

Programme Update

October 2011–January 2012

Welcome to this edition of Better Work's Programme Update, designed to keep you up-to-date with Better Work activities across the globe. If you would like more in-depth information on any of the topics below, contact Chandra Garber at garber@ilo.org.

Global Activities

Short Films about Cambodian Garment Industry Shown at Major European CSR Conference

In December, Conor Boyle from the Better Work global programme attended an international CSR conference in Berlin at the request of ILO Germany to showcase a series of short documentaries examining the Cambodian garment industry and to offer the ILO's thoughts on CSR in Europe. Over 1000 participants attended the conference, which was organized by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. (To view a clip from the conference, please click [here](#).) The documentaries were also shown and discussed in November at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung International Week of Justice in Berlin. The Week of Justice sought, at an international level, to seek policy answers in various conferences, discussions, readings and exhibitions on social, financial, climate and gender justice. To watch the documentary trailer, please click [here](#).

What's New in Better Work Research?

Better Work would like to thank all of the speakers and participants who took part in our conference "Workers, Businesses and Government: Understanding Labour Compliance in Global Supply Chains" and helped to make the event such a success! Over 200 participants from research institutions, governments, business and civil society joined to discuss key elements of improving compliance with labour standards and supporting sustainable supply chains. For more about the conference, including papers, proceedings and a complete list of participants, please click [here](#) to visit our event web page. Or visit our Facebook page to view photos by clicking [here](#).



Conference participants Paul Alois, Arianna Rossi, Chikako Oka and Gary Gereffi (left to right).

The third and fourth papers in the [Better Work Discussion Paper Series](#) are available on the Better Work web site. Paper No. 3, "[Apparel Wages Before and After Better Factories Cambodia](#)," authored by Raymond Robertson, finds that compliance with working conditions does not decline following a fall in apparel unit prices; on the contrary, it increases. And while both external forces and BFC visits play a role in improvements in working conditions over time, the changes that are attributable to BFC are arguably those that are important for productivity and high on the list of workers' concerns, such as payments of wages.

Paper No. 4, "[Working Conditions and Factory Survival: Evidence from Better Factories Cambodia](#)", analyzes the relationship between changes in working conditions and plant closure. While it has been claimed that anti-sweatshop activity in developing countries adds the risk of making factory survival more difficult by imposing external constraints, authors Drusilla Brown, Rajeev Dehejia and Raymond Robertson find little, if any, evidence that improving working conditions increases the probability of factory closure. In fact, some evidence suggests that improvements in standards relating to compensation actually increase the probability of plant survival.

Country Activities

Cambodia



Phat Sinuon (right) burst into laughter at the announcement that she is the champion.

On 24 December, Ms Phat Sinuon of Tai Yang 2 factory won 1st place in the 2011 radio competition for garment workers on the Cambodian Labour Law! Her opponents Mr Tha Yorn of GDM factory and Ms Mol Sophal of Sin Lan Ho factory came in 2nd and 3rd places, respectively. The competition, which ran for 10 Saturdays, received applications from 313 workers from 21 garment factories, nearly double the number of applicants in last year's competition. From the 12 shortlisted candidates, two competed each week to demonstrate familiarity with the Cambodian Labour Law. A panel of three juries from industry-affiliated institutions such as the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the Arbitration Council and the Bar Association provided judging for the competition. For more information, please click [here](#).

At a meeting organized by Better Factories Cambodia on 9 December, constituents joined to discuss the issue of recent factory faintings and develop recommendations to prevent future incidents. Participants included representatives from several Ministries—including Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; Labour and Vocational Training; and Commerce—the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia, brands such as H&M, Gap and Levi Strauss, affected factories and unions. While there has been no conclusive evidence of a single cause for the incidents, a recent study identified a number of contributing factors including exposure to industrial chemicals, heat stress, excessive overtime, inadequate nutrition and lack of ventilation. The study also suggests that when one worker becomes ill and falls down, other workers start feeling unwell due to psychological distress. For more information on this meeting, please click [here](#).

For more information on Better Factories Cambodia, please visit their web site at www.betterfactories.org.

Haiti

Following a call to all workers for interested candidates, the first Performance Improvement Consultative Committee (PICC) elections were held on 9 December at Island Apparel factory. Forty-two workers completed the registration form, were trained on PICC role and responsibilities and negotiation and communication skills, and discussed how the elections should be held. From the 42 trained workers, 15 workers (12 men and 3 women) stood as candidates. With 1216 workers participating in the elections, 4 men and 2 women were officially elected as workers' PICC representatives. A 2-day training will soon be provided on negotiation and communication skills, workplace cooperation.



To support the capacity of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Better Work Haiti coordinated an ILO colleague from Senegal to offer training to 38 MoLSA managers on issues of strategic management, labour and employment policies, and labour administration. In addition, a colleague from Brazil offered 42 labour inspectors guidance on labour inspection during a 5-day training session.

