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Better Work Jordan Phase IV Project, Better Work Jordan Mental Health Project, and Building Capacity for a More Inclusive and Fair Working Environment for Workers and Trade Unions Project

QUICK FACTS

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Administrative Office: Better Work

Technical Office: Better Work

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- Better Work Jordan, Phase IV, USDoL, US\$5,873,696
- Better Work Jordan Mental Health Project, USDoL, US\$1,850,000
- Building Capacity for a More Inclusive and Fair Working Environment for Workers and Trade Unions, ESDC Canada, US\$571,803

Key Words: [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#)

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Better Work Jordan Phase IV:

Better Work Jordan's Phase IV Strategy (2022–2027), launched during the post-COVID-19 recovery period, is anchored in a theory of sustained change aimed at enabling national stakeholders to uphold labor rights and enhance working conditions, while supporting the competitiveness of Jordan's export-oriented industrial sector. The strategy operates through three core assumptions: (1) that compliance improves through structured assessments, training, and advisory services—a claim substantiated by 15 years of sector-specific evidence; (2) that national tripartite partners are both committed and capable of assuming governance and sector development roles, with these responsibilities to be formalized via institutional agreements; and (3) that Better Work Jordan and its constituents possess sufficient leverage to incentivize improved labor compliance through the program's established model of engagement.

Project outcomes:

Outcome 1: By 2027, Jordan's garment industry will have an effective system of tripartite-plus labour market governance in which workers' rights are upheld and protected in line with national labour laws and core international labour standards.

Outcome 2: By 2027, export growth combined with active labour market policies will increase the garment industry's contribution to Jordanian employment.

Outcome 3: By 2027, Better Work Jordan will have made a positive impact on working conditions and labour market governance beyond Jordan's export-oriented garment industry.

Better Work Jordan Mental Health Project:

Mental health in Jordan's garment sector is shaped by multiple stressors, including poor living and working conditions, discrimination, social isolation, and gender-based vulnerabilities—particularly among migrant and female workers. Informed by prior research that defined mental health baselines and intervention priorities, Better Work Jordan launched the "Mental Health in the Garment Sector in Jordan" project in 2021 with funding from

USDOL. The project adopts a preventive and support-based model aligned with global frameworks such as the ILO-WHO Global Action Plan on Mental Health at Work (2022), and seeks to improve psychosocial outcomes by building worker resilience, strengthening workplace-based mental health responses, and facilitating access to external support services through coordinated referral mechanisms.

The project's theory of change is centered on two long-term outcomes: increasing worker resilience to Mental Health risks and expanding factory and referral system coverage for workers needing mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS). The project Goal is: Improve mental well-being among garment workers, prioritizing women and migrant populations.

The project's Long-Term Outcomes (LTOs) are:

LTO 1: Workers are resilient against mental health risks, including seeking psychosocial support.

LTO 2: Factories and the mental health referral system reach more workers needing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services

Building Capacity for a More Inclusive and Fair Working Environment for Workers and Trade Unions:

Despite progress, workers in the Jordanian garment industry, particularly women, migrant workers, and workers with disabilities, continue to face discrimination, gender-based violence, and unequal representation. These issues persist in both workplaces and living conditions, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

The General Trade Union of Workers in Textile Garment and Clothing Industries requires enhanced capacity to address these concerns effectively. The project focuses on creating a more inclusive environment by achieving two main outcomes:

Outcome 1: Reducing gender-based violence and harassment while promoting equal opportunities for workers with disabilities;

Outcome 2: Strengthening the union's ability to engage in social dialogue, with an emphasis on gender equality.

	Geographically, the evaluation is confined to the projects' operational zones, specifically the three primary industrial zones—Sahab, ad-Dulayl, and Irbid—along with their associated satellite factories.
Present situation of the project	In January 2025, the United States Government (USG) informed the ILO that Better Work Jordan, similar to other USDOL funded projects, will undergo a 90-day review period, which prompted a suspension of all USDOL-funded activities globally by the ILO Headquarters for the review period. Following that, both the Better Work Jordan Phase IV project and Better Work Jordan Mental Health Project were terminated in 27 March 2025 per ILO communication to its constituents on 9 April 2025 and a structured wind-down of USDOL-funded services will conclude by June 2025.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	With the aim of ensuring a proper documentation of project achievements and lessons learned, this evaluation will focus on Better Work Jordan (BWJ) outcomes in enhancing labour standards, promoting social dialogue, and advancing institutional capacity, with particular attention to progress toward the programme's objective of transferring ownership to national stakeholders. Consequently, it provides a strategic opportunity to assess Better Work Jordan's performance midway through Phase IV (originally planned for 2022–2027), document institutional knowledge, and evaluate the programme's contribution to industry transformation in Jordan. It will serve as a critical input for shaping future ILO engagement in the sector. The evaluation's principal clients include BWJ and the ILO's national constituents in Jordan, such as relevant government ministries and the ILO Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS), as well as the projects donors. Additionally, the findings are intended to benefit a broader secondary audience comprising project stakeholders, participating factories, and various ILO departments that may leverage the evaluation outcomes to inform institutional learning and strategic alignment.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation methodology relied on two data collection tools: desk review and Key Informant Interviews (KII). Desk review entailed reviewing all critical documents on each of the three projects including project documents, annual reports, previous assessments, evaluations and research studies, as well as national strategies such as Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision (EMV).

