

Better Work Jordan Newsletter



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BETTER WORK
Jordan



Improving fire safety in worker dormitories a priority for Jordan's garment industry

New report released by Better Work Jordan shows significant progress in fire safety at garment factories, highlights need for greater efforts to improve the situation in worker accommodation.

The need to improve safety in the garment industry globally was highlighted in November 2012, when a devastating fire at a garment factory in Bangladesh killed at least 117 and injured 200 others. To highlight the importance of this issue, Better Work Jordan (BWJ) has published a comprehensive report on fire safety in 57 export-oriented garment factories in the country, representing over 90 per cent of the export garment industry workforce.

According to Tareq Abu Qaoud, Technical Officer for BWJ, "There have not been any reports of significant factory fires since our programme launched in 2008, but some factories need to do more to promote fire safety. The measures they need to put in place are neither complicated nor costly." (Continued on page 2)

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“Over the next year, BWJ will be working closely with stakeholders to improve dormitories standards generally and fire safety measures more specifically.”

Improving fire safety in worker dormitories a priority for Jordan’s garment industry

(Continued from page 1) Such measures include ensuring that aisles and fire safety exits are not blocked and that factory escape routes are clearly marked.

The report shows that over the past five years, fire safety practices in most garment factories have seen considerable improvement. In recent years, BWJ has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen fire safety including providing extensive advisory services to factories on the issue, delivering training to workers and managers, and developing a variety of educational materials that have been distributed to factories.

But although there have not been any reports of major fire-related incidents at workers’ dormitories in recent years, there have been a number of minor incidents, suggesting that fire safety risks are higher in dormitories than in factories. The findings of the BWJ report show that almost half the factories in the sector are not adequately prepared for emergencies in all their worker dormitories. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that dormitories are not regularly inspected by a government agency to ensure that they are safe and meet legal standards.

BWJ’s Programme Manager, Phillip Fishman, is optimistic about making improvements in worker dormitories. “Over the next year, BWJ will be working closely with stakeholders to improve dormitories standards generally and fire safety measures more specifically. In particular, BWJ will facilitate a multi-stakeholder discussion to create a mechanism for regular enforcement of government regulations governing dormitory standards” he said.

This report on fire safety is the first thematic compliance synthesis report published by BWJ and is [available online](#). Like all Better Work country programmes BWJ will be publishing a thematic synthesis report each year on a chosen theme with relevance to the national garment industry, allowing the programme to look more in depth at relevant issues.

Free legal services help migrant garment workers claim their rights

Although migrant workers in most sectors are protected by Jordanian labour laws, language barriers and lack of access to legal services make it particularly difficult for them to claim their rights. To help address this issue, Better Work Jordan (BWJ) has partnered with the Adaleh Center for Human Rights to establish a legal assistance clinic for migrant garment workers at the Al-Hassan Industrial Zone, the hub of Jordan's export oriented garment industry.

Since 2010, Adaleh has provided legal representation to hundreds of migrant workers from across Asia and North Africa, helping them advocate for their rights under Jordanian law.

Working closely with the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing, Adaleh lawyer Abed Al-Rahman Al-Omari has been holding free legal assistance clinics in the industrial zone every Tuesday and Friday in partnership with the Workers' Center, a multi-purpose space for workers established by several industry stakeholders including BWJ.

Al-Omari has already taken on a number of legal cases for migrant garment workers. "Most of the legal issues I have come across so far are related to late payment of wages and employers confiscating workers' residence permits" he said.

He also expressed optimism about the potential for migrant garment workers to start advocating for their own legal rights. "I have assisted migrant domestic workers in the past, and garment workers are much more aware of their legal rights" he said, adding "I think that once word spreads about successful cases of legal action, workers will start to believe that they are capable of taking action to claim their rights."

The Executive Director of Adaleh, Luna Sabbah, believes that providing legal assistance through the Workers' Center is a great advantage. "The union representatives already have a strong relationship with workers that go to the Workers' Center. This means they have been able to help us break through workers' barrier of fear about filing legal complaints, which is always our biggest challenge when it comes to providing legal assistance to migrant workers."

The coordinator of the Workers' Center, Emily Hylton, believes this service can play an important role in empowering migrant garment workers in the industrial zone. "These kinds of services are at the heart of what we want to achieve at the Workers' Center" she says. "Until now, the center has focused on building trust with workers and establishing a name for the center in the industrial zone through recreational and cultural activities. Now that we have accomplished that, we can focus more on activities that empower workers to advocate for themselves."



