



Tajikistan: Strengthening export competitiveness of SMEs in the textile and clothing sector and enhancing trade support institutional capacities

Mission Report by

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Background:

The aim of the project is to increase the export competitiveness of the T&C sector in Tajikistan, by providing sector specific support to SMEs and relevant TSIs, as well as by supporting the respective stakeholders in taking a strategic approach to the sector's development.

Under the project development opportunities and challenges for the tourism and handicraft sectors in Tajikistan were identified, as a first step to engage different stakeholders, and develop comprehensive assistance frameworks, aimed at fostering the sectors' potential, to play a significant role in the economy.

The overall project's three expected outcomes are as follows:

- Outcome 1: The strategic and institutional framework of the T&C sector is improved
- Outcome 2: SMEs in the T&C sector are more export competitive and have access to new markets
- Outcome 3: Tourism and handicraft sector stakeholders have improved knowledge and understanding of sector needs and development priorities

Within the framework of the project, as part of Outcome 2, enterprises' capacities will be enhanced in the areas of sourcing, product design, marketing, productivity, quality management and corporate social responsibility. Exporters will then be connected to target markets in order to ensure that the improvements are linked to practical trade-based results.

As a part of capacity building activities it was envisaged to conduct series of trainings on corporate social responsibility and occupational safety and health (OSH). This will raise the sector's awareness of environmental issues and contribute to a sustainable, environmentally friendly development and business culture.

Programme of the mission:

Date	Day	Activity	Location
13 May	Wed	Meetings with the National Programme Manager and National Consultant, visits to pilot enterprises (3 companies)	Dushanbe
14-15 May	Thu-Fri	Two 2-day seminars on CSR and OSH for SMEs in textile and clothing sector	Dushanbe
17 May	Sun	Travel to Khujand	
18 May	Mon	Meetings with the National Consultant, visits to pilot enterprises (3 companies)	Khujand
19-20 May	Tue-Wed	2-day seminars on CSR and OSH for SMEs in textile and clothing sector	Khujand
21 May	Thu	Travel to Moscow	

Meetings with the Project:

The mission started with a meeting with Mr Saidmumin Kamolov, National Programme Manager, and Mr Rustam Shadibekov, National Consultant.

Overview of the project activities and main challenges related to OSH and CSR issues in textile industry were presented during the meeting, followed by the discussion on the forthcoming seminars and short summary of the pilot enterprises to be visited.

Visits to pilot enterprises, Dushanbe, 13 May:

1. Yokut-2000 LLC
2. Maftuna LLC
3. OJSC Suman

Yokut-2000 LLC

The first company visited during this mission was Yokut-2000 LLC, one of the leading companies involved in the project activities. The company was established 13 years ago. Now it moved to a new spacious building, recently repaired. During the meeting with the representative of an enterprise, she told us that an OSH Management System functions at the enterprise based on the experience gained by the responsible persons during Soviet Union times and current legislation.

The Reps gave overview of the problems in textile sector in Tajikistan and some efforts to avoid them have been discussed. Unfortunately, not all the problems can be eliminated. Due to economic crisis, the demand has significantly decreased. It becomes more and more difficult to get good orders. In 2008-2012 there were 1200 people working at this enterprise. Now only 305 persons.

Most of the workers are member of the Trade Union. They cooperate with the sectoral TU organization and get advice from them. Besides this, the Fire Service and Labour Inspection check the company on a regular basis. They have a responsible person on fire safety and OSH, medical service. There were a number of trainings on fire safety and use of fire extinguishers. Twice a month an electrical specialist comes to check the equipment. Every 6 months the company is checked by the representative of GOST service.

Environment at this company is good – the temperature is within the limits, ACs are available, good lightening, low noise level, the rooms are clean and well-organized. All new workers have to pass safety training, sign for it in a special register and get safety instruction as a part of their labour contract. Every 3 months they organize safety meetings for all the workers.

The company pays attention to improvement of motivation of workers. Every summer they organize tours outside the city, during state holidays they have parties. There is a canteen in the premises of the factory where the workers may have lunch. 70% of workers are in poverty, and the company helps them by sending their kids to camps during summer time, send them to schools where they can stay during working days, provide lunches.

Recommendations:

- Cutting section – a cutting table and a band knife should have special protective mechanism to avoid contact with a blade. In addition to that, a worker should wear an iron glove to minimise the risks. Unfortunately, most of workers refuse to wear protective gloves as this measure lowers sensitivity and is not very comfortable. There should be some mechanism to control how workers fulfil safety requirements.



