

Terms of Reference

Research on Evaluating the Effectiveness of Industrial Relations in Jordan's Garment Sector

Background

The garment industry in Jordan is primarily driven by large exporting factories that operate under the United States-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (USJFTA). Over the past decade, the sector has experienced significant growth, becoming a cornerstone of Jordan's export economy. While exports dropped by 15 percent in 2020 due to global disruptions, the industry demonstrated remarkable resilience, rebounding with 8 percent growth in 2021 and a further 22 percent growth in 2022. In total, garments worth USD 2.2 billion were exported in 2022—the highest export value recorded to date. The sector employed approximately 77,800 workers in 2022, with migrant workers comprising three-quarters of the workforce.

The workforce in Jordan's garment sector is diverse. Migrant workers, primarily from South Asia, include large groups from Bangladesh (over 50 percent of migrant workers), India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Myanmar. These workers typically arrive on contracts lasting two to three years, with options for renewal, depending on their employer's needs and workers' preferences. Complementing this significant migrant labor force are Jordanian workers, who represent approximately 25 percent of the total workforce. Gender dynamics also play a critical role in shaping the sector: women account for nearly 75 percent of the production workforce, while management roles remain male-dominated.

Better Work Jordan (BWJ), a collaborative initiative between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), was established at the request of the Jordanian Ministry of Labour in 2007 and began operations in mid-2008. BWJ brings together diverse stakeholders—including governments, global brands, factory owners, unions, and workers—to improve working conditions and enhance sector competitiveness. The program's mandatory status for factories exporting to the U.S. market has enabled it to drive sector-wide improvements, particularly in occupational safety and health, compliance with labor standards, and worker-management relations.

Over the past decade, BWJ has worked closely with tripartite stakeholders—the Ministry of Labour, the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment & Clothing Industries (JTGCU), and employer organizations—to create sustainable improvements in working conditions. Despite these advances, challenges remain in sustaining program impacts, particularly in addressing systemic inequities and fostering more inclusive industrial relations frameworks.

A critical component of BWJ's efforts has been the institutionalization of worker-management dialogue through worker-management committees, factory-level bodies established to represent workers and facilitate social dialogue. Initially introduced as Performance Improvement Consultative Committees (PICCs) under BWJ, worker-management committees became formally mandated by the 2015 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for Jordan's garment sector. However, the program's 2023 Annual Report underscores ongoing challenges, including limited worker participation in the committees, management interference, and gaps in representation.

Compounding these challenges is the fact that Jordan has not ratified the ILO's Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87), which hinders the development of fully effective and autonomous worker organizations. Against this backdrop, the proposed research aims to critically evaluate the effectiveness of industrial relations mechanisms, with a particular focus on worker-management committees, in fostering equitable representation and resolving workplace grievances.

Objective

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of industrial relations mechanisms in Jordan's garment sector, with a particular focus on worker-management committees, to support the development of equitable, inclusive, and sustainable labor practices. The research will address the following key questions:

1. **Effectiveness of Worker-Management Committees in Resolving Workplace Issues**
 - Assess how effectively worker-management committees (Union Labour Committees, ULCs) resolve workplace issues and conflicts.
 - Identify key barriers and enablers to the effectiveness of these committees, including structural, operational, and relational factors.
2. **Mechanisms for Equitable Representation in Worker-Management Committees**
 - Evaluate the processes and mechanisms in place to ensure equitable representation within worker-management committees, with attention to gender, nationality, and other demographic factors.
 - Explore challenges to equitable participation, including management interference, worker awareness, and systemic inequities.

Through this research, Better Work Jordan seeks to gain actionable insights into the current state of industrial relations in the garment sector. These findings will inform strategies for strengthening worker-management dialogue, enhancing compliance with labor standards, and fostering fair and inclusive workplace practices.

Expected Tasks and Deliverables

Deliverable 1: Data Collection Design and Planning Report:

- Develop a structured data collection plan, ensuring alignment with the research objectives and questions.
- Finalize tools and methodologies for qualitative data collection, including semi-structured interview guides and observation protocols, building on the desk research and stakeholder mapping already conducted.

Deliverable 2: Stakeholder Engagement and Interviews Report:

- Conduct semi-structured interviews with **20** key stakeholders, including representatives from government agencies, employer organizations, at least **5** workers' representatives, buyer representatives, representatives from the international and civil society organizations, as well as ILO experts.
- Conduct a check-in meeting after the first three interviews to assess the need for adapting the interview guide and make necessary revisions.
- Facilitate 6-7 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), ensuring they are representative of diverse groups, including gender and nationalities, to capture a range of perspectives and collective insights.

Deliverable 3: Structured Data Compilation Report:

- Organize and compile raw data (e.g., interview transcripts, observation notes) into a standardized format for easy reference and analysis.

- Include a coding framework or thematic categories to facilitate subsequent analysis.

Deliverable 4: Preliminary Analysis Report:

- Identify and summarize key themes and findings for each of the research questions, highlighting preliminary findings, challenges, and areas requiring further exploration.

Qualifications and Relevant Experience

- **Educational Background:** A postgraduate degree in social sciences, labor studies, industrial relations, or a related field, or equivalent proof of research experience.
- **Proven Experience:** Demonstrated expertise in qualitative research on labor relations, social dialogue, or worker-management dynamics, with at least two examples of published reports, policy briefs, or journal articles required.
- **Qualitative Data Collection:** Extensive experience in semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observational research, with a proven ability to analyze qualitative data and produce actionable insights.
- **Sector Knowledge:** Familiarity with the garment industry or similar sectors, including understanding of gender dynamics, migrant labor issues, and industrial relations frameworks, particularly in Jordan or comparable contexts.
- **Communication Skills:** Strong written and verbal communication skills, with a demonstrated ability to produce high-quality research reports tailored to diverse audiences, including policymakers and international organizations.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Experience engaging with diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, employer organizations, and trade unions, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings.
- **Language Proficiency:** Fluency in English is required, and working knowledge of Arabic is highly desirable
- **Proven Track Record:** Submission of at least two examples of written works, such as research reports, policy briefs, or peer-reviewed articles, demonstrating expertise in qualitative research and the ability to present complex findings clearly and professionally.

Supervision

The consultant will report to BWJ's Program Manager's and will work closely with the BWJ team.

Payment Schedule

According to the market rate, the External Collaborating will be paid according to its expertise and is asked to submit a technical and financial offer. The external collaborator will only be paid upon satisfactory completion and approval of deliverables and upon receipt of signed invoices. The external collaborator will be paid based on the following table:

Payments	Deliverables	Estimated dated of payment
First payment 20%	Deliverable 1: Data Collection Design and Planning Report	January 30 th , 2025
Second payment 40%	Deliverable 2: Stakeholder Engagement and Interviews Report.	February 28 th , 2025

	Deliverable 3: Structured Data Compilation report	
Third payment 40%	Deliverable 4: Preliminary Analysis Report	March 15 th , 2025

Submission

All applicants must send their technical and financial proposals to jordan@betterwork.org. Please note that this position is open to Jordanian nationals only. The deadline to submit your application is 16 JAN 2025, at midday (Jordan time). Only selected applicants will be contacted.