



# Assessing Key Elements of a Culture of OSH Prevention in the Philippines

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the International Labour Organization’s **SafeYouth@Work project**, which aims to improve occupational safety and health conditions for young workers, a mixed methods study was carried out to understand current knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (KAB) on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) issues among young workers in the agriculture and construction sectors in Region IV-A, Region VII and the National Capital Region in the Philippines.

This is part of a wider three-country study that also included Viet Nam and Myanmar. 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.

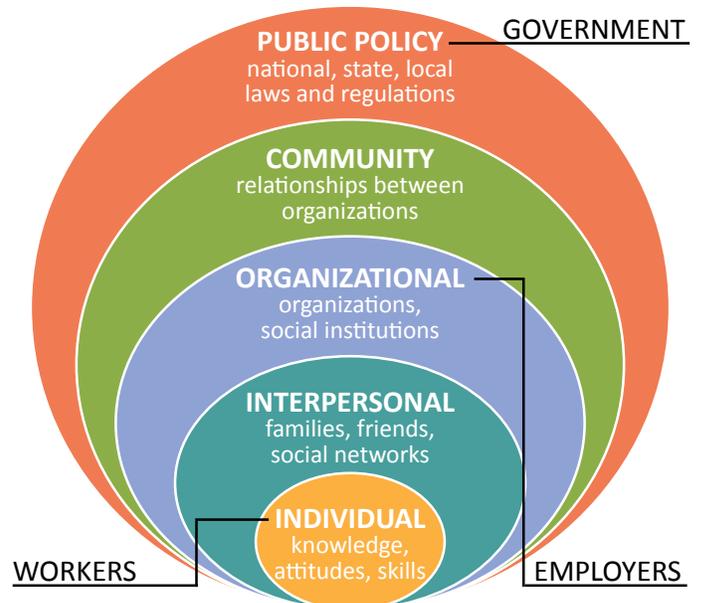
There is a significant need to improve OSH conditions and practices for young workers, especially in agriculture. Normative change is also needed to create a culture of open discussion and consistent best practices to improve worker safety and health. The following sections of this Fact Sheet summarize the key findings related to workers, employers, and government actors, and outline potential directions for a comprehensive social and behavior change communication campaign to address gaps in OSH-related knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Future campaign efforts must address the overlapping spheres of behavior change influence as depicted in

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

the Socio-ecological Model below. While workers, employers, and government actors are each distinct audience segments for OSH change efforts, these groups also influence each other, along with social networks and community-level networks. Social and behavior change initiatives are not linear in nature; human behavior is complex, and OSH campaign efforts must build on behavioral science evidence to create a culture of prevention in the Philippines.

## 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.

# Workers

## KEY FINDINGS

- Young workers tend to work in unstable conditions without written contracts, social security cover, or labour union representation.
- Workers self-report that they are generally knowledgeable about OSH practices, but have knowledge gaps on the specific components of OSH.
- One quarter of agricultural workers and 40 per cent of construction workers receive some OSH training before starting work.
- Agricultural workers identify sharp objects and manual handling as their primary OSH risks. **They fail to recognize pesticide use as a workplace hazard.**
- Construction workers highlight manual handling, using sharp objects, working at height and harmful dust as primary workplace risks.
- Workers in both sectors say that their fellow workers tend to have work-related health problems.
- One quarter of workers in both sectors feel that work-related accidents are not a risk for them.
- **A majority of workers say they would get into trouble if they reported a hazard.**
- Working under pressure, taking shortcuts, and working while ill or under the influence of alcohol, were mentioned by young workers as happening at least sometimes.
- Perceptions include that complying with OSH rules takes too much time, and that accidents only happen to unlucky people.
- Television and the internet are preferred communication channels, with internet use higher among construction workers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### KNOWLEDGE

- Improve knowledge of specific OSH components, including importance of prevention, and the rights of workers.
- Increase understanding of long-term health risks associated with pesticide exposure.
- Develop specific educational materials for family-run farms, given the unique employer/employee relationships in that type of business.
- Use television and internet platforms to provide OSH information in targeted and compelling ways.
- Increase understanding of the benefits of union membership and participation in social security.

