



STAFF GUIDANCE - FEB 2018

The Online Improvement Plan

This note gives an overview of BWs approach in maintaining the Improvement Plan (IP).

It is imperative that this approach is consistently followed across country programmes to ensure that factories and buyers have a uniform understanding of IP status updates.

1. Objectives

The main objective of BW advisory services is to build capacity of factory workers and management to strengthen social dialogue in the factory level while addressing existing and potential future improvement needs in a sustainable manner. In the process of delivering advisory services BW must also be able to provide assurance to buyers on the quality of information in the improvement plan.

While the advisory process cannot offer the same level of scrutiny as in the BW assessment, it is paramount that BWs approach in maintaining the IP contributes towards both of these objectives while balancing staff work load.

2. Maintaining the improvement plan online

The IP is maintained as an online living document through the BW Portal¹. The online IP contains the following data fields:

- ◆ Area of improvement
- ◆ Cluster
- ◆ Compliance point
- ◆ Root cause

¹ <https://portal.betterwork.org>



- ◆ Description of actions needed
- ◆ Lead person
- ◆ Additional persons
- ◆ Status
- ◆ Progress
- ◆ Key work ahead
- ◆ Target date
- ◆ Completion date

As part of its approach to give factories strong ownership of the improvement process, Better Work encourages factories to maintain their own IP through the Portal. As summarized in below table, most fields can be edited by the factory at any time in the cycle after an item has been created in the system. Better Work has exclusive access to some of the fields to make sure that integrity of the data can be guaranteed.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENTERING DATA TO THE SYSTEM?

IP data fields	Assessment findings	Additional findings from advisory
Area of improvement	Better Work	Factory ²
Cluster	Better Work	Factory ³
Compliance point	Better Work	Factory
Root cause	Factory	Factory
Description of actions needed	Factory	Factory
Lead person	Factory	Factory
Additional persons	Factory	Factory
Target date	Factory	Factory
Progress	Factory	Factory
Status	Factory and Better Work ⁴	Factory and Better Work ⁵
Key work ahead	Better Work	Better Work
Completion date	Better Work	Better Work

² This includes self-diagnosed findings before the BW assessment.

³ When a factory is not able to specify Cluster/Compliance point for self-identified findings it can contact the designated BW advisor for support.

⁴⁻⁵ The factory can mark the status of an IP item as In Progress or Pending. Only Better Work can mark the status of an IP item as Completed.



3. Follow up on the IP in advisory services

3.1 Role of the Committee

In BW advisory services, the designated enterprise advisor (EA) facilitates that members of the worker-management committee have a central role in activities to check on the status of improvements.

IP items remain In Progress / Pending until they are marked as Completed in the system by the EA.

The following steps must be taken before the EA can mark an IP item as Completed:

- ◆ The Committee (PICC/LKSB/PC) agrees that all necessary steps to address the issue in full have been taken.
- ◆ Committee members have reviewed supporting documentation and/or observed realized changes in the workplace.
- ◆ BW recommendations to address underlying root causes have been followed up in accordance with PDCA framework have been implemented according to the Committee.

After these steps have been taken the EA can mark the item as Completed, unless additional worker interviews are required (see paragraph 3.3).

When marking an IP item as Completed the EA will state the Completion Date.

3.2 Time frames

Before the EA takes any steps to follow up on improvement items the factory must have demonstrated sufficient commitment to the improvement process (see above mentioned steps).

BW actively encourages factories to prioritize Public Reporting Issues in the improvement process.





Factories can indicate progress regarding public reporting issues at any point in the reporting period by uploading information to the transparency portal.⁶

3.2.1. ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

- ◆ If a factory reports that an issue is remediated, the EA must work with the Committee on the steps listed above (paragraph 3.1) in the next one or two advisory visits. Activities can be spread out over these two visits.
- ◆ When a factory reports that an issue is completed, the EA should attempt to review this at one of the next 2 advisory visits, placing priority on public reporting issues.
- ◆ The EA must make sure that the status of all items in the Improvement Plan is up to date by the time Progress Report 2 is released.

3.3 What issues cannot be marked as Completed until the next assessment?

Advisory visits do not allow for in depth worker interviews. IP items requiring triangulation through worker interviews cannot be marked as Completed until the next assessment.

As a general rule it is at the discretion of the EA to determine if worker interviews are required to confirm that an issue can be marked as Completed. In general this applies to issues related to discrimination, intimidation, harassment, undermining of union/worker representatives, etc.

Issues that remain in the IP as Pending will be updated after a new assessment report has been released. If an issue that was found in the previous assessment is not repeated in the most recent assessment the BW advisor will review with the committee if the underlying root causes are addressed. This should include a review of the effectiveness of existing grievance mechanism and implementation of needed enhancements. If this is done the EA can mark the issue as Completed.

The information in the Transparency Portal will be updated by Better Work after a new assessment report has been released.

⁶ <https://portal.betterwork.org/transparency>



3.4 Ensuring a strong linkage between assessment and advisory

3.4.1. ROLE OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

- ◆ The assessment team must review the Improvement Plan of the previous cycle beforehand of the assessment.
- ◆ To make sure that buyers are provided with up to date information in the assessment report, the lead assessor must check the status of all IP items subject to public reporting that have not yet been marked as Completed. A comment on each of these items must be included in the assessment report.

3.4.2. ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

- ◆ The advisor must review the report of the latest assessment before the next advisory visit to the factory and incorporate additional findings from the assessment into the IP.
- ◆ If a finding from the previous cycle is repeated in the latest assessment, the advisor must merge these issues together. In such cases a comment must be included to enable buyers to track the issue.
- ◆ If an issue that was found in the previous assessment is not repeated in the most recent assessment the BW advisor will review with the committee if the underlying root causes are addressed. If this is confirmed the item can be marked as Completed.

