

ILO inter -regional project: Improving safety and health at work through a Decent Work Agenda

1. Introduction and rationale

The International Labour Organization's notion of Decent Work is a global objective for men and women to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and dignity. This project aims at revealing that the decent work concept is a viable approach for a national development strategy and brings focus to occupational safety and health as an essential element for decent work. The objectives of decent work have been consistently highlighted in EC and EU policy statements. The European Consensus on Development¹ states that the Community will promote decent work for all in line with the International Labour Organisation agenda. In its article 12(2), establishing Investing in People Programme, the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)² emphasises support for initiatives to promote the improvement of working conditions and therefore, gives evidence to the EU interest in funding this project.

Occupational safety and health (OSH) is a core element of Decent Work and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. Decent Work is SafeWork. To this end, the project supports the principles embodied in the ILO's Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health³, ILO standards on OSH and in particular, the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No.187), placing them in a wider development context.

The latest ILO global estimates show that non-fatal occupational accidents have increased to 337 million per year and the total number of fatal occupational accidents and diseases is now around 2.31 million per year. Urgent action is required to reverse this trend of workplace accident leading to disability, reliance on benefits, early retirement, exclusion from the labour market, the loss of a breadwinner and poverty. Creating a safe and healthy working environment will therefore contribute to prevent exclusion and poverty, human suffering and economic costs to workers and their families, employers and governments as well as society as a whole.

The overall objective of this project is to contribute to a more inclusive and productive society through the reduction in occupational accidents and work-related diseases in a number of countries. The project aims at incorporating OSH at the highest level in the national political agenda, integrating it into national development policies, and translating the OSH national programmes into action at the workplace level.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/consensus_en.cfm

² Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation (OJ L 378, 27.12.2006, p. 41)
Available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:378:0041:0071:EN:PDF>

³ Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health: Conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 91st Session, 2003.
http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/globstrat_e.pdf

2. Location and duration of the project

3 regional pilot program sites will be involved in the project:

- Eastern Europe: **Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**
- Central America: **Honduras and Nicaragua**
- Africa: **Malawi and Zambia**

The selection of the pilot countries is based on countries that have demonstrated national commitment in improving health and safety at work, as witnessed by the formal agreement between governments, employers' and workers' organisations in the Decent Work Country Programmes.

Overall project coordination will rely on ILO Headquarters in Geneva, while regional project coordinators will be based in Ukraine, Zambia and Nicaragua.

The project execution will be from 2010 to the end of 2012.

3. OSH background in:

Central America

OSH has been identified as a “priority for the social actors in the region” according to the Decent Work in the Americas Hemispheric Agenda, 2006-2015. A priority goal is to “reduce the incidence of occupational accidents and illnesses by 20 percent within 10 years (by 2015), and double OSH protection for sectors and collectives heretofore not covered”. Several countries in Central America have benefitted in the past from small projects which have laid the foundations for building a systematic OSH programme. In Central America, seventh countries⁴ are at various stages of developing their national OSH programmes. An overview of the countries where OSH has been identified as a priority or where a start has been made towards OSH activities is given in the table below:

Country	DWCP	OSH profile	OSH programme	Labour inspection audit	Occupational injury fatality rate (per 100,000 employed)
Costa Rica	√	√ - updating			14.96
Dominican Republic	√	√ - updating			11.27
El Salvador				√	13.33
Guatemala		√		√	20.52
Honduras	√	Wants to develop a profile and programme		√	17.90

⁴ Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

Nicaragua	√	√ - needs updating			20.67
Panama	√		Construction programme	OSH training for inspectors in construction sector.	28.40

Based on the overview of OSH conditions, their high rates of occupational fatalities due to injuries⁵, the state of progress of addressing OSH and labour inspection and – most importantly – the willingness to improve working conditions and OSH, Honduras and Nicaragua have been selected for their participation in the project. Both countries have shown and expressed motivation to tackle their OSH needs in the framework of DWCP. Honduras and Nicaragua could benefit from exchange of experience from previous activities on OSH which have already been carried out in their respective territories. Nicaragua has developed an OSH profile and an action plan that now need to be updated, this experience can be used by Honduras, which has committed to improve OSH under its DWCP. Similarly, Nicaragua, which has identified modernisation of its labour inspection system as a priority in its DWCP, can benefit from the experience of the labour inspection audit carried out in Honduras. Eventually, of course, the rest of the countries in the region can all benefit from the experience built up during the project.

