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SAFETY  
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FOR ALL

# ► Protecting workers: occupational safety and health in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Rapid Needs Assessment & Response Plans:  
Preparation Guidelines for Country  
Level Interventions





▶ **Protecting workers:  
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## ▶ I. Introduction

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This document provides guidance to governments', employers' and workers' organizations, among others, for preparing occupational safety and health (OSH) interventions to support efforts to ensure a safe work in the context of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

As relevant, interventions should support, build upon and/or complement existing efforts being carried out by the ILO, relevant international organizations (including the World Health Organization (WHO)) and ILO constituents. Proposed actions should pay particular attention to vulnerable workers, including women, workers in the informal economy and/or migrant workers.

## ▶ II. Conducting the rapid needs-assessment exercise

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The rapid needs-assessment exercise covers two main areas:

- ▶ the overall situation at the national and regional levels, and
- ▶ constituents' capacity and need to respond to the crisis.

The assessment is to be conducted by governments', employers' and workers' organizations, among others, in close consultation with the local ILO Office and/or constituents and/or partners on the ground.

The following steps could be followed for collecting data and information:

### Step 1. Initial desk review

The purpose of the desk review is to gain a good understanding of the outcomes of the pandemic in the country, to date and in the future, to identify the measures that have been put in place to address them; to collect available data/information on the labour market, OSH and labour inspection, health care and public health services; to map the assistance that other organizations may be providing; and to identify all relevant existing policies, programmes and plans related to COVID-19.

### Step 2. Rapid needs-assessment exercise

The primary information sources for the rapid needs-assessment exercise are key informant interviews, discussions, consultations and interviews to be conducted in-person or remotely, as per the security restrictions in place in the specific country. Key informants to be considered include:

- ▶ National and regional authorities competent in OSH (e.g. Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, national OSH institute, labour inspectorate, etc.).
- ▶ Occupational health services
- ▶ Public health services
- ▶ Health care providers/medical facilities
- ▶ Social security institutions, particularly employment injury institutions
- ▶ Workers' organizations

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<sup>1</sup> This tool has been adapted from the ILO Vision Zero Fund's "Protecting garment sector workers: occupational safety and health and income support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Rapid Needs Assessment & Response Plans Preparation Guidelines for Country Level Interventions" developed by the Vision Zero Fund ([www.ilo.org/vzf](http://www.ilo.org/vzf))

- ▶ Employers' organizations
- ▶ Private sector entities
- ▶ Other ILO programmes or projects
- ▶ Other UN agencies and international organizations, including WHO
- ▶ Relevant non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations and community groups

## **Useful resources**

[The ILO Action Checklist: Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work](#)

[A safe healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Policy brief](#)

[Safe return to work: Ten action points](#)

[Managing work-related psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Practical guide for the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 in agriculture \(ILO VZF Mexico\)](#)

[Preventing and Handling Covid-19: A Guide for Factories in Indonesia \(ILO Better Work Indonesia\)](#)

[ILO: COVID-19 Management Guidance with Self-assessment checklist for RMG and footwear factories \(ILO Better Work Bangladesh\)](#)

[Stop COVID-19 at work! \(sector specific guides\)](#)

[UN Women Checklist for a COVID-19 response](#)

Please complete the table below in relation to the country context, and ILO constituents and partners' requests.

► **Table 1. The country context**

A. Overall situation at the local level		
Health impact on affected population and areas		
	Guiding questions	Notes
1	What is the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country? Please provide a brief description that allows for an understanding of the trend.	
2	What is the total number of COVID-19 deaths in the country? What is the total number of recovery cases in the country?	
3	What is the profile of the people infected? (age, sex, migrant status, occupation, etc.)	
4	How have the target region, province and/or villages been affected by the pandemic (number of confirmed cases, deaths, recoveries, trends)?	
5	How many workers in the target sector were affected with COVID-19 (number of confirmed cases, deaths, recoveries, trends)? If possible, provide characterization by age, sex, migrant status.	
Economic and social impact on the target sector/region		
	Guiding questions	Notes
1	What are the economic and employment consequences triggered by the COVID-19 crisis?	

