

- ILO's role in promoting health and life at work -

Responding to the ILO 90 Anniversary and OSH World Day in Malaysia

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I. Global Facts and Figures: Work-related fatalities, accidents, and injuries

- Accidents at work are continuously on the rise, reaching 270 million each year in the last few years. According to the latest ILO projections for the year 2008, there were altogether 2.38 million work-related deaths annually. The poorest, the least protected, the least informed, and the least trained are the most affected. Women, children, disabled workers, migrant workers, workers in the rural and informal economy and ethnic minority people are often involved.
- At any moment, 160 million people are estimated to be suffering in varying degrees from work-related diseases
- Cost of accidents & diseases = 4 % of GNP
- Every year, some 900,000 new cases of diseases are reported, often linked to the handling of hazardous substances
- The rate of work-related deaths is four times higher in the Middle East and in Asia than it is in industrialized countries
- Agriculture, construction and mining are the most hazardous occupations worldwide

Concerns have been expressed that the globalization of the economy may increase safety and health risks at the workplace.

The protection of workers against sickness, disease and injury related to their work environment has been a central issue for the ILO since its inception in 1919.

II. Overview: Millennium priorities of the ILO and the Declaration on Social Justice for a fair globalization.

1. The ILO:

- supports the efforts of the tripartite constituents, Government, Workers' Organizations and Employers' Organizations; its tripartite structure make the ILO unique among world organizations in that employers' and workers' organizations have an equal voice with governments in shaping its policies and programmes.
- expands opportunities for good quality employment, and
- improves the effectiveness of social dialogue between employers and workers as well as social protection and equity for all people.

2. Millennium priorities of the ILO

- To promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work.
- To create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income
- To enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all
- To strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

The ILO works in around the world to promote **Decent Work** - productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity in order to reduce poverty and secure social justice.

3. The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization – A timely declaration of the ILO.

On the eve of the economic crisis, in June 2008, the ILO adopted a powerful legal instrument, which places the organization in a better position to help its constituents (governments, employers and workers) and their partners to address the unfair consequences of globalization.

On 10 June 2008, the International Labour Conference adopted by acclamation the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. The Declaration

enhances the ILO's capacity to advance these goals through the Decent Work Agenda. The Declaration institutionalizes the Decent Work concept developed by the ILO since 1999, placing it at the core of the Organization's policies to reach its constitutional objectives.

The Declaration comes at a crucial political moment, reflecting the wide consensus on the need for a strong social dimension to globalization in achieving improved and fair out-come for all. It constitutes a compass for the promotion of a fair globalization based on Decent Work, as well as a practical tool to accelerate progress in the implementation of the Decent work Agenda at the country level. It also reflects a productive outlook by highlighting the importance of sustainable enterprises in creating greater employment and income opportunities for all.

Through the Declaration governments, employers and workers call for a new strategy to sustain open economies and open societies based on social justice, full and productive employment, sustainable enterprises and social cohesion. The Declaration acknowledges the benefits of globalization but calls for renewed efforts to implement decent work policies as the means to achieve improved and fair outcomes for all.

The Declaration highlights that globalization is reshaping the world of work in profound ways. It states that

- on the one hand it has helped a number of countries to benefit from high rates of economic growth and employment creation, to absorb many of the rural poor into the modern urban economy, to advance their developmental goals, and to foster innovation in product development and the circulation of ideas.
- On the other hand, it has caused many countries and sectors to face major challenges of income inequality, continuing high levels of unemployment and poverty, vulnerability of economies to external shocks, and the growth of both unprotected work and the informal economy, which impact on the employment relationship and the protections it can offer.

The Declaration stresses the fundamental principles of freedom of

association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation.

The Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization marks the most important renewal of the ILO since adoption of the historic "Declaration of Philadelphia" in 1944. In addition, it marks a significant step forward in respecting, promoting and realizing the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted by the ILO in 1998.

4. The ILO 90 years anniversary and ILO's World day for Safety and Health at work

The ILO has taken action to promote OSH worldwide. Awareness raising and advocacy is a key action area. Nowadays many countries observe "The ILO's World Day for Safety and Health at Work" on 28 April annually to promote nationwide awareness in OSH. The recent main themes were: "Safe work and HIV/AIDS" in 2006, "Safe and healthy workplaces – Making a decent work a reality" in 2007, and "Managing risks in the work environment" in 2008 and this year 2009 "Health and life at work: A basis human right."

