

Converged Assessment.  
Collaborative Action.  
Improved Working Conditions.

**SOCIAL & LABOR  
CONVERGENCE**

**Social and Labor Convergence Program (SLCP)  
Recommendations for Facilities on  
Worker Engagement**

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**Table of Contents**

1. Introduction .....3

2. Engagement with workers during the self/joint-assessment process .....3

    2.1 Establishing a Worker Engagement Committee.....3

    2.2 Questions for initiating worker engagement .....6

    2.3 Interactive activities for worker engagement .....7

3. Worker Engagement Technology and SLCP’s Worker Engagement Question Set.....8

## 1. Introduction

Completing the SLCP assessment involves accurately answering questions that focus on a number of different topics. This involves multiple people from various departments within your facility. Workers' views and experiences help facility management to understand current facility circumstances and how to improve working conditions over time.

The SLCP assessment process promotes communication among facility personnel and departments, which helps to improve working relationships. Strong working relationships are vital in achieving the common goal of improved working conditions; therefore, it is important to establish or strengthen existing management systems that facilitate this type of communication.

It is in the facility's best interest to involve workers and, if applicable, workers' representatives in the self/joint-assessment process. The women and men who work at your facility are not only important to the self-assessment process of gathering accurate facility data, but they are also key contributors to the SLCP verification process as interviewees. SLCP highly recommends involving workers in the self/joint-assessment process. This can be achieved in multiple ways, as this document shows.

## 2. Engagement with workers during the self/joint-assessment process

### 2.1 Establishing a Worker Engagement Committee

One of the tool sections of the SLCP Data Collection Tool is "Management Systems" where you are asked about company policies, procedures and strategies regarding key social and labor issues. To effectively implement these policies, procedures and strategies, there first needs to be a team in place to establish and oversee responsible business conduct.

One example is formation of a Worker Engagement Committee, which functions as a forum for communications, consultation and deliberation between a facility and representatives of trade unions (if applicable) or workers. A Worker Engagement Committee is also responsible for identifying, reporting, and verifying issues. The overall aim is to increase workers' productivity and welfare, which in turn will ensure the sustainability of the business. Below are some recommended steps for establishing a Worker Engagement Committee:

#### 1. Conduct an introductory meeting

It is important that relationships are built among all factory level stakeholders. This involves organizing and conducting meetings with top-level management, trade union and/or worker representatives and workers. Topics for discussion should include:

- General objectives of social and labor working conditions and an explanation of SLCP's service scope and processes.
- Emphasize the important fact that the SLCP process does not score or evaluate the facility and that the overall objective is to work together to self-assess working conditions and identify potential improvement opportunities for the benefit of everyone.
- The importance of communication and effective worker representation. Discuss concepts of bipartite committee composition.
- Bipartite committee must include equal representation of workers and management. In the absence of laws and regulations and trade unions, then the recommended number of members should be 8-10. The enterprise's senior manager, or a designated management representative with decision-making power, must be an active member of the committee to ensure the committee remains effective and responsive.
- Ideally the meeting should have a **facilitator**, who could encourage and create opportunities for all bipartite committee members to participate in discussions and dialogue.

- As a result of the introductory meeting, attendees should gain the understanding that Worker Engagement Committees are important contributors in implementing social and labor improvement processes.
- If there are no trade union<sup>1</sup> or worker representatives in the factory, establish plans with management and workers to elect workers for the Worker Engagement Committee. In order to have a proper election, the factory needs to follow multiple steps:
  - Election commission/ committee
  - Nominations
    - Representation (e.g., departments/ sex / etc.)
  - Campaign period
  - Prep for elections
    - Voting mechanism e.g., ballot
    - Ballot boxes, etc.
  - Elections
  - Counting
  - Results
- In unionized factories, it is important to discuss ongoing two-way communication between worker representatives on the committee and the factory level trade union(s).
- During the meeting compile a list of the names and positions of relevant department representatives as well as trade union(s) leader(s) and committee members who will be involved in the SLCP assessment process. Clarify the importance of accurate information and make clear the time required for their involvement in the process.
- Encourage all stakeholders to be involved as much as possible in the assessment process.