- Electricity – in general electrical wiring is well-organized, but there were a few places where wiring had to be updated.



- Floor – in a few places we noticed broken tiles, besides this, in some doorways there were doorsteps which could become an obstacle in case of emergency situation.
- Fire safety – though fire safety procedures are established, it was advised to organize a separate training for workers on evacuation in case of fire.
- No rubber carpets to reduce vibration and noise level.

Maftuna LLC

The company Maftuna is a relatively small company (19 persons, maximum 25-30 persons), focused on production of school uniforms. The owners of the company are very motivated and keen on improvement. In the nearest future they are planning to get a new premises to expand the business (up to 150 employees). Unfortunately, we did

not have an opportunity to talk to the managers, but the representative showed us the production line.

There is a small TU organisation (5-6 persons) established in a company. The Fire Service and Labour Inspection check the company on a regular basis. Once a week there is a check-up of electrical safety.

One of the big problems – high personnel turnover. Young ladies come to Dushanbe from other regions for a couple of months and then get married or return back home due to low salaries. The company provides training for new employees and has to spend a lot of resources for that. The company tries to improve its social image. For all the workers there is a rest room, a canteen (lunch is provided). The company helps to local society and they have provided already school uniform for local orphans and a few computers for disabled persons.

The OSH system does not function very well, mainly due to lack of knowledge on the topic. All new employees get oral safety instruction, which is not enough, as according to the legislation they have to be registered and get written instructions. There is no proper ventilation system (but they plan to install them in the nearest future). In future they also plan to have a medical service in the company.

Recommendations:

- Appoint a responsible OSH person and train him/her.
- Establish a proper ventilation system.
- Improvement of Fire safety system – though there were a few fire extinguishers, most of them were located in hard-to-reach areas, like high shelves; no fire safety trainings for personnel; no fire alarm system.
- Ergonomics – the chairs are not comfortable for sewers (the same note was made by a previous consultant). They will try to buy a new ones later.
- Improvement of waste management – in all the rooms there were too many leftovers and pieces of material laying on the floor. This could lead to accident in case a worker fall down. Better waste management will also improve productivity. A small bins could be installed near each workplace to improve situation.



- Organize a risk assessment of a new building before moving there

OJSC Suman

The company Suman was founded 40 years ago. It is famous for its embroidery.



The company is located in a center of Dushanbe in very old premises. The owner informed us that in a year the buildings would be destroyed by the government and they will move into another building.

There are 45 persons currently working in the company. The atmosphere is very nice. All the workers, besides their work function, also take care of the garden, trees. During lunch time they cook together and have an opportunity to rest in shadow under the trees. There is pretty low personnel turnover as people have very good relations. Management helps to the workers, provides flour, tableware, ask for their needs, during big holidays they organize parties. All the workers are members of the TU. Sectoral TU assists them in organizing trips to sanatoriums, provide trainings.

The production is waste-free. All leftovers are used to fill pillows etc. Bobbins are sold. The company has a responsible OSH person, who takes care of OSH trainings and instructions. They also have a separate specialist on electrical safety. Equipment is also checked by the state specialist on a regular basis. The factory cooperates with the Labour Inspection and the Fire Service. There are sufficient number of fire extinguishers, fire trainings were also organized.

However, the company has a lot of problems due to decrepitude of buildings:

- All the building are too old and destroying. Special care should be taken to ensure safety of workers.
- In the embroidery shop the power level of lamps is not sufficient, that is why they hang too low, almost on the height of an adult. The level of noise here is too high as they use very old equipment.
- In the cutting section the floor is not even, it has many holes, very high chances to fall down, especially in an emergency situation.



Recommendations:

It is difficult to recommend any serious interventions as the management is being prepared to move to other premises and is not ready to invest in the old buildings.

Following points were advised:

- Organize risk assessment of a new building to prevent possible risk and study the situation
- Ensure proper lightning using proper lamps
- The situation with floor is urgent. Taking into account that it is impossible to change it, it was suggested to organize a temporary firm cover to make it flat.

The premises of the factory are clean and well-organized, proper lightning and ventilation are established, first aid kits are located in all the shops.



During a visit we noticed that a level of noise in a cheesecloth-production shop is too high due to old equipment, but all the workers wear PPE.

Due to the economic crisis, the company can't afford serious social programme for its employees. Previously, they organized regular parties for state holidays, provided lunch. Now this was reduced. But still for big festives they provide workers with meat, rice and flour.