"... once word spreads about successful cases of legal action, workers will start to believe that they are capable of taking action to claim their rights."

Garment factory managers come together to improve working conditions

Over thirty garment factories have participated in a series of Better Work Jordan (BWJ) learning seminars, short workshops that aim to improve communication and knowledge sharing and among factories in the various industrial zones.

The four seminars held so far in Jordan's three largest export-oriented industrial zones have addressed the issues of improving fire safety and grievance mechanisms in Jordanian garment factories.

Tareq Abu Qaoud, Technical Officer for BWJ, believes workshops such as these are key to the success of the programme. "Moving forward, BWJ is going to focus more on promoting knowledge sharing among factories and training several factories on a specific issue at the same time" he said. "This will make BWJ's work less labour intensive, and give factories the opportunity to learn from each other in the common challenges they are facing."

BWJ will be holding learning seminars on a monthly basis on various topics including human resources management and occupational health and safety.



"The most helpful part of this course was the brainstorming. Everybody was sharing their ideas, practices, and experience which made the training more rich and enjoyable."

-Lyvin Wong, Compliance Manager / Century Miracle factory (Al-Hassan Industrial Zone)

ILO support for comprehensive labour law reform welcomed by Jordanian MPs

Jordanian Members of Parliament have welcomed the ILO's plan to provide comprehensive technical support for the process of labour law reform in the country.

Thirty-two MPs, including the members of the Parliamentary Labour Committee, met with ILO officials in Amman this September to discuss protection of migrant domestic workers, and more generally, labour market governance in the domestic work sector. ILO officials and Jordanian policymakers agreed that changes to laws and regulations related to domestic work should be part of a broader process of labour law reform, rather than the being pursued independently.

The ILO will be launching a Canadian funded programme to facilitate a comprehensive labour law reform process at the end of 2014. The programme will likely include elements previously discussed with MPs such as pay equity, regulation of the domestic work sector, and freedom of association.

Better Work to introduce transparent public reporting

The Better Work programme will enter a new phase of its operations with the introduction of public reporting in its eight country programmes

Since its establishment, the Better Work programme has argued that increased transparency is key to improving labour standards and protecting workers in global supply chains. Over the past seven years Better Work programmes around the world have worked to increase the level of transparency in the garment industry by sharing information about labour standards in factories with international brands, leading to significant improvements in working conditions at participating factories.

To ensure continuing improvement, the Better Work programme will be enhancing transparency in all country programmes through public disclosure of factory assessment information. This increased transparency will also help Better Work programmes around the world address labour issues that have proven resistant to change.

According to Phillip Fishman, Manager of the Better Work Jordan (BWJ) programme, “Experiences from Better Work programmes in Cambodia and Haiti have proven that transparent reporting improves working conditions.” He added, “Transparency protects the reputation of the country’s industry. In the past, entire industries have had their reputations damaged because of a few low-compliance factories. Transparency will ensure that the true picture of a country’s industry is known.”

The way forward

Building on the experience of Better Factories Cambodia, the plan is for Better Work country programmes to develop a transparency page on its website disclosing factory names and non-compliance findings on a six month basis on a list of critical issues. Critical Issues deal with fundamental principles and rights, risks to life and limb and compensation.

In addition to the common critical issues, country specific issues can be carefully selected for transparent reporting in line with each country programme’s national priorities.

Emphasis will be placed on effective communications on the timing of the implementation, which will inform suppliers in advance about which critical issues they are at risk of being reported on, allowing sufficient time to resolve these issues through the advisory process.

It is intended that all Better Work country programmes will start implementing transparency reporting

by the end of 2016. The hope is that the three largest and most established Better Work country programmes (Jordan, Vietnam and Indonesia) will start implement transparency reporting in 2015, but this will be subject to consultations with stakeholders. In Bangladesh, transparency will be implemented from the beginning of programme operations.

This October, BWJ started consultation with local stakeholders on this issue in a meeting with its Project Advisory Committee that discussed the rationale behind transparent reporting and the way forward. An information package that will inform stakeholders on the process and the roadmap for implementation has also been developed.



Towards a sustainable future: determining a new pricing policy for Better Work programmes

A study commissioned by Better Work Global aims to develop a new pricing policy for the programme

As a programme that aspires towards long-term financial sustainability, Better Work has always aimed to recover a significant proportion of its costs through fees charged to factories and buyers for its services.

