

# Better Work Uzbekistan

In mid-2023, Better Work began a programme in Uzbekistan to improve working conditions and the competitiveness of the garment and textile industry. At the invitation of tripartite constituents and collaborating with other parts of the ILO, Better Work aims to support the industry to comply with international labour standards and national labour laws, in order to enhance worker well-being and attract Western brands and retailers to source from Uzbekistan.

## The industry in Uzbekistan



134

Cotton textile  
clusters



7,000+

Factories



3+Billion

Exports from  
the industry



500,000

Workers

Source: Uzbektexileprom

## Key milestones



### Fast Track start up

Better Work's feasibility study in Uzbekistan was completed in less than six months



### Tripartite MoU

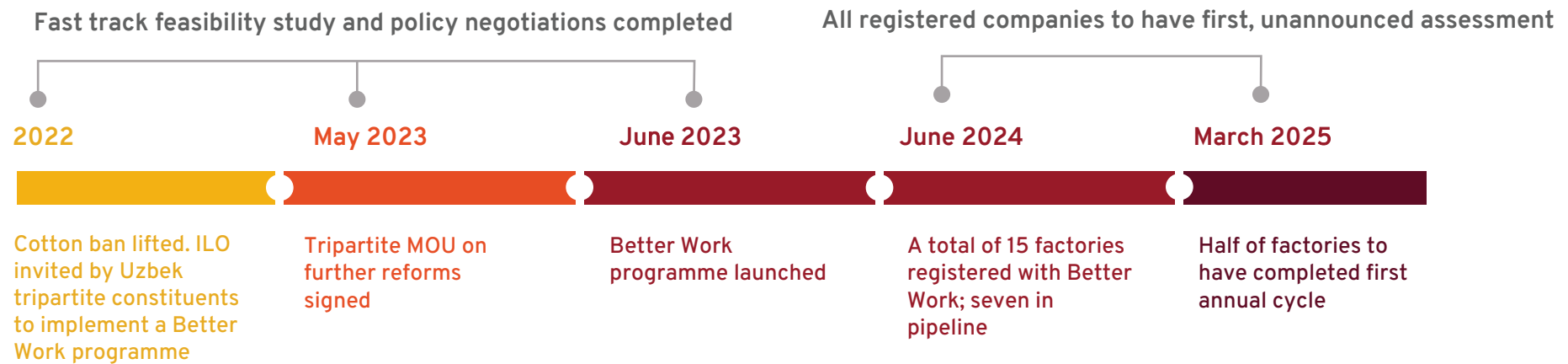
Signed on 30th May, 2023, this agreement outlines areas for further reform and demonstrates the local partners' commitment to improving labour practices and industry standards.



### Factory Engagement and International Interest

Ten factories have registered with Better Work, with seven more in the process. Better Work Uzbekistan is providing advisory and training services and compliance assessment to enrolled enterprises. Several Better Work buyer partners are actively considering Uzbekistan as a sourcing destination. Recently, the Walt Disney Company added Uzbekistan to its permitted sourcing country list for factories enrolled with Better Work.

# Timeline of Better Work in Uzbekistan



## Our work with factories

The Better Work service model is based on an annual cycle of assessments, advisory sessions and training. Services are delivered in Uzbek.

In 2024, all enrolled factories will undergo an unannounced compliance assessment. The results will be available on the Better Work STAR portal. Each factory works with Better Work advisors to maintain an Improvement Plan, recording compliance issues and corrective actions. In the first phase of the programme, training and learning materials focus on:

- ▶ Workplace communication and cooperation
- ▶ Basic introduction to social compliance and relevant legal requirements
- ▶ Grievance mechanisms
- ▶ Supervisory skills training
- ▶ Responsible sourcing
- ▶ Gender, inclusion and disability
- ▶ Zero tolerance issues

## Our work beyond the enterprise level

- ▶ **Legal and Policy Reforms:** Better Work and other ILO projects support significant legal and policy reforms, as agreed with national constituents in the 2023 MOU. These reforms focus on improving labour inspection capability and the rights to independent trade unions and collective bargaining (ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98).
- ▶ **Coordination with International Partners:** The programme works closely with international organizations such as the IFC, World Bank Group, EBRD, and bilateral donors to ensure policy coherence and effective support for national reforms. This collaboration is crucial for sustaining and scaling up Better Work's impact in Uzbekistan.
- ▶ **Promotion of Social Dialogue:** A key objective across all Better Work country programmes is to promote social dialogue at enterprise, sectoral, and national levels. In Uzbekistan, this involves training sessions and workshops aimed at fostering cooperation and understanding among management and workers and strengthen capacities for inclusive and harmonious industrial relations and social dialogue.



## Programme challenges

### Understanding Social Compliance

Better Work's feasibility study found that most companies have never undergone a social compliance audit. Many have significant gaps in their understanding of basic concepts of social and environmental compliance.

### Improving worker-management cooperation

Bipartite committees to promote good working conditions have not yet been implemented as current rules don't align with Better Work's standards for worker representation. Meeting the concerns of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU) also demands a tailored approach.

## First assessments

Five enterprises have completed their first Better Work assessment providing a detailed snapshot of current rates of non-compliance. Overall, there are areas where non-compliance was relatively low, including in the Compensation and Freedom of Association Clusters. However, significant gaps in safety, health, and equitable treatment of workers require focused improvements. The detailed findings highlight the necessity for targeted interventions to elevate safety standards and ensure fair treatment and remuneration of workers.

## Building trade union capacity and promoting workplace cooperation







The Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU) is an important partner among the ILO's tripartite constituents in Uzbekistan. In April 2024, Better Work hosted a workshop specifically aimed at building the FTUU's capacity to promote Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW) in the garment and agricultural sectors. The event focused on strengthening the FTUU's advocacy for workers' rights of association and collective bargaining under ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, exploring innovative organizing strategies and learning from international case studies.

This meeting built on the work of a December 2023 workshop, where the heads of Trade Unions from 14 regions, Better Work Enterprise Advisers and ILO specialists met to discuss the ILO framework and instruments to promote social dialogue.

## Next steps

Better Work seeks to strengthen Uzbekistan's role in the global textile market. By improving labour standard compliance, the programme aims to create better working conditions and more sustainable practices in the industry. This effort supports Uzbekistan's broader goals of economic growth and stronger international trade.

To attract more Western brands, Better Work is holding seminars and awareness-raising events. These encourage brands to take advantage of sourcing from Uzbekistan by maintaining high standards and continuing to improve compliance.

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