To achieve the evaluation objectives and explore the areas of interest listed above, evaluation questions for each project were developed according to OECD DAC evaluation criteria.

The following are the key limitations of the evaluation:

- Time constraints and methodological limitations: The evaluation was conducted under a tight timeframe and covered three separate projects, leading to reliance on streamlined methods such as document review and key informant interviews.
- Limitations in assessing long-term outcomes: Due to the short implementation period of the Mental Health and Trade Union Capacity-Building projects, the evaluation could not assess long-term or sustained impact.
- Stakeholder attribution challenges: Some stakeholders were unable to distinguish among the three concurrent projects or between BWJ Phase IV and earlier phases, viewing all activities as part of a single initiative.
- Influence of pre-evaluation stakeholder tensions: The evaluation coincided with stakeholder sensitivity following the dissemination of an ILO report critical of working conditions, creating a charged environment. This may have introduced bias in stakeholder responses, necessitating rephrased questions and, in one case, a repeated interview to ensure focus on project-specific outcomes.

Better Work Jordan, Phase IV

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The Better Work programme, jointly implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), has been central to labour reform and sectoral advancement in Jordan's garment industry since 2008. Initially focused on supporting compliance under the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (USJFTA), it has evolved into a holistic initiative promoting decent work and sectoral competitiveness. Phase IV (2022–2027) builds on this legacy, emphasizing national ownership, institutional capacity, and alignment with emerging global compliance frameworks.

At the core of Phase IV lies a theory of sustained change, integrating technical support, institutional development, and inclusive governance. Despite the early 2025 termination of USDOL funding, the programme maintained momentum through an adaptive strategy focused on institutional handover and the preservation of key reforms during the transition period.

The evaluation affirms that BWJ's strategic orientation is well-aligned with national priorities and global compliance trends. The programme embedded gender equality, disability inclusion, worker voice, OSH, and digitization into its activities. Its expanded focus included initiatives such as mental health, wage protection, and grievance redress, reflecting responsiveness to workforce needs and international labour standards.

Stakeholder feedback revealed diverging views on the programme's scope, persistent noncompliance, and global due diligence requirements. While some stakeholders preferred a narrower focus, others valued the broader strategic agenda. The PAC played a vital role in harmonizing these perspectives and advancing reforms through inclusive dialogue and evidence-informed facilitation.

BWJ achieved solid implementation progress: 45 activities were underway, 3 completed, and 23 scheduled. Twelve out of 45

performance indicators were met or exceeded, with notable gains in compliance, grievance resolution, and representation. However, challenges remain, including limited trust in social dialogue and delayed national ownership of some functions.

Factory-level outcomes include improved compliance, reduced audit fatigue, and strengthened buyer confidence. Tools like the Standard Unified Contract and factory mental health policies illustrate a shift toward proactive labour governance, supported by digitized training modules.

At the institutional level, BWJ enhanced national actor capacity via co-designed training, mentoring, and data systems. Yet sustainability risks persist, to service continuity due to administrative and procurement constraints. Engagement of migrant and female workers in decision-making also requires institutional strengthening.

The programme's use of data and research informed adaptive programming and policy influence, including inputs to OSH reform and CBAs. This evidence-based approach reinforced BWJ's credibility and sectoral impact.

In conclusion, BWJ Phase IV is a technically sound and adaptive initiative that institutionalized compliance, promoted decent work, and enhanced competitiveness. Its model offers broader relevance for sectoral transformation through inclusive governance and stakeholder ownership. Future efforts should build on these achievements by developing unified frameworks, strengthening institutional capacity, and grounding reforms in political economy realities.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Informed by the needs of local constituents, future efforts should explore viable pathways to provide: (i) impartial quality assurance, (ii) operational support, and (iii) stronger alignment with buyer expectations.

