



Covid-19 Pandemic Service Model Handling Policy

MARCH 2021

This document outlines Better Work's global factory service model policy applied during the pandemic. The approach prioritizes mitigating the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on factories and workers, taking into account national regulations and realities. This policy has been updated and will be in place until December 31st, 2021. Updates on the status of each country will be maintained on the website.

Guiding Principles

1. The health and well-being of Better Work staff and partners at the factory and national levels are paramount. Better Work will follow ILO/UN policy and national health guidelines to help prevent further spread of the pandemic and will proactively assess risks as the pandemic evolves.
2. The Better Work approach draws upon its proven suite of factory level tools and approaches. Additionally, the service model incorporates flexible approaches that include virtual and hybrid (e.g. combined virtual-onsite or delivery in partnership with others, including labour inspectors or factory ambassadors) methodologies to ensure ongoing factory oversight and engagement.¹
3. Better work maintains its commitment to provide factory services that meet the quality requirements defined in its global quality framework and to provide services of equal value when alternative modalities are used for services delivery.
4. The programme's focus is to support factories in becoming increasingly resilient to future shocks. Training and advisory continue to be the cornerstone of Better Work's continuous improvement methodology, including a wide range of new content covering topics specific to COVID-19.
5. Better Work maintains close engagement with all stakeholders, including coordination with national constituents and UN agencies to understand and disseminate updated regulations and protocols and to support the development of appropriate interventions.

¹ It is important to note that technology and connectivity issues might influence the extent to which virtual services are incorporated into the model. Better Work will keep stakeholders informed of the specific situation when required but in such circumstances phone interviews or delivery in partnership with others has been utilised.



Status of Lockdown Measures and Factory Services

Better Work's approach is based on a three-phase framework that categorises interventions based on local circumstances. The phases are not mutually exclusive; the status of factory production and mobility restrictions may move between phases based on how the pandemic evolves within countries. Please check the Better Work website for the most up-to-date information.

	Status	Better Work country programmes (March 2021).
Phase 1	Factory production is suspended; on-site factory visits by ILO staff are suspended.	No country programmes currently fall under this status.
Phase 2	Factory production is partially or fully resumed; on-site factory visits by ILO staff are suspended due to COVID restrictions.	Indonesia, Nicaragua, Bangladesh Cambodia (temporary suspension of services until April 9 th)
Phase 3	Factory production is partially or fully resumed; all or partial on-site factory visits by ILO staff are possible.	Vietnam (onsite visits fully resumed), Jordan*, Egypt*, Ethiopia*, Haiti* *These country programmes have received UN/ILO exceptional approval to conduct full or limited onsite factory visits under the following criteria: (i) staff have received medical clearance and are comfortable to travel; (ii) the region or factory are deemed not to be high risk from an exposure perspective; and (iii) the factory is accepting external visitors



Service Model Approach and Guidelines

Better Work will continue to maintain assessments, advisory and training as much as possible during the course of the pandemic and in line with the principles noted above. Regular engagement is taking place between Better Work country teams and partners as the situation evolves.

Advisory and Training

Better Work will continue to maintain advisory and training services to all factories. Flexibility in the number and focus of advisory or training visits is determined based on needs agreed with factories. In all countries, regardless of phase, Better Work will provide the following minimum advisory and training services:

- ◆ Virtual advisory with management and workers representatives to maintain social dialogue
- ◆ Virtual training with management and workers' representatives
- ◆ Support to managers and workers representatives on self-diagnosis and follow-up on Improvement Plans
- ◆ Improvement Plan (factory self-reporting)
- ◆ Progress Report 2
- ◆ Training reports

Where factory services have resumed as normal, the regular training and advisory curriculum will be followed, with virtual advisory and training being provided where it can be effectively delivered. Additional training and advisory services have been adapted to respond to the pandemic including on understanding legal requirements and measures introduced during the pandemic, OSH, managing and communicating during the return to work, retrenchment guidelines, gender and Covid impacts as well as risk assessment and purchasing practices.

Worker and management surveys may be provided as supplemental information, particularly when visits are suspended. In some cases, follow-up calls and informal contact with workers might be offered. The decision will be made at the discretion of the country programmes, considering local context.

Assessments

Where national regulations and factory conditions allow, Better Work has resumed onsite assessments. Assessment protocols may vary according to local context, including to reduce staff time in factories in countries/regions where Covid-19 transmission rates are high. In line with the principles noted above, a hybrid methodology may be applied in which part of the assessment is conducted virtually (e.g. some interviews and some document reviews), while others aspects are conducted onsite. In other countries, the services will be conducted in partnership with others, particularly labour inspectors. This latter methodology is also aligned with Better Work's commitment to strengthen national institutions and increase ownership of compliance on the part of national constituents.