Eastern Europe:

Concerning the countries of Eastern Europe, most have aspirations to eventual EU membership and are taking steps to bring their legislation and practices into line with the *acquis communautaire* on many fronts. Nevertheless, important gaps still exist, including in OSH and working conditions, especially concerning men and women in small enterprises. The process of change since the collapse of the Soviet system presents many challenges, such as OSH conditions are less amenable to change because the former system of OSH is not adapted to small enterprises in the private sector. It is also taking time for attitudes to change whereby employers are responsible for OSH and prevention through risk assessment and bipartite dialogue is the priority. The establishment of democracy and the market economy in Eastern Europe therefore requires fundamental changes in the principles of managing OSH.

The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have both identified OSH as a priority in their DWCPs; Ukraine and Moldova, whilst having benefited from several projects over recent years, including EC-funded assistance to strengthen institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, promoting economic reform and improving living conditions,

⁵ Occupational fatalities due to injury has been chosen as an indicator of working conditions, as recording and notification of occupational injuries and diseases is notoriously unreliable. Occupational fatalities from injuries on the job are relatively more likely to be recorded. The figures are based on ILO estimates from 2003 in order to be able to compare the countries. The overall occupational injury fatality rate in Honduras is 17.9/100,000 employed persons (with figures of 33.27/100,000 in the agricultural sector; 13.32/100,000 in industry; and 10.77/100,000 in services). The figures for Nicaragua are very similar: 20.67/100,000 employed persons (33.36/100,000 in the agricultural sector; 13.41/100,000 in industry; and 10.81/100,000 in services).

among other things, have not seen the improvement of OSH conditions amongst the key issues addressed in either country. Even in projects to support the agricultural sector and the rural community in both Ukraine and Moldova, rarely, if ever, has OSH been approached, a matter which could be relieved by a WIND programme to improve working and living conditions whilst improving productivity in small-scale farms, including family small-holdings. Such a programme would also benefit the high numbers of people engaged in the informal economy⁶, especially as agriculture is a mainstay of both the Ukrainian and the Moldovan economies.

Concerning OSH, Moldova was part of a Swiss-funded project to develop OSH profiles for the countries of South East Europe in 2007. It also saw the start-up, on a very limited budget measured in the tens of thousands of Euros over 2003-06, of a rudimentary WIND programme. A locally-developed training manual was produced, but it remains to train and develop a network of trainers which can get to the grass-roots level of family small-holdings. Ukraine was never part of the ILO's South East Europe network of OSH, and is desperately in need of an OSH programme to combat high levels of occupational accidents⁷. EC has previously funded a project on "Support for the development of accident insurance system in Ukraine". The project supported the development of the Accident insurance fund in Ukraine. Both Ukraine and Moldova have expressed their motivation for an OSH programme, particularly in light of changing legislation towards risk assessments as a means of improving working conditions. Training is needed in this, especially in the form of WISE and WIND for small-scale enterprises and the informal sector.

East Africa:

Concerning OSH in Africa, there are several activities going on in the region to promote OSH. These include a regional programme on OSH in East Africa with the aim of "decent work and better jobs for all East African workers, numbering 38 million people". In this context it will look at finding regional models, solutions, best practices and harmonised approaches that will benefit the partner countries in the region: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, with Burundi and Rwanda included in the project "in an appropriate way".

In Francophone West Africa the ILO OSH specialist in West Africa is presently carrying out a programme of strengthening national capacities to promote OSH through the development of national programmes. These include Bénin, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon.

Based on a stated commitment, as defined by inclusion of OSH concerns into DWCPs, and on further discussions with ILO specialists in the field, it is suggested that Zambia and Malawi are selected.

⁶ For example, in 2006, in Moldova the share of workers in the informal economy accounted for 35 percent of total employment, according to the DWCP, 2008-2011.

⁷ The occupational accident fatality rate in Ukraine is 8.4/100,000 employed, based on reported cases to the ILO. The corresponding figure for Moldova is 6.4/100,000 employed workers. (However, ILO calculations based on estimates which allow for low levels of reporting are 17.32/100,000 employed and 9.02/100,000 respectively.) These can be compared to rates of reported accident fatalities of, for example, 0.8/100,000 for the U.K., 1.5/100,000 for Sweden, 3.5/100,000 for France, 3.95/100,000 for Estonia.

Zambia has shown a commitment to OSH through its DWCP, and has been targeted by the ILO's field specialist in OSH as a country for OSH development. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of occupational accidents, some on a large scale, and this has been attributed in part to an inability to enforce the OSH laws. As indicated in the 2006 budget speech, the accident toll "negatively impacts on the country's GDP growth rate". On the other hand, Zambia's "Vision 2030" aspires to "a prosperous middle income country by 2030. The vision includes decent work opportunities that ensure respect for fundamental human rights and principles; increased ratification and implementation of International Labour Standards, including on labour inspection and OSH; and the active participation of the social partners in policy formulation and implementation, including on improvement of working conditions.