In October, an ILO labour law expert together with a labour lawyer from McGill University conducted three 1-day sessions with Haitian constituents to launch the revision of the labour code. The constituents are currently working on their proposals, which will be shared in late February during a tripartite meeting.

Indonesia



Better Work Indonesia EAs assess factory safety.

Better Work Indonesia Enterprise Advisors participated in an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Expert training to become certified as General OSH Experts by the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration. The training, which provided an in-depth analysis of Indonesian labour law and regulations, as well as best practices, was undertaken to strengthen the team's ability to offer OSH guidance as part of its advisory and training services. This support is particularly important in Indonesia, where enterprises must have certified OSH experts serve as Secretary on an enterprise's OSH committee. Recent Better Work assessments have found that most factories do not have a certified OSH expert. For more information on OSH Expert training, please contact indonesia@betterwork.org.

To better address the needs of Korean-owned factories, which comprise nearly 60% of enterprises supplying the export market, Better Work Indonesia has recruited a Korean intern, Arim Chang, to facilitate communication between Korean factory owners and Better Work Indonesia. Arim and the management team of the Korean Garment Manufacturers Association (KOGA), which represents the 200 Korean-owned factories in Indonesia, are currently planning a series of workshops in 2012 that will involve KOGA members and other key stakeholders. Better Work will work with KOGA to update KOGA guidelines on the Indonesian labour law and to develop a better appreciation of the benefits of social compliance in the supply chain.

For more information on Better Work Indonesia, please visit their web site at www.betterwork.org/indonesia.

Jordan

On 20 November, Better Work Jordan officially launched the research paper, "The Apparel Industry and the Jordanian Economy", which looks at the contribution of the apparel industry to Jordan's economy. This study, which was conducted by international economic experts in partnership with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation using official government data, was based on well-established economic models and approved by all Better Work Jordan stakeholders in order to ensure consensus around the results. This was also the first study on the sector providing information on the linkages between the sector and the rest of the Jordanian economy. With high levels of foreign investment and migrant employment, the contribution of the apparel industry to the Jordanian economy has long been hotly debated. The study revealed how the economic benefits of this sector are distributed between capital, labour and the government, as well as the extent to which these economic gains are retained in Jordan. It concluded that the domestic value-added of the Jordanian apparel industry is 36.9% of total industry output. To view the full report, click [here](#).

On 8 December, Better Work Jordan hosted a multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss issues related to migrant work. Many of the labour non-compliances identified by Better Work in Jordan are issues specific to migrant workers and include issues such as recruitment fees paid in workers' countries of origin, confiscation of personal documents and nightly curfews in worker dormitories. The meeting aimed to coordinate a sector-wide response to such issues, many of which can be remedied at through regulation and bilateral agreements between the Jordanian government and sending countries. Opening remarks were presented by His Excellency the Minister of Labour, as well as the US Ambassador to Jordan and Deputy Director of the ILO Regional Office for Arab States. Other attendees included representatives of the Jordanian government, the US embassy, employers' associations, international buyers and the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile and Garment Industries.

For more information on Better Work Jordan, please visit their web site at: www.betterwork.org/jordan.

Lesotho

On 5 October, Better Work Lesotho held its first local Buyer Forum in Maseru, welcoming representatives from Wal-Mart, The Children's Place and Levi Strauss. In meetings with the government, employers and unions, buyers confirmed their commitment to support the programme. Among the topics discussed were buyer interest in being more engaged in implementing training and advisory services, as well as major industry-related issues such as competitiveness and related constraints, wages and industrial relations. The government also reconfirmed its commitment to implement the programme industry-wide with mandatory participation.

Four factories have now formed PICCs with support from Better Work Lesotho. PICC worker representatives (union members and non-organized workers) were trained by representatives of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation on the local labour law, workplace cooperation, social dialogue and dispute resolution prior to the first PICC meeting. In addition, Better Work Lesotho met with factory management and worker representatives several times to introduce the PICC concept (mandate, tasks, composition etc.), which has received a positive response.



First PICC meeting at Jonsson Manufacturing.

In the last quarter of 2011, the programme launched its training services, including Supervisory Skills Training (SST) in Sesotho and Chinese, and Workers' Life Skills training. In a training of trainers, Taiwanese managers from different factories were trained to conduct the SST in Chinese. Selected participants of this course will start to offer the Better Work SST for Chinese supervisors working in Lesotho's garment industry from early 2012. By working with Chinese-speaking trainers based in Lesotho, Better Work Lesotho anticipates offering training that is cost-efficient and implemented on a continual basis.

