



BETTER WORK

Programme Information

Background

Better Work is a unique partnership program between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Launched in February 2007, it aims to improve labour standards and competitiveness in global supply chains. Better Work involves the development of both global tools and country level projects. The focus is on scalable and sustainable solutions which build cooperation between government, employer and worker organizations, and international buyers.

Improving labour standards in global supply chains is an important part of a pro-poor development strategy. Ensuring workers' rights and entitlements are protected help distribute the benefits of trade. Better Work supports enterprises in implementing the ILO core international labour standards and national labour law. This helps enterprises compete in global markets where many buyers demand compliance with labour standards from their suppliers. Improved labour standards also helps enterprises be more competitive through higher productivity and quality. These benefits help build the business case and supplier support for improved labour standards.

Global Level

Better Work is developing practical tools to help enterprises improve their labour standards and competitiveness. Some of these tools are:

- *A global portal* designed with end-users in mind. Information will be accessible by language, country and industry sector. As projects are rolled out in different countries and sectors, the tools will be adapted and made available through the global portal. The portal will also support virtual communities of practice to involve stakeholders in program development.
- *A compliance needs assessment* against core international labour standards and national labour law. The assessment also allows enterprise to track the impact of improving labour standards against quality and productivity indicators.
- *Training resources* including a 12-month modular training programme, single issue seminars, induction training kits, and first-level supervisor training.
- *Worker awareness raising on rights and responsibilities* using innovative techniques such as soap operas and comic books
- *Work books for mini projects* to address common problems in enterprises targeted to small and medium size enterprises
- *Model policies and procedures* and good practice guides on a range of needs often found in enterprises;
- *Information Management System (IMS)* that can capture information on compliance and remediation efforts. This system will also be adapted to support self-assessments, country projects and public sector labour administration.

Better Work tools are designed to be practical, easy to use, and to focus on benefits for employers and workers through better workplace cooperation. They will be made available globally and adapted for use in different sectors as part of country projects. More tools will be developed as the programme unfolds.

A small global team will support the ongoing development and roll out of Better Work. Its job will be to develop and support country projects. The team will also be responsible at a global level for managing impact assessment reporting, knowledge management, coordination, stakeholder engagement, ongoing quality control, resource mobilisation, strategic management and policy advice. Most tools and resource development will be done in country projects.

Country Level

Country projects typically combine independent enterprise assessments with enterprise advisory and training services to support practical improvements through workplace cooperation. This is done through creating industry-based schemes designed to work at the enterprise level. Through the use of the Better Work Information Management System (IMS) enterprises can share factory information with their buyers. This in turn allows buyers to reduce their own auditing and redirect resources to fixing problems and sustainable solutions. The key to success is the support of the relevant employers' and workers' organizations, the national government and international buyers.

Better Work projects are designed to work closely with existing IFC and ILO initiatives particularly those focusing on capacity building in the private sector, public sector labour administration, and for employers' and workers'

organizations. Each Better Work project will consider in detail how it can support the work of the ILO and IFC in these areas during the design stage.

Better Work country projects will work with partners to deliver its training. Training is adult-centred and combines class-room based training with enterprise advisory services. It has been designed to maximise the impact of training through support for implementation at the enterprise level.

A reputation for quality and positive impact will be the basis of success. The skills of trainers and enterprise advisors are critical. They will need to be well trained and supported including continuous professional development opportunities. *Better Work* will establish certificated training programmes for trainers and enterprise advisors, a support network, an inter-active web-based community of practice to support practitioners and a professional development programme for these target groups.

Country projects are designed to be sustainable and of a significant scale. The objective is to build sustainable independent organizations that will continue after funding has stopped. Typically this means that within five years the projects are expected to become self-financing. ILO and IFC work together to mobilise necessary resources for country projects. The global programme will be responsible for ongoing quality control once country projects are independent.

Better Work is currently designing three pilot projects for Vietnam, Jordan and Lesotho for implementation in late 2007. These projects alone will directly benefit over 800 000 workers. ILO and IFC is now working on a strategy for adding projects in different countries and sectors as part of a five year roll out.

Impact measurement

Measuring the impact of Better Work is of high importance. The IFC and ILO are designing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework with indicators that include:

- labour standards compliance;
- productivity and quality performance;
- economic figures such as employment, foreign direct investment, and exports;
- human and social development.

An interdisciplinary team from Tufts University is designing a framework for Better Work to measure impact at the factory, industry, country and global level. In addition, the Tufts team will be conducting a controlled experiment with factories in Vietnam that will show the causal relationship between Better Work interventions at the factory level and economic, social, and human development outcomes. Building the business case for improving labour standards is an important part of the overall strategy. Better Work will continue to publicly name factories and their progress on implementing suggestions for improvement as part of country projects.

ILO and IFC Strengths

Better Work builds on the respective strengths of the IFC and the ILO. The IFC is the private sector financing arm of the World Bank. It recently adopted performance standards on labour for its investment clients. The ILO is the specialised labour agency of the United Nations. Better Work combines expertise of the ILO in social dialogue, labour standards and their application, with those of the IFC in private sector development. As international organisations they bring strong credibility and experience to the programme.

Next Steps

In the first stage of the program, there will be three pilot country projects -- in Vietnam, Jordan and Lesotho. After initial implementation of these projects, Better Work will expand to other countries. Country projects adapt the global tools, and develop new ones, which in turn will be made available to the global Better Work community. It is through this process that Better Work tools will be adapted and developed for different sectors. Therefore the choice of countries and sectors for country projects is very important. Better Work intends to develop projects in sectors such as agribusiness, textile and apparel, light manufacturing, transport, construction, and electronics. IFC and ILO have been approached by multiple countries interested in participating in Better Work and will develop regional strategies to ensure effective and logical roll-out. One such example is the planned expansion into African agribusiness in 2008

For more information see www.betterwork.org or contact Global Programme Manager, Ros Harvey at Harvey@ilo.org.