The ILO celebrates its 90th Anniversary, against the backdrop of financial crisis and critical levels of unemployment around the world. Looking for the future means understanding the past, and as such the ILO's anniversary celebrations worldwide on the theme of "90 years working for justice" with a strong forward looking element. asking how the ILO's experience working through crisis can add a unique voice to the present day response to economic crisis.

Look back on the past 90 years, from the nation's humble origins and uncertain beginnings, as a predominantly rural and agrarian economy, heavily dependent on exports of tin and rubber, Malaysia has become a modern urban industrialized nation and one of the world's leading exporters of high-tech electronics.

III. The ILO response to the global economic crisis: Strengthening the constituents' capacity to provide decent work

The current global economic crisis has led to a serious slowdown in world economic growth and to considerable loss of jobs. The ILO forecasts that there could be a dramatic increase in unemployment worldwide and in the number of working poor; global unemployment levels could rise from 18 million to 30 million workers in 2009, and more than 50 million if the situation continues to deteriorate.

The ILO will work with constituents to put the Decent Work Agenda into practice at the national level, striving to make sure that Decent work is an integral part of countries priorities and programmes for poverty alleviation. The ILO's main focus will be

- on advocating economic policies which generate productive employment, extending social security coverage to the majority of workers in the informal economy.
- on strengthening the tripartism and the values of social dialogue.
- a guarantor of basic human right (including fundamental principles and rights at work) in which high priority should be given to strengthening system of social protection. Possible measures include:
 - introduce social protection programmes for unemployed (such as unemployment insurance where appropriate),
 - expanding social assistance scheme to reach out to people in extreme poverty
 - focusing particularly on basis needs such as health care
 - taking practical steps to improve safety, health and working conditions to prevent occupational accidents and diseases.

IV. The ILO Action in promoting health and life at work

1. Strengthening Regional Cooperation through ASEAN-OSHNET

Experiences and achievements of ASEAN-OSHNET provide good examples in promoting health and life at work for Asia and other parts of the world. The ILO has been supporting its initiative as their partner and worked together at both

national policy and workplace levels.

Key areas to cooperation are:

- (1) developing OSH laws and regulations,
- (2) strengthening national OSH systems including labour inspection, occupational injury reporting systems and application of OSH management systems (OSHMS),
- (3) responding to emerging occupational health problems such as asbestos and avian and pandemic human influenza, and
- (4) extending OSH protection into small enterprises, and informal and rural workplaces.

2. Strengthening national OSH legal frameworks

- At its 91st session (2003), the International Labour Conference (ILC) adopted a Global Strategy on OSH, which was designed progressively to improve safety and health in the world of work. In response to this strategy, the ILC adopted the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No 187) and its accompanying Recommendation (No 197) in 2006.

The Convention encourages ILO member countries to:

- develop a preventative safety and health culture,
- apply systems approaches to managing OSH nationally,
- strengthen national OSH policy and systems, and
- develop National OSH Profiles and Programmes.

Japan, the Republic of Korea, Finland, Sweden, the UK and Cuba have ratified the Convention. We expect more countries to ratify this important convention.

ILO has been providing technical assistance for our member countries to promote ILO OSH instruments. In particular, support to implement Convention 187 through national and regional workshops & trainings is our priority. As a result, an increasing number of countries have developed National OSH Programmes and National OSH Profiles. These countries have also strengthened practical national OSH policy, standards, and management systems.

ASEAN countries have launched and effectively implemented national OSH

programmes referring to ILO Promotional Framework for OSH Convention (No 187, 2006). These programmes were designed reflecting both common priorities in the region and also special concerns of each country. The common priorities included:

- (1) strengthening OSH legal frameworks,
- (2) improving law compliance through strategic labour inspection,
- (3) supporting workplace-level OSH activities by employers and workers such as safety and health committees or risk-assessments,
- (4) preparing special programmes for the industry with high accident rates such as construction or mining,
- (5) reinforcing occupational accident and disease reporting, and
- (6) extending OSH protection to small enterprises, informal economy workplaces and rural sectors.

ASEAN-OSHNET has promoted sharing good practices in the priority areas for mutual benefits.