## 2. Establish a Worker Engagement Committee

- Review the tentative list of Worker Engagement Committee members. Assess if the personnel selected represent their constituents in a credible way taking into consideration factors of gender, position, department, etc. Also consider these factors in ensuring an equal balance of worker representation.
- Consult applicable legal requirements for the selection of worker representatives for the bipartite committee:
  - If there is only one trade union at the facility the trade union official should appoint their own representation through the executive committee.
  - Workers should democratically elect their representatives for the committee if there is no trade union at the facility. In order to have a proper election, the factory needs to follow multiple steps:
    - Election commission/ committee
      - Identify observers
    - Nominations
      - Representation (e.g., departments / sex / etc.
    - Campaign period
    - Preparation for elections
      - Voter registry
      - Voting mechanism e.g., ballot
      - Ballot boxes
      - Clear space for voting, etc.
    - Elections

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<sup>1</sup> Also referred to as “labor union” or “worker’s union”.

- Counting
- Results
- There should be equal representation on the committee of trade union representation, non-union workers, and all unions at the facility.
- Consult applicable legal requirements for the structure and composition of the bipartite committee:
  - The membership of a bipartite institution should have equal representation of the facility and of its workers.
  - The number of members of the bipartite committee should be determined based on the number of workers in the facility.
- Review the process undertaken in electing the worker representatives for the committee to ensure it was fair and equitable and in line with legal requirements.
- Make any recommendations needed to solidify the credibility and equality of the Worker Engagement Committee. Engage fully in dialogue and consultation with all relevant stakeholders during this review process.
- If mandated by law, register the newly established bipartite cooperation institution with the government agency responsible for labor affairs in the district/city where it is established.

### **3. Initial Worker Engagement Committee meeting**

- For a committee meeting to be impactful, it is ideal to delegate responsibilities:
  - A facilitator encourages and creates opportunities for all bipartite committee members to participate in discussions and dialogue.
  - A participant gives opinions/ideas by complimenting and adding to the other ideas.
  - A resource person provides relevant expertise and technical knowledge.
  - A timekeeper ensures that meeting discussions remain within the allocated time.
  - A referee remains neutral, encouraging both sides to listen to each other, to communicate, and to practice dialogue in reaching consensus.
- Designate a chair-person for the committee meeting.
- Designate a committee member to take notes for the meeting minutes.
- Present the general SLCP objectives and approach.
- Emphasize the importance of dialogue and engagement.
- Explain the role the Worker Engagement Committee plays in social and labor management:
  - Platform for promoting good workplace cooperation and improving processes.
  - Responsible for identifying and prioritizing issues for improvement.
  - Continually engages in open dialogue with facility stakeholders to collect and disseminate information.
  - Regularly keeps all other facility workers informed about activities and progress.
- Discuss the responsibilities of the committee members in the SLCP process and beyond.

### **4. Beyond the SLCP assessment to improved working conditions**

The SLCP self/joint-assessment process enables a facility to self-assess working conditions and identify potential improvement opportunities. Once the Worker Engagement Committee is established, the facility is better placed to address identified areas for improvement. Here are some recommendations for the Worker Engagement Committee for moving beyond the SLCP assessment:

- The Worker Engagement Committee, along with other key facility level stakeholders should collaborate in the development of a management plan that analyzes root causes and solutions to areas in need of improvement. Goals and time bound targets enable the facility to stay focused and on track to meet its objectives.
  - The Worker Engagement Committee should conduct regular scheduled meetings with workers and management to discuss progress and lessons learned. The management plan should be reviewed and revised accordingly.
  - Make use of interactive exercises so that workers, supervisors and senior level management can work together in developing solutions (See section on *Interactive activities for worker engagement* for suggested activities).
  - Ensure that all participants have the opportunity to contribute and to present their ideas.
  - Perform ongoing internal reviews and assessments of the facility to identify any new issues that may arise post-assessment and to observe remediation actions already under way. For example, walkthrough Occupational Safety and Health assessments could be a daily activity, whereas assessment of child labor verification could be conducted either weekly or once a month.
  - Regularly review the effectiveness of the Worker Engagement Committee, identify root causes of any problems found and develop an improvement / remediation plan.
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## 2.2 Questions for initiating worker engagement

Below is a list of questions/issues that are of priority to workers and provides a great starting point for discussions in Worker Engagement Committees. The next section on for *Interactive activities for worker engagement* provides some suggestion for interactive activities to aid discussions.