2. Nekoo Khujand

Nekoo Khujand is a yarn producing factory with a branch hosiery factory located in a neighboring town. Most of employees had an experience of working in a big silk factory during Soviet Union times, so the OSH system here is a heritage from the SU times.

An OSH engineer is a very professional lady with 30 years of experience, including many years of work at a big silk factory. The Fire Service and Labour Inspection check the company on a regular basis, additionally they organize trainings for workers. Jointly with the Sanitary Epidemiological Service attestation of work places is held every 5 years. Besides this, an OSH engineer provides safety training each month for all the workers, develops safety guides and instructions and makes daily inspections. All the workers are members of the TU and sectoral TU regularly visit the enterprise.

There is an efficient mentoring system when all new workers during first months work together with senior staff.

Unfortunately, we couldn't see the shops in a working process as the factory is closed for summer repairs and will be opened in September only.



The company has a serious social support programme for its employees and local society. They organize competitions among workers, regular parties on state holidays, provide workers with free medical check-ups, rest in sanatoriums, they send kids to summer camps. Besides, every year they send shirts and socks to local homes for the elderly and a school for the blind.

Summary of the visit to the companies:

Good points:

1. The companies already passed a number of trainings with ITC on improvement of production and increasing quality. These trainings are closely interconnected to safety issues and therefore most of employers know, for example, how to ensure proper electricity wiring and lightning for their workers, how to organize stock of raw materials and ready items.
2. In Khujand regions, industrial area of Tajikistan, there is still a very good OSH basis left from the Soviet Union time. They have experienced safety engineers and a lot of workers with good knowledge of OSH systems. Though, situation is worse in Dushanbe where the system was destroyed and there is no more courses for safety engineers at schools and universities.
3. Most of employers have experience in working in industry, therefore they have at least basic knowledge of safety systems.
4. Workers are provided with safety instructions when employed.
5. Almost all the companies had fire extinguishers available in work shops.
6. Availability of rubber carpets for sewers to prevent vibration and problems with electricity in most of the places.
7. Cooperation with Trade unions – most of workers are members of a TU.
8. In most of the companies employers pay a lot of attention to a working climate.

Challenges:

1. Difficult to acquire information on current safety regulations and standards.
2. Low understanding of links between quality of working conditions and quality of production, economic advantages of good working conditions, CSR.
3. High personnel turnover leads to gaps in control and application of rules at workplaces.
4. Financial situation of enterprises doesn't allow them to purchase modern equipment, they are trying to find safe ways of using old ones.
5. There is no mandatory safety training for employers and their staff.
6. Ergonomics – most of the companies can't afford purchasing proper work chairs needed especially for sewers. Workers often try to regulate the height of chairs themselves by putting additional cushions on the chairs were available.

Training seminars:

The trainings consisted of 2 two-day seminars (1 in Dushanbe and 1 in Khujand) for representatives of the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies, Agency of standardization, metrology, certification and trade inspection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (Tajikstandart), textile SMEs and Technological University of Tajikistan.

The main goal of the seminars was to give to participants an overview of main principles of CSR and OSH, to show the links between good working conditions and competitiveness of an enterprise, and to discuss some low-cost solutions to improve working conditions at workplaces.

The programme of the seminars:

Day 1

09.30-10.00	Registration of participants
10.00-10.10	Opening of the seminar
10.10-10.40	Introduction of participants, course overview
10.40-11.30	CSR and SMEs. Main approaches.
11.30-11.45	Coffee-break
11.45-12.30	Elements of CSR
12.30-13.30	Workplace communication and cooperation
13.30-14.30	Lunch
14.30-16.00	Basics of OSH
16.00-16.15	Coffee-break
16.15-17.30	Introduction to Risk Assessment
17.30	End of Day 1

Day 2

10.00-10.30	Overview of the Day 1
10.30-11.30	Risk factors at a workplace
11.30-11.45	Coffee-break
11.45-13.00	Practical exercise on Risk Assessment
13.00-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.00	Conclusions of the seminar
15.00	End of Day 2

During the trainings an interactive approach was used, involving participants into discussion and sharing their own experience and best practices. In the end all the participants had to take part in the practical exercise on Risk assessment to try to apply information acquired during the seminars in practice.

Training seminar in Dushanbe



The training in Dushanbe was attended by 13 participants and 4 representatives of ITC. Mr Saidmumin Kamolov opened the seminar and welcomed the participants. He also provided information about ITC programme, explained the necessity of this event and gave practical information about the trainings.