3. Strengthening national OSH systems

Many countries still lack the expertise and the resources to collect statistics that would allow a sufficiently reliable evaluation of the magnitude of work-related accidents and diseases. There is a strong need in these countries to improve recording and notification as well as data analysis systems and to harmonize lists of occupational diseases. Improvements in these areas would provide countries with more reliable indicators of the effectiveness of national OSH systems and help them in prioritizing OSH issues and focusing scarce resources to resolve them

ASEAN countries have consolidated the national OSH system elements such as labour inspection, occupational injury reporting systems, information & campaigns, and application of OSH systems approaches. In particular, labour inspection plays a fundamental role in ensuring the compliance of laws and regulations in occupational safety and health.

Strengthening occupational injury and disease reporting systems and expanding coverage are keys to better understand the real magnitude of safety and health problems and to establish responsive national policies for

improvements. Among ASEAN countries, different trends have emerged over the past decade with regard to the incidence of occupational injuries and fatalities. Following a sharp rise in reported occupational injuries and fatalities in the 1980s, which occurred in step with rapid industrialization, Malaysia and Thailand began demonstrating a decreasing trend in occupational injuries during the 1990s, though Thailand has seen an increase in recent years, this reflects the improved coverage of Employment Injury Insurance Systems. The occupational injury rates are still showing a decreasing trend. On the other hand, Indonesia and Vietnam are now facing a rapid increase in reported occupational injuries and fatalities associated with their own industrial development.

4. Extending OSH protection into small enterprises, and informal and rural workplaces

Many countries in ASEAN have been extending practical OSH protection into small enterprises, informal economy and rural workplaces.

- Regional OSH Centres in the Ministry of Labour in Thailand, for example, have provided participatory, action-oriented training for small enterprises, and been extending their support into home workers, and farmers.
- Cambodia has formed a network among the government, workers, employers and NGOs and trained them as basic OSH trainers. The trained local OSH trainers used their human channels and reached a variety of informal economy workplaces such as home workplaces, small construction sites, or self-sustained farms. The government has played a facilitator role and constantly organized useful forums for the trainers to meet together for exchanging experiences.

The participatory training programmes have been incorporated into national OSH programmes and policies.

- In Cambodia, with technical cooperation from the ILO's Informal Economy, Poverty and Employment project, government inspectors have worked collaboratively with local trade unions, employers' organizations and NGOs to train their representatives as participatory OSH trainers. With national support and strengthened networks, these practical programmes

are gradually expanding their reach into more workplaces in the informal economy.

- Vietnam has trained many farmer OSH trainers. The trained farmer OSH trainers have trained their neighbouring farmers in simple and low-cost OSH improvement methods. The farmer trainers apply a participatory training programme called WIND (Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development) programme. The Vietnamese government carefully sustained the WIND farmer volunteer system and established functioning support systems at national and provincial levels.

5. Responding to emerging occupational health issues such as elimination of silicosis, asbestos, sound management of chemicals and Avian and Pandemic Human Influenza

- International collaboration with partner organizations has been growing and promoted specific OSH measures. For example, the joint ILO/WHO Committee on Occupational Health reviewed the implementation of the ILO/WHO Global Program for the Elimination of Silicosis (GPES) in 2003. It recommended that the elimination of silicosis (and asbestos-related diseases) should become one of the priorities for future cooperation between ILO and WHO. National programmes for the elimination of silicosis have been set up in Brazil, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Peru, South Africa, Turkey, Thailand and Vietnam.
- Health hazards caused by asbestos are an increasing concern in the region. ILO and WHO have been jointly supporting national actions of Thailand and Vietnam aiming to eliminate asbestos-related health hazards (National programmes to eliminate asbestos-related diseases - NPEAD). Our survey has identified that asbestos-using companies want practical information on asbestos-free materials and technical advice from the government to replace asbestos-materials with asbestos-free materials. Promoting public awareness on asbestos-related health hazards, strengthening health surveillance, and establishing concerted national policies are noted as equally important.
- ILO has contributed to the inter-organization programme for the sound management of chemicals. It has developed the Globally Harmonized System for the classification and labeling of Chemicals (GHS) and more

recently the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

- United Nations agencies such as WHO, and FAO have taken concerted actions in order to protect people from Avian and Future Pandemic Human Influenza. The ILO through its tripartite channels with governments, workers and employers is expected to strengthen practical preventive actions at workplace level. ILO has launched Avian and Human Influenza (AHI) and the Workplace Projects in Thailand and Indonesia aiming to: (1) reduce risks of Avian Influenza infection amongst poultry workers and farmers, and (2) protect workers and businesses in small enterprises from future Pandemic Human Influenza. The ILO has developed action-checklists which can support employers' and workers' actions to reduce their infection risks and protect their businesses under possible pandemic situations.

