



▶ Reducing the use and release of Chemicals of Concern (COCs), including Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the Textile Sector - ESCM

July 2025

▶ At a glance



Partners

Federal Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Federal Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD), United Nations Environmental Programme, Employers' and Workers' organizations, academia, civil society, and relevant UN agencies



Donors

United Nations Environment Programme (GEF-7/UNEP)



Duration

August 2023 – December 2025



Target Beneficiaries

Around 25,000 Textile Workers from the pilot phase, particularly in processing units and wet mills, and their families, communities residing near industrial estates, tripartite partners, industrial estate associations, developing partners sharing similar mandate, provincial labour and social security institutions.



Geographical Focus

Pakistan. The pilot phase is initiated in Karachi, Sindh, later expanded to Punjab.

▶ Background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has long recognized that the protection of workers from hazardous substances and chemicals or chemicals of concern is essential to ensuring healthy populations as well as sustainable environments. Workers, in particular women, continue to face disproportionately high exposures to hazardous chemicals, and exposure to hazardous substances claimed the lives of almost 1 million workers in 2015 alone. The ESCM Project focuses on reducing the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) deficits faced by workers exposed to chemicals in textile Mills and contribute towards institutional and policy level interventions in line with international labour standards, particularly ILO Chemical Convention 1990 (No.170).

▶ Objective

- ▶ Sensitize stakeholders and tripartite partners on the ILO Chemical Convention 1990 (No. 170) and ILO Code of Practice on textile, leather, clothing and footwear.
- ▶ Initiate a comprehensive pilot Capacity Building Program with 10 Textile Mills in Karachi to review Chemical Management SOPs through a comprehensive risk assessment on chemical cycle.
- ▶ Support Textile Mills to ensure and prioritize health of workers and track environmental impact from all activities involving COCs and POPs.
- ▶ To sensitize workers and employers on international labour standards and OSH compliance for reducing the exposure of hazardous chemicals.

- To lead interventions under the industrial effluent target of the Living Indus Initiative for reducing the chemical and industrial waste.
- To support government, labour department in Sindh and Punjab to review the current compliance checklist related to chemical management.
- To work with Employees' Social Security Institutions in to initiate data collection of prevailing diagnosis resulting from the exposure of hazardous chemicals. Further to create training modules for OSH and Medicals officers in Textile Mills.



A worker handles fabric at a textile mill in Karachi.

► Main activities

Awareness Raising

- Project provides technical sessions to Mills on the identification of chemicals of concerns, and other hazardous chemicals from the chemical inventory.
- Periodically, conducting webinar sessions with UNITAR, UNEP, NRDC, ZDHC and other partners for knowledge sharing.
- Session with constituents in multiple industrial association for awareness for 200 businesses on occupational diseases with social security institutions.
- Project host sessions for tripartite partners and stakeholders on ILO Conventional 170 (1990) and ILO Code of Practice.
- Integrating international labour standards in training for workers on their right to safe and healthy working environments.

Capacity Building

- Capacity building programme on sound chemical management for more than 50 Textile Mills by 2025, with direct beneficiaries around 50,000 workers.
- Project in leading a risk assessment to review the current operations and chemical management standard focusing on the entire chemical lifecycle. The program is providing an operation layout to ensure worker's health and environmental impact are not compromised.
- Sessions with labour inspectors in Sindh and Punjab to review inspection checklist in line with ILO Chemical Convention 1990 (No.170).
- Enhancing capacity of Employees' Social Security Institution on data collection on occupational diagnosis and conduct training for Textile Mills.
- Consultation session on the gap assessment on ILO Chemical Convention 1990 (No.170)
- Project is facilitating national partners and associations to scale the programme in Sindh and Punjab by dedicated services to Textile Mills.

► Project Outcome

To reduce the occupational safety health (OSH) deficits in chemical management, making workplaces safer for workers through capacity building at factory level, comprehensive compliance at institutional level, and policy advocacy for ILO Chemical Convention 1990 (No. 170).



A worker manages chemicals at a textile mill in Karachi.

Contact details:
Debaaj Abidi
National Project Coordinator
ESCM Project

ILO Country Office for Pakistan
ILO Building, Sector G-5/2 (Near State
Bank of Pakistan)
Islamabad, Pakistan

T: +9251226456-8
E: islamabad@ilo.org
W: www.ilo.org/islamabad