To achieve this, the programme has commissioned Dalberg Global Development Advisors and Emerging Markets Consulting to conduct a study across all eight Better Work countries to inform the development of a standard global pricing policy reflecting market dynamics and improving cost recovery rates, while accounting for contextual differences in individual Better Work country programs.

The results of the research conducted in Jordan show that Better Work Jordan (BWJ) is currently underpriced for large factories with multiple production units and those requiring significant improvements. Advisory is universally seen as the strongest service offering included in BWJ's service portfolio. Factory managers interviewed for the study admitted that very few advisory companies exist in Jordan, and overseas consultants would be very expensive to hire.

Based on market rates, the study estimates that large factories and those requiring significant improvements save up to US\$7,000 annually because of their participation in BWJ. This includes cost savings primarily from advisory services, as well as some savings from factory assessments and training.



Better Work Jordan Presents Collective Bargaining Achievements to Omani Employers

As part of a two-day workshop on collective bargaining organized by the ILO for the Omani Chamber of Commerce and Industry in September, Better Work Jordan (BWJ) presented the achievements of the collective bargaining agreement in Jordan's garment industry as an example of best practice in the Arab region.

The processes of social dialogue and collective bargaining are not well-established in Oman and there is a consensus among workers' organizations, employers' organizations and the government on the need to strengthen these processes. The ILO workshop provided employers with an overview on social dialogue and collective bargaining with the aim of increasing knowledge around these concepts and exchanging experiences and practices from Oman and abroad.

"The success of the collective bargaining agreement in Jordan's garment industry has given confidence to workers and employers in the region that they can work together to solve their own problems" said Phillip Fishman, Programme Manager for BWJ. He added, "A big message to Gulf countries is that not everything needs to be managed from above by government. Social dialogue is a dynamic process that is very effective when people engage with each other in a constructive and respectful way."

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Qadri Group

Rainbow Textile

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Rich Pine International Group Ltd.

R-Tex Garments

Sana Factory

Saysaban Garment Manufacturing Co.

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Trans World Apparel Manufacturing Co. Ltd

Tusker Apparel Ltd. Co.

United Creations L.L.C.

Vega Textile Ltd.

Victorious Apparel Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

W&D Apparel (Jordan) Corp.

UPCOMING PUBLIC TRAINING

Better Work Jordan offers a range of targeted training programs to managers, supervisors and workers, both in the classroom and at the factory. Our trainings focus on improving compliance with labour standards, productivity and quality through building effective workplace cooperation. For more information, please contact our offices.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT

About the course:	This course helps participants understand that OSHM should be an integral part of factory management. The training gives guidance on how to improve safety and health within factories to meet both national and international standards. Participants will engage in a series of practical activities that will not only benefit safety and health within the enterprise, but also offer low-cost suggestions for improving working conditions and increasing productivity.
Target participants:	Factory management, OSH committee members and trade union/worker representatives
Duration:	2 days
Cost per participant:	80 JDs

INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

About the course:	This course is designed to help factories overcome non-compliance in human resources and bridge the gap between BWJ standards and current practices in garment sectors. The training programme covers: Human Resources roles, workplace cooperation, compliance with national labour legislation and personnel administration. Factories are guided to create concrete action plans, and encouraged to implement them. BWJ Enterprise Advisors monitor factories' progress through regular visits.
Target participants:	Human resource managers, Human Resource Officers, Compliance Officers
Duration:	4 days
Cost per participant:	160 JDs

ADVANCED HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

About the course:	This course provides participants with in-depth training on the following human resource management topics: » Conflict resolution and industrial relations » Performance appraisal » Continuous improvement » Training/capacity building of employees » Competency mapping and job descriptions » Succession planning » Compensation and benefits
Target participants:	Human resource managers, Human Resource Officers, Compliance Officers
Duration:	5 days
Cost per participant:	200 JDs

SUPERVISORY SKILLS TRAINING

About the course:	This course enables participants to gain valuable leadership and management skills to further enhance dialogue between the company and its employees. The content of the course will cover the following topics: » How to be a professional supervisor » Building good relationships » Influencing skills » Managing people » Videotaped practice
Target participants:	Factory supervisors and managers
Cost per participant:	90 JDs (45 JDs to be paid by the factory and 45 JDs sponsored by The Walt Disney Company)
Duration:	3 days

This newsletter is published by Better Work Jordan, a joint programme between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Finance Corporation (IFC). The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the official views of the ILO, nor those of the IFC.

For more information about Better Work Jordan, visit www.betterwork.org/jordan or contact us at jordan@betterwork.org