V. Plan for the future

We need to look to the future and find practical measures to identify and manage emerging OSH risks.

- **Chemical risks:** ILO Chemicals Convention, No 170, provides sound guidance for assessing and managing chemical risks. China ratifies this Convention. It is important to assist the government in developing coherent national policy and support employers and workers to conduct practical risk-assessment activities for managing chemical risks at source. We need to consider specific needs of different groups of workers. Young workers, pregnant workers are more vulnerable to exposure to hazardous chemicals.
- **Biological risks** are also emerging. 320,000 workers worldwide die every year from exposure to viral, bacterial, insect or animal related biological risks. Health care workers, farmers, and workers in industries such as waste treatment are at high risk. Infectious diseases such as HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis, SARS, avian flu or dengue fever are of increasing concern as work-related diseases. Concerted global actions are needed. For example, UN coordinated actions towards pandemic human influenza is in progress.
- **Violence at work and psycho-social risks:** The ILO has conducted studies on violence at work as a global problem and the use of personal work related data collected about workers. The ILO Code of Practice on the Protection of Workers' Personal Data as well as the Worker with Family Responsibilities

Convention, 1891 (No 156) and recommendation, 1981 (No 165), provide important guidelines in these areas.

It is estimated that in the EU 50-60% of all lost workdays were due to stress and the related economic cost for 2002 amounted to 20 Billion Euros. Changes in work design, organization, management & the introduction of new technologies or new forms of employment contracts can increase stress levels. Conditions generating most stress are: precarious work, work intensification, violence and harassment. HIV, alcohol, drugs & tobacco can initiate or exacerbate a damaging cycle for individual and organization.

- **Changing patterns in the workforce.** Many countries, in their programmes for economic and social development assign an important role to the small scale industrial enterprises and informal economy. These have considerable potential for creating employment, developing a pool of skilled workers to meet the requirements of future industrial expansion and promoting industry in rural areas. One neglected characteristic of the small scale industrial sector is that it is often in such enterprises that the work is most difficult, accident rates are highest and conditions of work least favourable. ILO experience has shown that simple, effective, low cost action can be taken to raise productivity while improving working conditions. ILO has provided participatory training support to rural and informal economy workplaces by using WISE & WIND methodologies. These programmes are now increasingly applied in Asia, Central Asia, Africa & Latin America and produced tangible results.
- **Migrant workers** are another serious concern of ILO. World's migrant population has more than doubled between 1960 & 2005, reaching 191 million. They are vulnerable in terms of OSH because:
 - Employed in high-risk & informal sectors , in "3 D work"
 - Language and cultural impediments to receiving OSH communication & training
 - Work long hours & suffer from poor general health
 - Not covered by social security
 - No data on migrant workers OSH problems to guide policy making.
- **Maternity protection:** The ILO was a pioneer in this area, in 1919 adopted Convention No 3 on maternity protection. Taking account of developments over the last 50 years, the International Labour Conference

adopted a new, modernized standard on maternity protection with Convention No 183 in 2000.

- Promoting OSH of **older workers** is another important area. UNFPA predicts that whereas 1 in 10 persons in the world today are aged 60 or over, this figure will rise to 1 in 8 by 2020. Older workers frequently have one or more chronic diseases or disorders that may impact functional performance with impact on safety. The Ageing process can also be accelerated by arduous working conditions. However, the skills, experience and maturity of older workers often counteract such health concerns. Studies show older workers are more dedicated to the workplace; have fewer sickness absences and stay longer in their jobs. Older workers are a valuable asset. We need to pay more attention to their safety and health.

VI. Conclusions

ASEAN countries have accumulated good OSH practices and increasingly supported workers and employers by using these good practices. Good OSH practices have created substantial impacts on the development of national OSH policy and programmes. The test activities and projects which have made visible results produced workable models to strengthen national OSH systems. It is strongly desired that ASEAN countries continue active exchanges of good OSH practices for stronger impacts and synergy. Sharing practical OSH experiences in ASEAN with other regions such as South Asian countries and African countries should be in the scope of future ASEAN actions in order to reinforce the collaboration South-South intercontinental. The ILO will continue to work together with ASEAN countries and support its actions in realizing safe and health workplaces with all.