

ILO Influenza Project Newsletter, No.1, November 2010

ILO and partners move forward on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and business continuity planning

On 2 November, as part of Phase 3 of the ILO's Influenza Prevention, Pandemic Preparedness and Business Continuity at the Workplace Project, a consultation workshop on the way forward was held.

The ultimate aim of the workshop was to maintain the project's positive momentum and build on past achievements.

Participants interactively shared experiences through panel and group discussions on the strengths and challenges observed over the life of the project, how to build upon lessons learned and how to target the most at risk populations in society. Participants represented the interests of Government, employer associations, worker advocates, network trainers, and academia. Participating in the discussion were also concerned UN System agencies and affiliates including UNSIC, OCHA and IOM.

"The Participatory approach, unique to the ILO's training method, is an appropriate method in disseminating information concerning AHI (Avian & Human Influenza) preparedness and prevention in workplaces.

Participants unanimously agreed that the ILO's projects and developed materials have been useful. The easy to use and easy to apply materials are essential and allow for a quicker dissemination. Significant findings include:

- Training of Trainers very successful;
- Regional intergovernmental bodies (e.g. ASEAN, APEC) are playing a significant role in pandemic preparedness and prevention; and
- OSH committees need to be more active in training on pandemics preparedness and prevention and other workplace issues.



Suggestions for future action included expanding the geographic spread of the training of trainers activities, integrating other communicable diseases into the training and incorporating disease prevention training into existing and future action on Occupational Safety and Health.

Participants also presented on and suggested more effective methods of information dissemination and the need for further policy action on arrangements for workers during a pandemic situation including the concept of paid sick leave for all workers.

Recommendations also included further adaptation of training styles and materials to suit local contexts such as workplaces that require simpler messaging and communities that are highly agrarian versus urbanised.

There was great enthusiasm for the concept of business continuity planning and an identifiable gap in the small and medium enterprise sector for planning at this level.

The workshop closed on a very positive note with participants recognizing that a great deal of common understanding could be achieved in a relatively short time. It was agreed that the workshop was a good step towards strengthening the tripartite partnership and coordination.