The first part of the seminar was devoted to CSR. In the beginning most of the participants said that they had never heard about CSR and were sceptical about possibilities of applying its principles. However, during the discussion it was revealed that many of them already follow some of CSR principles, just not knowing proper terminology.

On the level of the company following interesting examples were noted:

- A couple of employers were aware of the principles of lean production (like Kaizen, 5s) and apply them in their companies. They gave the group an overview of the improvements made and proved that they had a positive impact on the production.
- Importance of work climate was marked by most of participants. They mentioned that due to historical traditions they used to help their workers.
- Most of the companies also help to the children of their employees and send them to summer camps free of charge.
- Personnel development methods are also used at some of SMEs, including “sisters approach” and rotation of low-skilled staff.

On the level of society, the companies also shared their best practices:

- Some companies support orphan homes by providing them clothes for children, especially for 1 September, beginning of a new school year.
- Some companies support junior sport teams by providing them uniform.

In general, most of the companies were interested in getting to know more about CSR and possibilities of practical implementation of its principles. Application of CSR is important also

due to increased cooperation with Russia and expansion to new markets. It was also noted that the support they provide to society should be also reflected on their web-sites to improve the image of companies.

The second part of the seminar was devoted to occupational safety and health issues. The participants showed low level of awareness about OSH legislation in their countries. In the beginning some participants expressed their concerns of wasting their time for discussing such question which leads only to spendings and no benefits to the company. And it was interesting to see that in the end they were taking very active part in the training, changing their mind on the topic.



During the OSH part the participants discussed economic benefits of good working conditions and tried to calculate “hidden” costs of accidents. A few examples were given to prove that good OSH system is not just the costs, but an investment in the future of the company. The participants were divided into groups to discuss the cases where small improvements could prevent accidents at their companies and save a lot of money to the management.



Later participants looked at the most important risk factors at their workplaces: fire safety, electricity, physical factors, ergonomics, microclimate, noise/vibration, psychosocial factors. Each topic was followed by discussions between the participants and group tasks to share their own experience and practice in eliminating such risks and benefits to the company. In the end of the 2nd day the participants were divided into 3 groups and participated in the practical training on Risk assessment. In the end all the groups presented their findings and possible solutions how to improve situation.

The seminars resulted in a group work to sum up the most interesting topics and possible ways of improvement the content. Everyone noted that it would be very beneficial to organize a separate training on fire safety and use of fire extinguishers.

Group 1:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of the OSH legislation - OSH Management Systems tools and instruments (Elmeri system, Risk Assessment) - International practice, examples from real enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough time to cover in details all the topics - It would be good to organize such a training at an enterprise for practical exercises

Group 2:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elmeri system - OSH Management Systems principles - Principles of successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More statistics, especially national, would be useful - The employers do not understand consequences of bad

management (examples from enterprises, preventive OSH culture)	working conditions, so there should be a separate training for them
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Group 3:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very important topic and relevant information - Good practical exercises on Risk Assessment, clear theory - Good teaching methods, nice atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There should be a seminar for those who take decisions at enterprises - The seminar should be organized at an enterprise - There should be monitoring of implementation of practices acquired during the seminar

Analysis of CSR and OSH Seminar, Dushanbe

In total 13 evaluation forms were analysed

Number of public organizations: 4

Number of T&C company representatives: 6

Number of teachers from University and Colleges: 1

Number of consulting companies: 2

#	Questions	Not agree at all	Not agree	Agree	Full agree
1	The explanation of the subject and delivered materials were clear and comprehensive	0	0	4 (30%)	9 (70%)
2	I will apply/use acquired knowledge in my daily work	0	0	6 (46%)	7 (54%)
3	I will be happy to participate in such events/activities in the future	0	0	4 (30%)	9 (70%)
4	The organization of the seminar was good (materials, cofeebreaks, training hall)	0	0	5 (38%)	8 (62%)
5	My expectations from seminar were met	0	0	4 (30%)	9 (70%)
#	What would be you expectations or recommendations for future?				# of occassions (times)
1	Very good seminar and useful knowledge. I am thankful to ITC Project. It would be nice to continue providing such seminars in the future. We would like such an event to be organized in company as well.				3
2	I would like to thank organizers. Very interesting seminar with useful information. It would be good to conduct such events in the company (production floor) with practical exercises.				
3	I would like to thank ITC and our trainer Ms.Oxana Gerasimova for providing such an interesting seminar				2
4	It would be nice to have the distribution materials online. Also it would be good to conduct exercises of the seminar on the production floor. (in companies)				
5	I would like to thank ITC team and trainer for providing such an interesting seminar which is indeed important for producers, public and conculting				3

	organizations.	
6	Very good seminar and useful knowledge. I am thankful to ITC Project (representative of T&C company) and to our trainer	

Training seminar in Khujand:

The training was held on 19-20 May in the premises of the Technological College of Khujand. Compared to the trainings in Dushanbe, participants of this seminar were representing much bigger enterprises with good technology basis. Working in the industry for many years, they showed good knowledge of safety legislation and standards, but low level of knowledge about CSR.

