



Better Work – Phase III

Better Work works towards a global garment industry that lifts millions of people out of poverty by providing decent work, empowering women, driving business competitiveness and inclusive growth.

Since 2009, SECO supports more and better jobs and skills development in the garment industry through the Better Work programme. This joint ILO-IFC flagship programme unites diverse groups – governments, factory owners, unions, workers and global brands – to create positive action that improves working conditions while stimulating both productivity and profitability in the garment supply chain.

Rationale

The garment industry creates an opportunity to fight poverty by providing decent jobs. The industry provides formal employment to over 60 million of workers, predominantly young women and migrants. In some countries, garment production represents 70% or more of total exports. However, many factories fail to comply with national and international labour standards. In addition, garment producing countries often lack the capacity to effectively enforce legislation. International buyers have looked to address poor compliance to labour law by auditing their suppliers – with limited impact. Better Work addresses these challenges at the factory, industry and global level in a holistic and sustainable way, by working together with governments, social partners and global buyers.

The Better Work Approach

Better Work is a comprehensive intervention with activities at factory, sectoral, national and global level.

- At the factory level, Better Work assesses the compliance with national and international labour standards. In addition, Better Work provides advisory and training services for managers and workers to support continuous improvements.
- At sector level, Better Work works with global retailers, brands and manufacturers to improve business and purchasing practices that foster labour conditions across their supply chains.
- At national level, Better Work reinforces public institutions and influenced policies that create an enabling environment for decent work and improved business competitiveness.
- And at global level, Better Work uses its evidence base and proven examples of success to influence the regional and global policy dialogue on decent work and the SDGs.

Better Work operates in Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh, as well as in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Haiti, Jordan and Nicaragua.

SECO country/region

Global, Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar (other countries: Bangladesh)

Executing agency

International Labour Organization (ILO) & International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Duration

2017-2021

Total budget

USD 74,900,000

SECO contribution

CHF 12,000,000



In each country as well as at the global level, tripartite advisory committees are established to guide programme direction and to support ongoing operations and sustainability.

Objectives and Activities of Phase III

During its third phase (2017-2021), Better Work leverages existing and new partnerships to expand its impact to eight million workers and 21 million family members. In addition, the programme supports garment-producing countries to strengthen policies ensuring decent work and competitiveness and to drive positive outcomes on a much larger scale. The programme:

- Builds on what works best in garment factories by focusing on services with the greatest value add, tackling the root-causes of non-compliance, re-doubling efforts to build worker-management dialogue and strengthening the role of women.
- Influences global brands and manufacturers to increase its impact beyond the garment sector and beyond those countries where Better Work has established programmes.
- Aligns policy advice to governments and develops joint plans in areas such as labour inspections, investment climate, trade and competitiveness.
- Expands to new countries.

Results so far

An independent assessment of Better Work confirmed there is a business case for improving working conditions and highlighted the programme's significant impact in a number of areas:

- Improving working conditions and compliance with labour standards – BW decreased excessive work hours (-2.5h per week), reduced the incidence of abusive and coercive working conditions (-18%) and increased worker take-home pay (+USD 15 per week in Vietnam).
- Empowering women – Better Work decreased the gender pay gap (-17%) and reduced sexual harassment concerns (-18%).
- Improved firm performance – Factories collaborating with Better Work were more profitable (+25%). Ensuring women have the skills and confidence to success yields real business benefits: training female supervisors leads to 22% higher productivity.
- Influencing policy – Based on the experiences with Better Work, Vietnam introduced a ground-breaking reform to its labour law in 2013, permitting worker-management committees in all factories and all sectors as mechanisms for social dialogue for the first time.

How to get involved

Better Work's business, government and social partners have played a key role in each of these successes. They are industry leaders in the movement to reimagine the global supply chain, where workers' rights are realized and businesses gain a competitive advantage to grow.

Better Work engages with brands, retailers and manufacturers through a number of channels, including formal partnerships and regular Business Forums at the country, regional and international level. There are two channels for involvement: partnership or participation. Partnerships provide more strategic benefits and visibility. Partners are involved with the programme and take part in its governance. They sign a public-private partnership agreement with the ILO and IFC. Brands and retailers – who are not Better Work partners – may purchase reports for factories registered in Better Work programmes. Such companies will need to register as a participant in order to access reports from our online portal. For more information, please contact: buyers@betterwork.org.

Further information

Website: <https://betterwork.org>

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