2	<p>What are the consequences and challenges faced in the target sector/region?</p> <p>Please consider/provide information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- any measures imposed by the government or other stakeholders that affect the operation of sectors/ industries (e.g., lockdown regulations which include definition as an essential service, teleworking or other work arrangements including shift work and paid leave);</li> <li>- whether workplaces have closed, reduced or changed their production, laid off/furloughed workers, changed working arrangements or conditions, faced postponement or cancellation of orders from global buyers, etc.;</li> <li>- differentiated impacts of these measures on formal/informal, rural/ urban, female/male workers, or contract conditions, if any.</li> </ul>	
3	<p>What are the characteristics of the workers that are required to go to work and those that perform remote work (occupation, sex, age, geographical location, contract conditions etc.)?</p>	
4	<p>What are the social protection benefits available for the workers in the sector (e.g. collectively financed paid sick leave, sickness benefits, parental/care leave, unemployment benefits, etc.)?</p>	
5	<p>What are the measures taken (by the government and/or others) to compensate the loss of income for workers?</p>	
<b>B. Capacity and needs assessment of constituents</b>		
	<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	<p>What is the country's experience in previous similar crisis situations (if any) and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic? Please include information on lessons learned and capacities acquired.</p>	

2	Where mechanisms for social dialogue (e.g., tripartite advisory bodies on OSH, bipartite workplace OSH committees) exist at the national, sectoral and/or enterprise levels, please provide information on any consultations/ meetings taking place in relation to COVID-19.	
3	Are there any national regional or sectoral COVID-19 response plans in place in the country to which the intervention's activities need to be aligned to?	

**Component 1: Ensuring that policies and programmes are in place to respond to the current pandemic and for future epidemics**

In relation to the following measures, please describe if there is any guidance, policies and/or actions at the national/sectoral/workplace level, and how these are being implemented. When doing so, please consider the following questions to document existing measures, gaps and identified needs:

- a. What are the provisions that already exist to respond to and prepare for an epidemic and the measures that have been taken?
- b. What are the ILO constituents' capacities and needs to improve the response and prepare for an epidemic?
- c. Were the measures and actions developed and adopted through social dialogue processes?

*Hint: As relevant, refer to the "ILO Action Checklist: Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work" and to the "Safe Return to Work: Ten Action Points".*

1	Integration of public health emergency measures into OSH national policies and programmes.	
2	Integration of OSH issues into national health emergency-preparedness plans.	
3	National COVID-19 prevention and mitigation plan (example: definition of guidance criteria for reopening/ closure of workplaces and minimum safety and health requirements for each phase).	
4	Adaptation of regulatory frameworks, as required (example: definition of essential services, provisions applying to telework).	
5	Labour inspection response.	



6	Available and easy to access services to inform workplaces of minimum required measures for safe operation in the region/ sector.	
7	Monitoring and evaluation mechanism for prevention strategies and plans.	
<p><b>Component 2: Prevention of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 at the workplace in the target region/sector.</b></p> <p>In relation to the following measures, please describe if there is any guidance, policies and/or actions at the national/sectoral/workplace level, and how these are being implemented. When doing so, please consider the following questions to document existing measures, gaps and identified needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are the relevant efforts that have been/are being deployed by the government, employers' and workers' organizations, and/or other relevant stakeholders to prevent workers' exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 at the workplace in the target region/ sector?</li> <li>b. What are the ILO constituents' capacities and needs to prevent exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 at the workplace in the target region/sector?</li> <li>c. Were the measures and actions developed and adopted through social dialogue processes?</li> </ul>		
1	Risk assessment (infection and other hazards).	
2	Prevention and mitigation measures for infection risk adopted at the workplace (e.g. social distancing, personal hygiene, respiratory hygiene; personal protective equipment (PPE) provided for high-risk workers or disinfection in public or private spaces).	
3	Development of a preparedness and response plan at the workplace, considering all work areas and tasks performed by workers and potential sources of exposure.  Please consider integration of emergency preparedness into OSH management systems and policies at the enterprise level, as well as integration of safety and health into contingency and business continuity plans.	

