

The promotion of tobacco-free workplaces as part of the ILO Workplace, Health Promotion and Wellbeing Programme

Workplace smoking can be a serious safety and health hazard and a cause of conflict at work. Promotion and implementation of a smoke-free work environment therefore fall under the ILO's mandate to create healthy and safe workplaces.

Historically, in the early 1900s, when smoking was banned at work it was done more to prevent fires and explosions rather than for health reasons. Later during the century, from 1950s to 1980s, bans on smoking at workplaces focused more on the protection of vulnerable workers, mostly in the healthcare and education sectors. Today, with the growing awareness of the danger of second-hand or environmental tobacco smoke, more and more workers are being protected by legislation and policies banning smoking at work.

More than half of countries worldwide, accounting for nearly two thirds of the population of the world and including many low- and middle-income countries allow smoking in government offices, work spaces and other indoor settings. Smoke-free policies in the workplaces of several industrialized nations have reduced total tobacco consumption among employees by an average of 29%. This shows that the development and implementation of strategies to promote smoke free workplaces as well as assistance in the cessation of smoking can lead to a considerable reduction in avoidable deaths attributable to cigarette smoke.

As a considerable percentage of the population spend most of their time at work, the workplace can be used to inform and educate workers about the dangers of environmental tobacco smoke. According to the WHO, seven out of ten smokers want to quit and admit that a smoke-free workplace would provide a supportive environment for employees trying to quit.

ILO Conventions and Recommendations related to smoking at the workplace

For the ILO, prevention and control of tobacco use in the workplace, as part of health promotion activities to improve the health and well-being of men and women at work, should complement OSH measures and be integrated into OSH management practices in order to prevent occupational accidents and diseases. The fundamental principles of this approach are found in the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 155) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 164) as well as in the Occupational Health Services Convention (No. 161) and its accompanying recommendation (No. 171). Occupational health services are entrusted with preventive and advisory functions, and are responsible for assisting employers, workers, and their representatives in meeting the requirements of establishing and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment which facilitates optimal physical and mental health in relation to work. These include the adaptation of work to suit the workers' capabilities by taking into account their state of physical and mental health. The list of ILO Conventions and Recommendations related to smoking at the workplace includes:

- Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139)
- Occupational Cancer Recommendation, 1974 (No. 147)

- Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148)
- Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Recommendation, 1977 (No. 156)
- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)
- Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)
- Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)
- Occupational Health Services Recommendation, 1985 (No. 171)
- Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170)
- Chemicals Recommendation, 1990 (No. 177)

The SOLVE training package: Integrating health promotion into workplace OSH policies

The promotion of tobacco-free workplaces is an important aspect of the ILO's primary goal on health promotion at the workplace¹. The ILO's health promotion and well-being at work programmes focus on the promotion of health among all workers and their families through preventative and assistance programmes in the areas of drug and alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, workplace stress, violence at work and the promotion of tobacco-free workplaces. The health promotion and wellbeing programme integrates workplace health promotion into occupational safety and health OSH policies and programmes, providing tools for action at the enterprise level. Close collaboration between management and workers is indispensable in finding solutions for safety and health problems in the workplace with the active participation and involvement of workers and their representatives.

One of the main tasks of the ILO is to support its Constituents and social partners in protecting workers' health and well-being. The ILO developed *SOLVE: Integrating health promotion into workplace policies*² with the aim of integrating workplace health promotion into OSH. The SOLVE training programme focuses on the promotion of health and well-being at work through policy design and action to offer an integrated workplace response in addressing the following areas and their interactions:

- Psychosocial health:
 - stress;
 - psychological and physical violence;
 - economic stressors.
- Potential addictions and their effects on the workplace:
 - tobacco consumption and exposure to second-hand smoke;
 - alcohol and drug consumption.
- Lifestyle habits:
 - adequate nutrition;

¹ See: http://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/workplace-health-promotion-and-well-being/WCMS_117691/lang--en/index.htm

² See: http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/WCMS_178438/lang--en/index.htm

- exercise or physical activity;
- healthy sleep;
- HIV and AIDS.

SOLVE uses a training-of-trainers methodology. It offers tools for designing a workplace policy, a preventive programme and a plan of action to reduce or eliminate the emerging psychosocial risks associated with the above problems in the workplace with a gender sensitive approach. Participants face real problem-solving situations in the context of a “virtual enterprise”. SOLVE also introduces an innovative approach whereby workers' health, safety and well-being become an integral part of organizational development, productivity and competitiveness contributing to the economic sustainability of the enterprise.

The ILO's comparative advantage lies in its experience in using social dialogue in the implementation of successful workplace and community initiatives addressing these problems by means decent work country programmes in member States with the involvement of employers, workers and their representatives, OSH practitioners, governments, policy makers, public services and NGOs. SOLVE has been applied in many countries (see figure). The SOLVE training programme is also part of the curricula of the ILO Training Centre in Turin, Italy, which holds trainings every year. An e-learning platform is also being developed.

Providing for mechanisms to incorporate the promotion of tobacco-free workplaces to preventive and health promotion measures contributes to a more decent and human world of work. The ILO acknowledges that in times of workplace change coping successfully with the promotion of tobacco-free workplaces at the workplace is essential for protecting the health and well-being of workers while enhancing the productivity of enterprises.



Building national capacity for SOLVE application

⇄ ITCILO training programme since 2012

⇄ E-Learning (blended course) as from 2016



COUNTRIES INVOLVED

Argentina	Cameroon	Iran
Brazil	Mauritius	Saudi Arabia
Chile	Nigeria	
Colombia	Malawi	Australia
Honduras	Gabon	Fiji
Jamaica	R.D. Congo	Indonesia
México	Rep. Congo	Malaysia
Panamá	Senegal	Nepal
Paraguay	South Africa	
Perú	Togo	France
Surinam		Italy
Venezuela		Switzerland
Burkina Faso		