Nicaragua

With the recruitment of a fourth Enterprise Advisor in late 2011, the Better Work Nicaragua technical team is now complete and has been participating in intensive training sessions. International colleagues have provided training on factory assessments, industrial relations and core labor standards, and the global apparel supply chain. Other topics covered include current issues in sourcing practices and lean manufacturing, the impact they are having on conditions in the factory level and the challenges these pose of assessing labor compliance. According to the Confederation of Free Trade Zone Labor Unions, Nicaragua's garment industry added 13,000 new jobs in 2011, and textile assembly plants in the FTZs now employ 95,000 workers. Growth in the sector is expected to continue in 2012, including the opening of a Brazilian company that will employ 5,000 workers and a Taiwanese company that will employ 3,000.

Better Work Nicaragua is currently in the process of developing guidelines for the formation of PICCs. Taking into account the dynamic tripartite dialogue in the sector, these guidelines are being developed in close consultation and validation with key stakeholders, and are expected to be finalized by the end of January.

Vietnam

In mid November, Better Work Vietnam hosted the official delegation of Marie Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, the Swiss State Secretary for Economy, who was in Vietnam for meetings with government officials and representatives of the local business community. Better Work hosted a panel on industrial relations, with representation from the Vietnamese General Confederation of Labor and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), which discussed changes underway in Vietnam to strengthen social dialogue and genuine negotiations. The representatives also visited a Better Work factory and were able to see

firsthand the improvements to working conditions that have been made since the factory first joined Better Work Vietnam a year ago. The Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs is a key Better Work donor.

Better Work Vietnam launched Episodes 3 & 4 of the Worker Training Series, “At the Factory Gates,” focused on issues of OSH and stealing. The videos, aimed at a low-literacy, mostly female audience, convey key messages about worker rights and responsibilities through dramatic soap operas using Vietnamese actors. Following an initial delivery of videos to workers in groups of roughly 500, factory managers and union officials are then trained to deliver the videos to other workers in their factories. The latest episodes were filmed onsite at a Better Work Vietnam factory and were made possible through funding from the Levi Strauss Foundation. Factories and buyers can register for the training by contacting Nguyen Thi Hoa Binh at binh@betterwork.org.

Better Work Vietnam has teamed up with the VCCI to offer quarterly industry seminars on technical issues to the 150 factories currently participating in the programme. During last quarter, the organizations jointly hosted a seminar on effective negotiation and collective bargaining, taught by experts from the ILO Hanoi and Bangkok offices. The goal of the training was to support factories in enhancing mechanisms for better workplace cooperation and joint problem-solving and to decrease the incidence of wildcat strikes in the industry. Another jointly hosted event for factories focused on forecasts for the apparel industry for 2012.

Looking ahead, Better Work Vietnam will host a number of events in March focused on the Vietnamese Safety Week. During the week of 12 March, the programme will hold a local Buyers’ Forum, including an opportunity for buyers to meet with participating factories and members of the programme’s Project Advisory Committee. Better Work Vietnam will also host workshops directly linked to official events celebrating Safety Week, which is being held this year in the southern province of Dong Nai.

For more information on Better Work Vietnam, please visit their web site at: www.betterwork.org/vietnam.

Buyers’ Forums in 2012 (tentative)

Better Work has tentatively scheduled its local, regional and global Buyers’ Forums for 2012. Interested buyers should contact local programme representatives directly, or contact Susanna Harkonen (harkonen@ilo.org) at the Better Work global programme for more information.

Date(s)	Meeting	Location
Late Feb\early March (TBC)	BW Bangladesh meeting	London, (TBC)
12 April	BW Jordan Buyers’ Forum	Amman, Jordan
15 May	Regional Buyers’ Forum	Hong Kong
May (TBC)	BW European Buyers’ Forum	TBD (to be linked to other European-based mtgs)
13-14 June	BW Haiti Buyers’ Forum	Port au Prince, Haiti
28 June	BW Indonesia Buyers’ Forum	Jakarta, Indonesia
Late July (TBC)	BW Nicaragua Buyers’ Forum	Managua, Nicaragua
Week of 10 Sept	BFC\BW Cambodia and Vietnam Buyers’ Forum	HCMC, Vietnam and\or Phnom Penh, Cambodia
4 October	BW Lesotho Buyers’ Forum	Maseru, Lesotho
22 October	BW Global Buyers’ Forum	New York, USA



Jobs

Better Work is continually looking for qualified professionals to work with the global and country programmes. All available posts are listed on our web site. [See vacancies and tenders >>](#)

About Better Work

Better Work is a unique partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). It unites the expertise of the ILO in labour standards with that of the IFC in private-sector development. Better Work brings together local enterprises, international buyers, governments, and workers' and employers' organizations to improve labour standards and promote competitiveness in global supply chains. [See our brochure >>](#)

The Better Work global programme is supported by the following (in alphabetical order):

- Australian Government
- Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Switzerland (SECO)
- United States Council Foundation, Inc. (funds provided by select USCIB member companies)
- The Walt Disney Company

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