4	Promotion of teleworking. If teleworking is not feasible, introduction of shifts to avoid large concentrations of workers on the premises, and details as to how this is affecting production.	
5	Awareness raising, information, communication and training on the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace, including access to information, materials to promote workplace prevention of risk of exposure to the virus and other technical advice provided by occupational health services, local public health authorities or other partners.	
6	Development of a protocol concerning what to do if a confirmed or suspected case of the virus is identified at the workplace, including reporting, monitoring and disinfection in line with national guidelines.	
7	Measures to prevent other OSH risks arising from the pandemic such as ergonomics and psychosocial risks and violence and harassment (e.g. awareness raising, communications and training for stakeholders).	
8	Other risks that may arise as a result of business suspension and lead to occupational accidents (lack of maintenance, system failures).	
9	Workplace system for providing information to workers on emerging situation on COVID-19, with reference to information released by national or local health authorities.	

**Component 3: Providing support to workers and their families through the employment injury insurance system**

In relation to the following measures, please describe if there are any policies and/or actions at the national/sectoral/workplace level, and how these are being implemented.

When doing so, please consider the following questions to document existing measures, gaps and identified needs:

- a. Are workers in the target sector covered by the country's employment injury insurance system if they suffer health consequences and incapacity to work from exposure at work to COVID-19? Please describe who is covered and who is not and, as relevant, explain gaps to ensure this coverage.

1	Inclusion and recognition of COVID-19 under employment injury compensation schemes.	
2	Delivery of the benefit to affected workers (e.g., cash benefits, medical service).	

**Other questions/observations**

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## ► III. Response plan template

► Table 2. Summary table

1. Lead organization:	Please specify: _____	2. Beneficiary country/ies:	
3. Project title and DC code (if applicable)	Title: _____ DC code: _____	4. Contact person:	Name, Email address
5. Indicate the actions covered by the response plan	<p>1. Ensuring that policies and programmes are in place to respond to the current pandemic and for future epidemics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► 1.1 Enhanced capacity of ILO constituents to develop policy and regulatory responses to address the occupational safety and health dimension of COVID-19</li> <li>► 1.2 Enhanced capacity of ILO constituents to develop and implement national, regional or sectoral COVID-19 response plans</li> <li>► 1.3 Improved consultation and engagement of employers' and worker's organizations</li> </ul> <p>2. Prevention of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 at the workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► 2.1 Enhanced capacity of ILO constituents for risk management and assistance in the development of preparedness and response plans for COVID-19 prevention at the workplace</li> <li>► 2.2 ILO Constituents' efforts in the design and implementation of practical workplace prevention and mitigation measures are support</li> <li>► 2.3 Enhanced awareness and communication by all relevant stakeholders of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and effective responses</li> </ul> <p>3. Providing support to workers and their families through the employment injury insurance system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► 3.1 Provide support to ensure that the legal framework related to employment injury includes a flexible list of covered contingencies</li> </ul>		
6. Indicative funding	Amount: USD _____	7. Estimated duration of the response plan (dates):	
8. Estimated life span:	This refers to the total period during which the investment is effective (in months).		
9. Intervention rationale, objectives and approach (max. 100 words)	Brief summary of the main findings of the rapid assessment (per component, as relevant) and the proposed response plan, including implementing partners.		

## Executive summary

The Executive Summary should feature a clear and comprehensive overview of the Response Plan. The summary should focus on the actions and activities proposed as per constituents and/or partners' requests and the results of the above needs-assessment exercise. The summary must clearly articulate the linkages between the current work of the office and the response plan. Be concise: the Executive Summary should not exceed 200 words in length.

