cotton growing communities.



Two women cotton pickers working in a field, Uzbekistan. © ILO / TPM Project

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► Contact details:

ILO Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Petrovka 15, office 23
107 031 Moscow
Russian Federation
T: +7 495 933 08 10
E: moscow@ilo.org
www.ilo.org/moscow

ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS)

Office of the ILO-INDITEX Rise for Impact Project in Uzbekistan
107B, Amir Temur Avenue
Yunusabad district, Tashkent, 100 084
Republic of Uzbekistan
E: hamdamov@ilo.org