Under exceptional circumstances, when Better Work staff cannot travel to factories for extended periods of time, Virtual Compliance Checks (VCCs) will be utilised. VCCs include a subset of questions from each compliance cluster, selected Core Labour standards and Covid-19 related questions where remote data collection and triangulation is possible. VCCs will be done in conjunction with advisory services and worker engagement tools to ensure triangulation of issues and to support factories in addressing them through continuous improvement and social dialogue. While technology can be a challenge in some cases, the pilots conducted in Cambodia, Nicaragua and Bangladesh confirmed that Better Work is still able to detect difficult/sensitive issues in VCCs.

Social & Labour Compliance Programme

In spring 2021, Better Work will progressively introduce Step 1 of the SLCP tool as its assessment tool, starting in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam, subject to consultation of national constituents. Step 1 has been aligned with national labour laws, International Labour Standards and measures compliance against these standards. The new tool will progressively be introduced in factories at the time of their assessment in the cycle. A Covid-19 risk mitigation strategy is being developed to ensure continuity of the SLCP roll-out during the pandemic. BW is exploring with SLCP the extent to which data from virtual compliance checks can be paired with self-assessments.

Reporting

Better Work will use its traditional reporting channels to share information with manufacturers and brands. Regular updates on conditions in each Better Work country programme will be provided through calls and webinars as well as through the Better Work website. In some instances, supplemental reporting such as reports of survey results or website stories will be made available.

On-going Internal Training, Monitoring & Evaluation

Better work has adapted its internal training, strengthened QA frameworks, and established a system to evaluate pilot efforts to ensure oversight and critical review of services during the pandemic, including the following measures.

- ◆ Introduction of internal trainings to support Better Work teams during the pandemic, including on positive mental health, leadership in a crisis, and virtual training and facilitation skills
- ◆ Service model guidelines and QA/QC framework to support consistent and quality delivery and reporting of virtual and hybrid factory services
- ◆ Given the speed at which the situation of the pandemic changes on the ground, regular check in points are established to review service delivery and identify potential service model enhancements based on innovations piloted in 2020. The evaluation criteria will be further refined in 2021. Results will be shared with partners and constituents to inform discussions of future services.



Annex: Factory Services Overview in Better Work Countries

Status	Countries	Core Services		
		Training and Advisory	Assessments	Reporting
Phase 1 (High risk of) rising number of cases Factory production is generally suspended; On-site factory visits by ILO staff are suspended	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual training with management and workers' representatives. Virtual advisory with management and workers to maintain social dialogue and support bipartite discussions on pandemic responses. Support to managers and workers on self-diagnosis and follow-up on Improvement Plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms of assessment are not carried out as factories have suspended production. Worker management surveys may be implemented to capture information regarding on the ground realities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan (factory self-reporting) Progress Report 1 (factory self-reporting) Progress Report 2 Training reports (TMS)
Phase 2 (High risk of) rising number of cases Factory production is at least partially resumed; On-site factory visits by ILO staff are suspended All timeframes to be updated on a monthly basis	Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual advisory and training services ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting VCC to clear assessment backlog. SLCP data-sharing to commence in Q2. Covid-19 mitigation plans under development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 VCC assessment report
	Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual advisory and training services ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting VCC to clear assessment backlog. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 VCC assessment report
	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-person advisory visits and trainings have been temporarily suspended until 9 April. However, these are conducted virtually instead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factory visits have been temporarily suspended until 9 April due to the current COVID-19 situation in Cambodia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 Compliance assessment report



Status	Countries	Core Services		
		Training and Advisory	Assessments	Reporting
Phase 2 (continued)	Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual advisory and training services ongoing. In limited instances, BWI staff were able to conduct on-site advisory and trainings where particular health and safety criteria were met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments to resume in Q2 2021 as well as data sharing with SLCP. Covid-19 mitigation plans under development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1
Phase 3 Factory production is partially or fully resumed; and on-site factory visits by ILO staff are possible. *These country programmes have received UN/ILO exceptional approval to conduct onsite factory visits under the following criteria: (i) staff have received medical clearance and are comfortable to travel; (ii) the region or factory are deemed not to be high risk from an exposure perspective; and (iii) the factory is accepting external visitors	Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site advisory continues for BWV, combined with continued virtual advisory and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 days Onsite assessment now resumed as 1 day assessment where possible. Data-sharing with SLCP to commence in Q2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 Compliance assessment report
	*Haiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual advisory and training services are conducted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint onsite assessments with Ministry of Labour have resumed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 Compliance assessment report
	*Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual advisory and training services are available. Slowly resuming onsite advisory visits with ILO authorization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onsite assessment now resumed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 Compliance assessment report
	*Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory services started in July 2020 virtually but have transitioned to on-site visits as of late 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onsite assessment offered by ILO consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 Compliance assessment report
	*Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual advisory, Industrial Seminars and trainings have been ongoing. Onsite advisory services (particularly focused on OSH) carried out by either EAs or national stakeholders on behalf of BWJ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid assessments with labour inspectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All reports mentioned under Phase 1 Compliance assessment report