## Response plan

Elaborating on the Executive Summary, please provide a concise description of proposed actions and activities referencing, to the extent possible, the framework presented above (i.e., specifying the component and action). Activities should be specific deliverables that are associated with it. Moreover, activities should be organized by deliverables.

For example: Activity 1: Conduct feasibility study, Activity 2: Carry out gender assessment, Activity 3: Undertake financial analysis, Activity 4: Negotiate and sign an implementation agreement with the Ministry of Labour to support purchasing of PPE, etc.

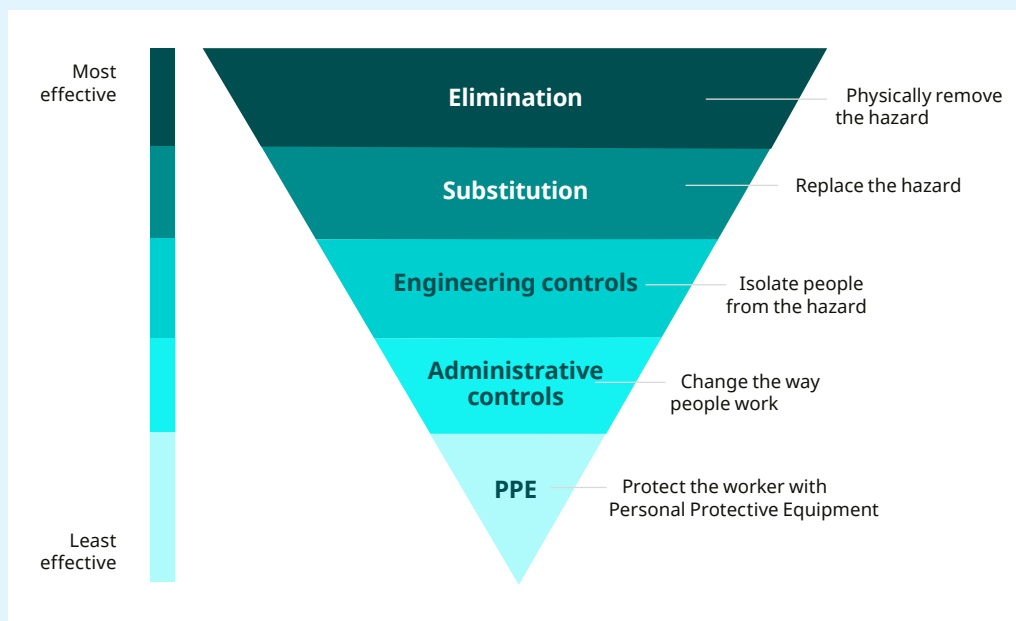
As relevant, please provide a short explanation of how activities in the response plan are integrated into current work plans and will make effective and efficient use of the existing capabilities, networks, research, etc.

## Budget details

An activity-based budget should be provided consistent with the activities proposed in Section II.

## Annexes

► Figure 1. Hierarchy of controls applied to Covid-19



**Elimination/substitution.** Since it is not yet possible to eliminate or substitute the occupational hazard (coronavirus) if the workplace reopens, a combination of other preventive measures is required to protect workers from exposure to the virus.

**Engineering controls.** These include improving ventilation by increasing ventilation rates in the work environment; installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards; or installing a drive-through window for customer service.

**Administrative and organizational controls.** These include changes in work policy or procedures in order to reduce or minimize exposure to a hazard, such as introducing extra shifts; physical distancing; or good hygiene and infection control practices, directed at both workers and the workplace.

**PPE.** While engineering and administrative controls are considered more effective, PPE may also be needed to prevent certain types of exposure, in particular for the most hazardous occupations.

**Source:** ILO, Prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 at work for small and medium-sized enterprises: Action Checklist and follow-up (Available at [www.ilo.org/vzf](http://www.ilo.org/vzf))

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