	Given the three core areas of divergence among stakeholders - namely, the project's scope, approaches to addressing persistent noncompliance, and the level of engagement with emerging compliance demands - it is essential that local constituents develop a shared vision and define how these issues will be addressed within their respective mandates. Given the dynamic and politically complex context of the sector, it is essential that future activities, including those undertaken during the BWJ wind-down period and any prospective ILO interventions, integrate iterative and actionable political economy analysis (PEA).
Main lessons learned and good practices	Sustained engagement, tailored support, and multi-level training strategies are of critical importance to strengthen institutional capacities across the sector. The project applied a blended approach combining social dialogue facilitation, mentoring, and direct training to build the capacities of factory personnel, trade unionists, and national institutions. A key success factor was the use of the Training-of-Trainers (ToT) model, which facilitated large-scale knowledge transfer while embedding institutional ownership through targeted capacity-building of HR staff, compliance officers, and union representatives. Additionally, the project leveraged digital tools to enhance the scalability and accessibility of training, notably digitizing Sexual Harassment Prevention (SHP) modules via WhatsApp and eLearning in multiple languages—enabling wide outreach to diverse worker populations, including migrants and those in remote settings. Over the course of the program, the PAC emerged as a crucial tripartite-plus platform, facilitating structured dialogue, sectoral coordination, and stakeholder alignment. Its regular convening enabled diverse actors to collaboratively address emerging challenges, review program progress, and influence strategic direction and proved particularly valuable in responding to crises.

Utilizing research and data to guide decision-making and inform programmatic adjustments proves valuable, even in cases where there is not full consensus among stakeholders. BWJ consistently applied evidence-based methods to address emerging priorities, uncover systemic gaps, and refine its interventions. Research activities—ranging from worker surveys to studies on mental health, gender-based violence, and disability inclusion—were instrumental in shaping practical tools and tailored responses. These findings directly informed the design of inclusion guidelines, localized training content, and improvements to grievance redress procedures. The strategic use of data enhanced project credibility and supported alignment with evolving buyer expectations and international due diligence standards. Nevertheless, the experience highlighted the need to reinforce institutional capacities for ongoing data utilization by national actors to sustain evidence-driven planning beyond the project's duration.

Better Work Jordan, Mental Health Project

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The Better Work Jordan (BWJ) Mental Health Project, launched in 2021 with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, marked a pioneering initiative to integrate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) into Jordan's garment sector. Triggered by urgent mental health incidents and heightened by COVID-19's impact, the project addressed the needs of a predominantly migrant workforce facing social isolation, language barriers, and stressful working conditions. Aligned with international frameworks, such as the ILO-WHO Global Action Plan on Mental Health at Work, the project aimed to institutionalize psychosocial interventions at both factory and national levels.

The project's theory of change focused on two core outcomes: enhancing workers' resilience and expanding access to mental health support systems. Strategies included factory-level risk assessments, training for HR and health personnel, and the establishment of mental health focal points and task forces. The project also collaborated with stakeholders to embed MHPSS into Collective Bargaining Agreements and OSH legislation. By late 2024, the project had completed 14 of 30 outputs and had 13 more underway, with significant achievements in training, policy development, and awareness-raising.

The initiative proved contextually relevant, especially in later phases where gender and migration dynamics were better integrated into programming. Greater efforts were made to address the needs of women and migrant workers through gender-sensitive messaging and multilingual resources. However, challenges remain in reaching smaller factories and ensuring consistent translation. Still, the project effectively expanded inclusivity in mental health outreach and support.

From a cost-effectiveness standpoint, the project maximized existing tools, reduced operational costs by embedding into factory structures, and scaled outreach through Training-of-Trainers models. Its diverse communication channels—ranging from social media to printed materials—helped overcome barriers to literacy and digital access. Nonetheless, long-term sustainability could be

enhanced by embedding mental health services into factory clinics and linking efforts to broader corporate responsibility agendas. A 2024 study confirmed measurable psychosocial improvements, including reduced stress and greater help-seeking behavior. Trained workers expressed increased confidence in handling work-related stress and utilizing support mechanisms. Moving forward, the evaluation recommends institutionalizing MHPSS within factory systems, integrating mental health into CBAs, and leveraging digital tools to sustain momentum. The project's participatory, multi-level model offers a replicable framework for improving mental health in high-risk industries.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Institutionalize factory-level mental health structures: To ensure continuity and sustained impact, factory-level roles such as Mental Health Focal Points and counsellors should be formally integrated into enterprise human resources and compliance systems. The endorsement of mental health policy frameworks at the factory level, supported by regular monitoring mechanisms, will reinforce accountability and long-term adoption.

Expand access to services for migrant workers: Mental health programming should be better tailored to the unique vulnerabilities of migrant workers, who often face isolation, language barriers, and limited access to psychosocial support.

Prioritize training and capacity building: Continuous training for focal points, counsellors, and line managers is critical. This includes refresher courses and skill enhancement in trauma-informed care, basic counselling, and psychological first aid. Training modalities should also integrate digital and blended learning for scalability.

Facilitate sector-wide peer learning: Peer learning forums should be institutionalized, allowing factories to exchange best practices and collaboratively address challenges. Lessons from high-performing factories can guide others in shaping effective, context-appropriate interventions.