This emphasis on OSH is also reflected in the DWCP, which calls for, among other things, reduced risks, vulnerabilities and decent work deficits in seeking and maintaining decent employment and graduating from informal to formal employment and enterprises. Improvements in OSH in workplaces, and the active involvement and commitment of constituents to programmes, projects and supportive actions in relation to improved working conditions are indicative of the country's commitment to OSH.

It is acknowledged, however, that additional resources are needed to achieve particularly the enhancement of working conditions of informal economy operators and the need of the government to develop better information on industrial injuries and days lost.

As for Malawi, its draft DWCP for 2009-2012 focuses on OSH (among other issues) with one country priority being "Enhanced Occupational Safety and Health". Expected outputs include:

- National System on OSH developed and implemented
- Awareness campaigns mounted
- At least one fully equipped OSH laboratory in place
- Labour inspection policies adopted and labour laws reviewed (with respect to OSH issues and in line with relevant International Labour Standards) to extend coverage to all workplaces
- Operational National Information and Documentation Centre

The aim is to develop a national OSH policy consistent with the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No.155), as well as to strengthen the capacity of national systems for a preventive culture, in line with the Promotional Framework for OSH Convention, 2006 (No. 187). In this context, the strategy will be to develop a National OSH Profile and National Programme/Action Plan. This will mean strengthening the information and research capacity as well as the human, financial and material capacity of the OSH services; developing preventive measures and mechanisms aimed at reducing the impact of risk (including safety education, protective equipment, careful design of workflow, limiting the participation of vulnerable groups, especially young workers, in hazardous work, promotion of the awareness of OSH), prevention of OSH incidents, and linkages to national development.

While OSH has been identified as a priority in the DWCP, it is acknowledged that additional resources are required for the design and setting up of the National OSH System, as well as for its effective implementation, including legislative reviews, and awareness raising on OSH issues. Furthermore, resources are required to develop a comprehensive social security, occupational accident and disease insurance, system.

In all three regions it was decided to select pilot countries not only for their needs and declared willingness, even enthusiasm, to work on OSH improvements but also because of their geographical closeness in order to make the most of the amount of funding under this project.

4. Objectives and expected results

Overall Goal: To contribute to a more inclusive and productive society through a reduction in occupational accidents and work-related diseases.

Specific objective 1: A systematic approach to improving occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is taken on board at the highest political level, including consideration of OSH concerns in national development policies in the pilot countries.

Specific objective 2: Practical OSH management measures are introduced and implemented at enterprise level in accordance with national action plans.

Specific objective 3: Global knowledge sharing on OSH tools and good practices is promoted with the purpose of developing a systematic and sustainable approach to OSH improvements.

Expected results:

- A national dialogue process on OSH is established and functioning in the six pilot countries (Honduras and Nicaragua, Moldova and Ukraine, Malawi and Zambia).
- Advocacy tools developed by the project are used by stakeholders who are motivated to promote and prioritise OSH at national level.
- National OSH programmes/action plans are adopted in the six pilot countries.
- Stakeholders are capable of using tools and methodologies to improve OSH management at the workplace.
- Methodologies used and good practices developed in the pilot countries are acknowledged by more countries.

A national programme on OSH will be developed and implemented with the tripartite partners in the participating countries. Specific outputs include:

- A tripartite national dialogue process with functioning tripartite national OSH committees in six pilot countries.
- National OSH profiles (situational and needs analyses), including evaluation of OSH inspection services, adopted and published in six pilot countries.
- National action plans on OSH, including on OSH inspection, adopted and launched at highest political level in six pilot countries.
- A number of policy-makers trained on prioritising OSH in six pilot countries.

- A practical tool published on calculating costs to national economy of poor OSH practices.
- A tool published on determining the real extent of occupational injuries.
- A number of trained labour inspectors and managers capable of promoting more efficient and effective OSH inspections and ensure implementation of the OSH action plan.
- A number of trained trainers in OSH management and the WISE (improving working conditions in small enterprises) and WIND(improving working conditions in neighbourhood development in rural areas) methodologies, capable of expanding the WISE and WIND programmes in each country.
- An awareness-raising campaign in each country, based on the ILO World Day for Safety and Health at Work
- A report of the project conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for a systematic and sustainable approach to improving OSH in a national context
- One global conference.