

FACT SHEET

BUILDING A CULTURE OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH IN VIET NAM

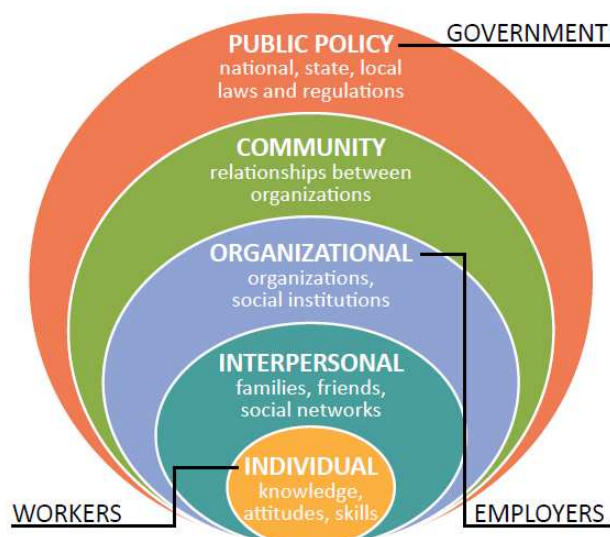
The International Labour Organization's (ILO) SafeYouth@Work Project, which aims to improve occupational safety and health (OSH) conditions for young workers, conducted a mixed methods study to understand current OSH knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour (KAB) among young workers in agriculture and craft villages in the Phu Tho, Hung Yen, and Da Nang provinces of Viet Nam. The purpose of the quantitative survey was to establish baseline values on a series of awareness, knowledge, attitudinal, and behavioural variables related to OSH issues, and to identify potential priorities for project interventions. Qualitative key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with tripartite stakeholders representing the government, employers, and workers to complement the quantitative survey. This is part of a three country study that included Myanmar and the Philippines.

The SafeYouth@Work Project conducted these KAB studies to ensure that its OSH awareness campaigns targeting young worker vulnerability address the specific knowledge and awareness gaps identified for the workers in question. This approach makes it possible to isolate priority OSH issues, and to allocate scarce public resources to maximum effect.

The following sections of this Fact Sheet summarize the key findings related to workers, employers, and government actors that pose barriers and indicate potential directions for a comprehensive social and behaviour change communication campaign to improve OSH-related KAB in Viet Nam.

Future campaign efforts should address the overlapping spheres of behaviour change influence, as depicted in the Socio-Ecological Model below. While workers, employers, and government actors are distinct audience segments, these groups also influence each other, along with social networks and community-level networks. Social and behaviour change initiatives are not linear in nature; human behavior is complex, and OSH campaign efforts must build on behavioural science principles to foster a culture of OSH prevention.

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL



McLeroy KR, Bibeau D, Steckler A, Glanz K. "An ecological perspective on health promotion programs". *Health Education Quarterly*. 1988 Winter; 15(4):351-77.

YOUNG WORKERS

KEY FINDINGS

- Most young workers in the agricultural sector are family workers and do not have a formal contract. Over half of young workers in craft villages are family workers; most do not have formal employment contracts, except in villages that supply large corporations or exporters.
- A large proportion of young workers in craft villages work over 40 hours per week, so they may be at higher risk of workplace accidents and injuries.
- There is broad gender balance among young workers in the agricultural sector. Young workers in agriculture tend to be in secondary school.
- Overall, most research findings showed minimal differences between genders.
- Young workers who are informally employed very rarely receive training on OSH.
- The most important motivation for young people to work is to earn money to support their families.
- Staying healthy and safe at work was not found to be a key priority for young workers.
- Overall, young workers believe that they and their employers give importance to OSH, but they themselves give it greater priority.
- There is significant scope to improve OSH conditions for young workers. Young workers' reluctance to report OSH incidents to their employer suggests a lack of openness.
- Using sharp objects, working with animals, slips, trips, and falls were most commonly mentioned as workplace risks by young workers. Young agricultural workers do not recognize the harmful long-term effects of pesticides.
- Joint or back pain was the most commonly mentioned health problem, followed by muscle problems and coughing or breathing problems.
- Young workers in both sectors identified use of personal protective equipment (PPE) as the main way to mitigate risk.
- Young workers noted a wide range of hazards from working in craft villages, reflecting the variety of work in that sector. Key risks include using machinery, tools, and sharp objects. Those who work with batteries face added risks from battery acid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

KNOWLEDGE

Address the disconnect between young workers' perceived and actual knowledge levels. For example, most say OSH is the means for 'prevention of accidents' and 'using safety equipment'; they think they have enough information to do their jobs safely and protect themselves.

Awareness-raising efforts should increase accurate risk perception among workers, including improving their knowledge about immediate and long-term hazards and ways to prevent them. This is especially pertinent for pesticide risks in agriculture and hazardous working conditions in craft villages. Many young workers, particularly in craft villages, feel they will not experience a work-related incident.

Young workers would benefit from an improved understanding of their OSH rights and responsibilities.

OSH messages should focus on young workers' goals for the future and emphasize the importance of staying safe and healthy in order to achieve these goals.

Young workers should be informed about the benefits of voluntary occupational accident and disease insurance schemes.

OSH risk communication should include targeted messaging for young workers receiving piece rate payment to discourage them from working excessive hours.

Since workers in both sectors use informal channels (family, friends, other workers) for OSH information, more formal, consistent and reputable channels should be used to impart correct information. Explore use of the internet to improve knowledge measures.

ATTITUDE

Young workers' key motivation for working is to support their family, so highlighting the importance of OSH to protect one's family from hardship is likely to be effective.

Most agricultural workers believe they are responsible for their own safety. In craft villages, although most young workers say employers should be responsible, some workers attribute safety incidents to workers' negligence. Improve worker attitudes about OSH responsibilities.