### Workplace wellbeing

- Question around types of developmental programs offered by the facility.
- Questions related to activities / programs promoting health.

### Occupational Safety and Health

- Question about access to water, toilets/restrooms and medical facilities.
- Questions around emergency drills and other H&S training for worker safety; are the trainings done with all workers and do workers understand what safety measures they have to follow.
- Is the safety committee (if applicable) working according to procedure with regular meetings, documentation and follow-up?
- Does the facility have areas where fall protection is needed? Workers may be able to identify this safety need better than supervisors.
- Are workers provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)? Is this equipment provided the way it should be according to facility procedures (free of charge, if applicable; in good condition; available to all workers as needed)?

### Employment practices

- Questions related to employment contracts and hiring processes to see if workers are onboarded according to facility procedures (e.g., minimum age verification, H&S training), and if workers fully understand their employment contract.
- Questions on written terms and conditions documents to explore how easy this information is to understand (e.g., terms, acronyms, provisions, etc.).
- Questions around wages and hours so the facility can determine if workers think they are being paid correctly and if they understand their wages and benefits, including social insurance contributions, annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, etc.
- Confirm with workers that they understand the grievance process including resolution and disciplinary procedures.

### 2.3 Interactive activities for worker engagement

- **Using pictures to start conversations:** The meeting participants are divided into even groups. Each group is assigned with different labor issues (e.g., child labor, Occupational Safety and Health, forced labor, etc.). Each working group member is given a picture and asked to identify which pictures relate to their specific topic. After they have been able to match their pictures, they break into small working groups to reflect over the pictures and agree on a common understanding of what their topic may mean or imply as non-compliance. Then they discuss if these issues are present in their workplace and how they are being managed.

**Impact:** objectives are more easily met through engagement from all working group members while preventing discussions from becoming emotional.

- **World café:** The meeting participants are divided into even groups. Each group represents a compliance issue that is agreed to need improvement. Each group has flip chart and markers, which they use to write about different actions they have completed in response to any non-compliance over the past month. The groups then rotate on to the next flip chart and provide additional information on actions taken, specific processes and participants involved. Once each group has contributed to each flip chart, one group member presents the completed flip chart to the working group as a whole.

**Impact:** All working group members gain in-depth knowledge of every subject area discussed in the meeting. The workers become actors rather than passive listeners in processes that happen around them.

- **Bank of games:** When worker and management representatives come together to discuss important issues, it is not always easy as workers may feel vulnerable, and management may feel exposed. In order to break down these barriers, a friendly, welcoming, and safe environment must be developed so that trust can be established, and representatives can engage in meaningful discussions eye to eye. This method involves a shared library of games, icebreakers, and activities that target different challenges. When preparing a meeting, the worker committee chooses different options from the bank of games for use to begin the meeting.

**Impact:** Working group members become more relaxed and conversations are more in-depth and productive. Group members can therefore connect more with each other, which leads to increased dialogue and cooperation.

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- **One message different interpretations:** each working group member is given a piece of paper and they are asked to close their eyes. They are then given instructions to fold their papers certain ways (left to right, right to left, etc.). They may not ask any questions. Once they are asked to open their eyes, each member realizes that despite given the same instructions they have arrived at different outcomes. The importance of two-way communication thus becomes evident.

**Impact:** management becomes keener to identify root causes of problems rather than simply blaming poor worker awareness levels.

This is just a small example of activities that have been effective in promoting increased dialogue in worker committee sessions across different countries. The examples provided are intended to inspire you to try new approaches.

### **3. Worker Engagement Technology and SLCP's Worker Engagement Question Set**

After a Worker Engagement Technology (WE Tech) pilot in 2022-2023, SLCP rolled out the Worker Engagement Question Set (WE Question Set) along with the WE Tech Protocol for Facilities. WE Tech can be applied prior to completion of the SLCP self/joint-assessment to engage workers in the SLCP process. Please go to the [WE Tech Protocol for Facilities](#) to better understand the WE Tech process.