The most interesting part for the participants was about introduction of OSH Management Systems and Risk Assessment exercise. The teachers of the college took active part in the course of the seminar. As the college has a textile department, they kindly allowed to organize RA exercise in the classes with sewing equipment to make it more practical. In the end of the seminar participants expressed a wish for more trainings, including fire safety.

The seminars resulted in a group work to sum up the most interesting topics and possible ways of improvement the content.

Group 1:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk Assessment procedures - Introduction of OSH Management Systems - Interesting topics, experienced trainer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More video clips are needed - Training at an enterprise for practical exercises - Not so many participants

Group 2:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization of the seminar - Detailed information - Professional trainer - New approach to Risk Assessment - Good practical exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More participants to exchange views - More information on OSH standards in CIS countries - More information on electrical safety

Group 3:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A topic of current interest - Easy-to-understand information - High culture of the trainer - Attractive slides - Practical exercises - Good hand-outs - Active exchanging of views between the participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More info on OSH situation within the country - Include business-games and quizzes - Involve employers into the seminar - More information on first aid - Provide certificates after the training

Analysis of CSR and OSH Seminar, Khujand

In total 11 evaluation forms were analysed

Number of state organizations: 1

Number of T&C company representatives: 5

Number of teachers from University and Colleges: 5

#	Questions	Not agree at all	Not agree	Agree	Full agree
1	The explanation of the subject and delivered materials were clear and comprehensive	0	0	2 (18%)	9 (82%)
2	I will apply/use acquired knowledge in my daily work	0	0	5 (45%)	6 (55%)
3	I will be happy to participate in such events/activities in the future	0	0	2 (18%)	9 (82%)
4	The organization of the seminar was good (materials, cofeebreaks, training hall)	0	0	1 (9%)	10 (91%)
5	My expectations from seminar were met	0	0	3 (27%)	8 (73%)
#	What would be you expectations or recommendations for future?				# of occasions (times)
1	Invite more participants to exchange knowledge and experience				5
2	Organize such trainings more often				3
3	Extend training period. Increase number of practical trainings and organize it in companies				4
4	Provide handouts in electronic version				4
5	Provide certificates of participation in this training				
6	Provide information according new legislation, regulatory documents and standards in labour security and health safety (in Tajikistan and CIS countries)				2
7	Include session about first medical aid on typical industry injuries				
8	Invite managers to training.				

Annex 1 Media coverage report

The International Trade Center (ITC) raises the attention of the Tajik textile industry stakeholders to the occupational health, safety and social responsibility.

Two workshops on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) for the representatives of the textile and clothing companies were held in Dushanbe on May 14-15 and in Khujand, the capital of Sughd province on May 19-20.

Initiated and organized by ITC and funded by the Government of Switzerland within its Trade Cooperation Program (TCP) in Tajikistan, the workshops were planned and conducted by the ITC international consultant, Ms. Oxana Gerasimova.

The media release was prepared in three languages and was disseminated among media representatives. Media releases are available via www.itctj.wordpress.com

News Agencies: The news attracted the attention of two biggest news agencies in the country - the top Tajikistan informational agency "Asia Plus", and the state news agency "Khozar". News from both agencies is widely re-published by many other local, regional, and international media.

Radios: The news went on top local independent radios of Tajikistan – "Vatan", "Tojikiston", "Khozar", "Asia Plus", and etc.

Online: The event was covered by most visited web-site in Tajikistan – news.tj in English, as well as in state news agency – "Khozar"'s Tajik and Russian web-sites. A regional special expert portal – Central Asia CSR also posted the news in its official web-site in Russian and contacted ITC Tajikistan to see the cooperation opportunities. Special agricultural portal – agroinform.tj and newsnow.co.uk web-site re-published Asia Plus's news in English.

Social Media: The news was circulated via the official Facebook page of ITC Tajikistan.

Multimedia: A photo-gallery from the selected pictures was prepared and posted both on ITC Tajikistan web-site, and ITC Tajikistan Facebook page.