Most young workers perceive that they and their employers regard OSH as important and have open dialogue in the workplace; improve correct perceptions about workplace risks and what a 'culture of OSH prevention' means.

BEHAVIOUR

Since some young workers would not report a hazard or accident to their employer, but would tell other workers, friends or family, campaign efforts should change this behavior.

Increase the proportion of workers who use chemicals according to the instructions, and who ask for help from an experienced worker.

Identify 'model workers' who practice desired OSH behaviors and highlight the benefits of these practices in campaign activities.

Television and internet should be used as primary mass media channels, with family, friends and co-workers as additional interpersonal channels.

Workers' organizations could play a significant role in negotiating improvements on worker protection.

EMPLOYERS

KEY FINDINGS

- Most employers say they are aware of the OSH laws. Employers in both sectors most frequently associated OSH with prevention of accidents and use of safety equipment and hygiene practices.
- Some employers reported that they had never heard of OSH laws, while a small number said that they knew a lot about them. As with workers, employers in craft villages were more likely to report a better awareness than those in agriculture.
- A small number of employers in agriculture stated that their workers suffer from health problems, especially coughing or breathing problems, joint or back pain, and muscular problems.
- Employers in agriculture do not recognize the harmful long-term effects of pesticides. This was cited by key informants as the biggest issue in agriculture.
- Agricultural employers cited use of sharp objects as the most common risk. This was followed by machinery and tools, and slips, trips, and falls. Less than half of employers reported pesticides and chemicals as a risk.
- This contrasts with findings from the key informant interviews, where improper use and disposal of pesticides was said to be the biggest OSH risk in agriculture.
- Almost all the craft village employers interviewed stated that workers do not suffer from health problems due to their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS



KNOWLEDGE

Address the disconnect between employers perceived and actual OSH knowledge.

Employers in both agriculture and craft villages stated that their main sources of OSH information are television and family and friends.

Awareness-raising for employers should highlight the prevalence of injuries caused by sharp objects.

Since many workers are young, and these jobs are their first 'real world' experience of employers cannot assume that young workers have the required skills and knowledge to do their jobs safely.

Employers should also be trained and information how to report incident data.

Increase employer awareness and knowledge of the labour inspectorate as an institution, as well as relevant laws and employers' responsibilities under those laws.

Employer education efforts should highlight the business benefits of strong OSH policies, practices, and standardized forms of employee payment.



ATTITUDE

Improve employers' appreciation of the value of OSH training.

Increase employers' perception of the benefits of investing in OSH measures.

Improve employers' risk perception about workplace hazards and risky worker behavior.



BEHAVIOUR

All employers who report pesticide and fertilizer use in their workplace state they provide safety equipment for workers when using these chemicals. Few employers stated they monitor use of protective equipment, and only half provide clear instructions and ensure correct labelling and storage of chemicals. Employers should monitor the use of protective equipment in their workplaces and identify ways of making PPE more comfortable.

Simple, sector-specific checklists and guidance materials should be used to help employers identify risks in their workplaces and develop plans to mitigate them. For example, they could encourage appropriate use of PPE if they had information on the specific tasks that require PPE and the standards the equipment should meet.

Employers could be encouraged to record and report incidents to the relevant authorities. Advocacy efforts should aim to improve OSH conditions for young workers in both sectors, and should target employers as parents and caregivers, and not only as employers.

LABOUR INSPECTORS

KEY FINDINGS

- Labour inspectors feel they have sufficient knowledge to monitor compliance with safety and health regulations. Most say they have access to enough information as well as penalties and incentives to carry out high-quality inspections and encourage employers to improve OSH conditions. However, many inspectors were unfamiliar with the level of risk and compliance in the agricultural sector.
- Few inspectors agreed that they have enough time and resources and access to adequate equipment. This is consistent with the views shared by key informants, who pointed to capacity constraints and administrative challenges facing inspectors.
- While employers assess their own prevention efforts positively, labour inspectors and key informants have a different opinion.
- While employers perceive there is open OSH dialogue in the workplace, key informants and labour inspectors felt that workers do not openly discuss their concerns, primarily because they are not aware of their rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

KNOWLEDGE Inspectors should be trained on risk factors and compliance procedures for the agricultural sector.

ATTITUDE There is significant scope to improve both physical conditions and the safety culture in craft villages and agriculture. A culture of open discussion should be encouraged, as this is one of the most important preconditions for safety and health at work.

BEHAVIOUR Allocate additional resources to support labour inspectors to successfully advise on and enforce OSH laws and regulations. This is likely to require substantial capacity building to provide inspectors with a deep understanding of the risks in small and informal enterprises such as craft village and agricultural enterprises.
The mechanism for penalties and incentives for non-compliant businesses should also be reviewed to mitigate any administrative barriers and to strengthen inspectors' enforcement powers. Information collection and sharing within the inspectorate should also be strengthened.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

A comprehensive social and behaviour change campaign is needed to create a culture of OSH prevention in the agriculture and craft village sectors in Viet Nam. Working together, actors from the government, employer organizations, and workers' groups should partner with organizations such as the ILO to develop a campaign strategy and secure funding.

Local media consultants should be identified to create an overall brand for the OSH awareness campaign as well as relevant and compelling messages and materials for each target audience group. All communication messages and materials should reinforce and support the overall culture of prevention goal.

Campaign metrics should be defined so that the impact of the campaign on KAB variables can be measured and overall campaign impact can be measured.

This fact sheet is based on "Building a culture of prevention in the Philippines: Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour (KAB) on occupational safety and health among young workers in the agricultural sector of Region IV-A and Region VII and the construction sector in National Capital Region," International Labor Organization 2017



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SafeYouth@Work Project
Building a Generation of Safe and Healthy Workers