	Institutionalization of project approaches through social partner ownership: To ensure sustainability and sector-wide impact beyond the lifecycle of the Better Work Jordan Mental Health Project, social partners are encouraged to adopt and institutionalize the project's approaches
Main lessons learned and good practices	Early buy-in from factory management is pivotal: Success of the mental health intervention was largely influenced by the degree of engagement and ownership shown by factory leadership. Where management viewed mental health as integral to workforce productivity and compliance, implementation was more effective. Mental health support cannot be one-size-fits-all: The project revealed that different factories require tailored approaches depending on size, workforce composition, and organizational culture. Customization in counselling modalities and focal point selection enhanced relevance and effectiveness. Mental health is a cross-cutting issue: The integration of mental health services strengthened outcomes across several compliance areas, including sexual harassment prevention, grievance handling, and absenteeism management. This demonstrates the value of framing mental health within a broader decent work agenda

Building Capacity for a More Inclusive and Fair Working Environment for Workers and Trade Unions

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation assesses the performance and sustainability of the project “Building Capacity for a More Inclusive and Fair Working Environment for Workers and Trade Unionists in Jordan’s Garment Sector,” implemented by the ILO with support from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The review covers the period from August 2022 through early 2025 and evaluates the project’s contributions to decent work, inclusion, and institutional capacity within the broader framework of the Better Work Jordan (BWJ) programme. Despite operating in a challenging context shaped by regional instability and global compliance pressures, the project maintained strong alignment with national priorities and global labour standards.

Strategically, the project demonstrated high relevance by addressing key sectoral needs such as grievance redress, gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), and disability inclusion. It introduced context-specific tools and digital platforms, with stakeholders confirming the utility of interventions such as multilingual SHP training, inclusive policy guidance, and the union membership database. However, views differed on the balance between compliance services and broader institutional reforms, indicating the need for continued dialogue on strategic priorities. The project achieved tangible results under both outcome areas. Under Outcome 1, it introduced SOPs for grievance handling, SHP training in five languages, and disability employment guidelines. Outcome 2 focused on strengthening union capacity, notably through the empowerment of female focal points and the creation of a digital database with over 66,000 union members. By October 2024, six of sixteen planned outputs were completed, nine in active implementation, and only one pending, with most performance indicators on track or exceeded.

Cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability, and digitization were effectively integrated across interventions. E-learning tools, WhatsApp training models, and multilingual content extended the project’s reach, particularly among migrant and female workers.

The project also employed an evidence-based, data-informed approach that strengthened credibility and adaptability, allowing real-time program adjustments even where stakeholder consensus was limited.

Looking ahead, sustainability will depend on national ownership and institutional commitment. Tools like SOPs, training modules, and the union database are being transferred to national partners, though gaps remain in enforcement, coordination, and financing. Key recommendations include formalizing SOP adoption, scaling SHP training, piloting inclusive factories, supporting union database updates, and enhancing participatory collective bargaining. Despite operational constraints, the project has built a solid foundation for future progress toward inclusive and rights-based governance in Jordan's garment sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

To promote a more inclusive and fair working environment, it is recommended to advocate for the formal endorsement and integration of the Sector's Grievance Redress Mechanism SOPs into factory operations, CBAs, and sectoral frameworks, with accountability reinforced through MoUs and buyer engagement. Sexual Harassment Prevention (SHP) training should be expanded across all worker language groups using WhatsApp, and integrated into induction and compliance programmes to ensure sustained impact. Additionally, factories should be supported in implementing disability employment guidelines through pilot initiatives, including infrastructure adaptations, HR policy revisions, and reasonable accommodations, underpinned by a monitoring framework to track progress and promote recognition.

To strengthen trade union and worker representation, it is recommended to finalize and maintain the trade union database with regular updates to support grievance tracking and strategic

	planning, alongside capacity-building for union administrators on data governance. Support for female union focal points should be expanded through mentorship initiatives to enhance their role in grievance handling and worker engagement. Additionally, future Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) negotiations should incorporate participatory mechanisms—particularly direct consultations with migrant and female workers—to promote inclusivity and strengthen legitimacy.
Main lessons learned and good practices	Building an inclusive and fair working environment requires persistent stakeholder engagement supported by aligned incentives, as formal adoption of tools like SOPs depends on more than enforcement alone. While digitization expands outreach—especially for migrant workers—offline options remain vital to address language, literacy, and technology gaps. Moreover, effective disability inclusion demands practical, factory-level guidance and tools, alongside enforcement to ensure compliance with legal obligations. Strengthening trade union and worker representation requires targeted investment in female leadership, which has proven effective in elevating gender-based issues and enhancing union responsiveness. Additionally, sustaining the impact of digital tools like union databases depends on clear institutional ownership and ongoing commitment to data maintenance.