### ATTITUDES

- Most workers are motivated to do their jobs well and earn money to support their families. Show how they will have greater success in achieving these goals by improving their own OSH-related knowledge and behaviours.
- Improve workers' risk perception so they understand that workplace accidents and work-related diseases can occur, and why they should follow OSH rules. Highlight the potential negative consequences of not following safety and health protocols.
- Improve workers' ability to advocate for their OSH rights in the workplace, including reporting hazards and accidents.

### BEHAVIOURS

- Establish incentives to reward positive behaviour (e.g. OSH reporting hazards and accidents, improved compliance with OSH guidelines, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), etc.) and discourage risky behavior (e.g. working under the influence of alcohol).
- Create a youth advocacy organization as a vehicle for young workers to play a more active role in promoting a culture of workplace prevention.

# Employers

## KEY FINDINGS

- Most employers believe they have a proper understanding of workplace risks and state that they have not had accidents at their workplace.
- Employers view OSH measures and training as time-consuming and a business expense rather than appreciating this as a worthwhile investment.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### KNOWLEDGE

- Improve employers' understanding of occupational illnesses, especially musculoskeletal and respiratory problems, and ways to mitigate health risks.
- Expand employers' knowledge of the labour inspectorate and the importance of routine documentation of illnesses, injuries and near misses.
- Employers should educate employees about the principles of prevention and practical implementation of preventive measures. This includes workplace-based training, especially for young workers, and posting of print materials such as safety procedures and reminders.
- Tailored materials for owners of family farms are needed, given the unique situation of family-owned businesses.
- Employers should partner with employee trade unions and worker associations to improve employee education and training.

#### ATTITUDES

- Establish incentives for employers to take their obligations to maintain a safe work environment seriously, including having open communication with workers.
- Increase employer risk perception and ability to accurately assess workplace hazards such as pesticide exposure, unsafe use of sharp tools, and working long hours.

#### BEHAVIOURS

- Establish incentives to reward positive behaviour (e.g. documenting and reporting hazards and accidents, improved compliance with OSH guidelines, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), etc.) and discourage unsafe behavior (e.g. fines for workplace accidents).
- Increase communication about OSH issues with employees through toolbox talks, safety representatives and other mechanisms.
- Regularly use tools such as sector-specific checklists to systematically assess risk and prevent health and safety problems.

# Government

## KEY FINDINGS

- Labour inspectors say they are knowledgeable about OSH standards and procedures, but some key informants report gaps in inspectors' knowledge and qualifications.
- Labour inspectors often lack adequate equipment and enforcement tools, and more labour inspectors are needed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### KNOWLEDGE

- Improve labour inspectors' knowledge of OSH standards, procedures, and compliance mechanisms related to both the formal and informal sectors in construction and the agricultural sector.
- Strengthen ongoing training to ensure that labour inspectors are up-to-date on the latest OSH inspection protocols.

### ATTITUDES

- Strengthen labour inspectors' confidence in their ability to implement comprehensive OSH enforcement and support OSH training and capacity building efforts.

### BEHAVIOURS

- Address gaps in labour inspectors' equipment and enforcement tools and abilities.
- Hire additional labour inspectors, especially for the informal sector.
- Improve the OSH incident reporting system.
- Advocate for expanded, free OSH training programs for employers and workers in both sectors.
- Develop a certification scheme for unskilled construction workers.
- Develop/disseminate a wide range of products on OSH standards, safety and prevention procedures, risk assessment, etc. using television, social media channels, and websites.
- Review pesticide legislation and ensure that manufacturers and distributors provide accurate safety and health information.
- Increase the level of government participation in workplace inspections to improve OSH compliance rates.
- Create OSH committees at the barangay level, especially in agriculture.
- Integrate OSH into local development plans.

## CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

1. A comprehensive social and behaviour change campaign is needed to create a culture of OSH prevention in the agriculture and construction sectors in the Philippines. Working together, actors from the government, employer organizations, and worker unions should partner with organizations such as the ILO to develop a campaign strategy and secure funding.
2. A local advertising agency should be identified to create an overall brand for the 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.
3. 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.



Funding for this project was provided by the United States Department of Labor. This material does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.



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