

Regional Workshop on Labor Standards Manila, 18-19 September 2002

Recommendations on Occupational Safety and Health

THE PROBLEM

- More than **2 million work related death** are estimated annually in the world. More than **350 thousand workers die** during a year as a result of **occupational accidents**. The number of people suffering from the occupational safety and health negligence cannot be even estimated. Very often the worker killed at work was the only source of money necessary for the support of a dozen of family members.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH)

- OSH represents a complex of measures to be taken to prevent the loss of lives of workers due to occupational accidents and diseases. The very wide spectrum of them includes among others development of international and national standards, regulations and norms, formulation of technical guidance, the provision of technical advisory services, including technical cooperation activities, and the dissemination of information through publications and Internet. Special OSH training at different levels of competence aimed to prevent occupational accidents and diseases. The main purpose of these measures is to create National OSH (SafeWork) systems, to promote ILO OSH management system, improve working conditions, to raise living standards of workers through the increase of productivity and to extend decent work principles as wide as possible.
- The total number of the ILO Conventions related in small or large to OSH issues exceeds 80 and OSH recommendations are included in many other Conventions. The list of priority Conventions adopted by the tripartite Meeting of Experts and approved by the ILO Governing Body in the year 2001 consist of the following:
 - Radiation Protection (No.115);
 - Workers' Representatives (No.135)
 - Benzene (No.136)
 - Occupational Cancer (No.139)
 - Working Environment (No.148)
 - OSH (No.155)
 - Occupational Health Services (No.161)
 - Asbestos (No.162)
 - OSH in Construction (No.167)
 - Chemical Safety (No.170)
 - Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents (No.174)
 - OSH in Mines (No.176).

DISCLAIMER: These findings and recommendations are a result of the ADB-ILO Regional Technical Assistance 5887 studies, national consultative processes during 2001-2002 and high level discussions at the concluding Manila Regional Workshop, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ADB or the ILO.

In the year 2001 the International Labor Conference adopted the OSH in Agriculture Convention that should be also included in the list of priority.

PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

The protection of workers against sickness, disease and injury arising out of employment is one of the tasks assigned to the ILO by the international community. Over the years the worldwide concern for protection of the worker has evolved to assume a broader coverage of the fundamental objectives embodied in the ILO Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia. The 1984 International Labor Conference Resolution concerning the improvement of the working conditions and environment, laid down the following principles:

1. *Work should take place in a safe and healthy working environment*
2. *Conditions of work should be consistent with workers' well-being and human dignity.*
3. *Work should offer real possibilities for personal achievement, self-fulfilment and service to society.*

These three principles constitute the basis for the ILO standards on OSH. Those, in turn, have exerted considerable influence on the laws and regulations of the ILO member States. Many texts have been modelled on the relevant provisions of ILO instruments.

ILO occupational safety and health standards broadly fall into four groups or categories:

The first includes standards that aim at guiding policies for action (Convention No.155, Convention No.161).

The second group provides for protection in given branches of economic activity including mining, the building industry, commerce and offices and dock work.

The third highlights measures of protection, e.g. guarding of machinery, medical examination of young workers, and maximum weight of loads to be transported by a single worker.

The fourth group provides for protection against specific risks: e.g. ionising radiation, benzene, asbestos, prevention of occupational cancer, prevention of air pollution, noise and vibration in the working environment and safety in the use of chemicals including the prevention of major industrial accidents.

It should be seriously considered that promotion and implementation of OSH standards in the ILO as well as ADB member countries have to be designed and monitored according to industry, the nature of the work, the location of the project' the composition and skills of the workforce and the management structures of the existing agency and contractors, etc.

The standards to be implemented should be identified by the OSH expert for each particular case. E.g. the difference between work with chemicals and work with chemical wastes is essential and improper treatment of substances can provoke bad consequences for workers' health.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO PROMOTE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

All possible actions have to be taken to achieve the main objective: **substantially reduce the number of occupational accidents and diseases**, especially in the industries and occupations with high rate of injuries.

Main directions of action:

- Creation of the national OSH profiles and SafeWork programmes and laws and regulations.
- Creation, development and strengthening of the national enforcement system.
 - Raising of public awareness on social, moral and economic aspects of occupational accidents and diseases.
 - OSH training of workers, as well as OSH education of students and school children with a view to establish safety culture at different levels.

COUNTRY PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES

- **The need to Elaborate National strategic OSH programmes with the identification of priority needs for the sustainable and effective reduction of occupational accidents and diseases**

1. The need to promote activities at national level that build a culture of occupational safety and health as a boost to economic development, including:
 - Preparation of national profile on OSH including case studies to be implemented for data collection using sectoral and territorial approaches.
 - Elaboration of the National strategic OSH programme with the identification of priority needs for the sustainable and effective reduction of occupational accidents and diseases with the deep involvement of social partners for joint implementation.
 - Review and assessment of legislation. Priority to be given to hazardous industries and high risks occupations.
 - Establishing a national register of OSH experts, institutions and laboratories
 - Raising awareness campaigns at schools, universities and in the community.

PROJECT DESIGN

1. The need to take active steps to ensure that workers engaged on projects funded by ADB are provided with safe and healthy working conditions that are appropriate to the project, these will include:
 - Assessment of the work to be carried out.
 - Assessment of the environment and the location in which the work will be performed.
 - Selection and appointment of appropriately skilled project management and staff.
 - Adequate OSH training for project management and workers.
 - Concentration on the most sensitive areas is necessary to prevent spreading of funds and efforts with minimum of efficacy.
 - Practical measures on the national, enterprise and small establishments (including informal sector) levels to be designed and implemented according to the relevant priority needs.
2. The need that subcontractors become aware of labor issues. OSH issues would first be addressed in an employment/labor plan. The issues here are: The nature of the

available workforce for the project – experience, skills and capability, composition, availability of competent supervisors, understanding of safety and health issues.

3. Existing national OSH laws that are relevant to the project and the effectiveness of the enforcement process.
4. Application of any relevant ILO Conventions, Recommendations and Codes of Practice.
5. Level of utilization of local of indigenous labor force versus need to bring in external workers and consultants to ensure necessary expertise.
6. Management responsibilities and site co-ordination for safety and health. Identification of major safety and health issues that could arise on the project, particularly any significant safety or health risks to project workers or local population living in the vicinity of the work (terrain or other environmental or climatic factors, pollutants, biological risks – prevalence of infectious diseases etc.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

- A proposed project implementation cycle is set out on page 5 of the report. The suggested cycle proposes roles for all of the organizations that are involved in each project from ADB to developing countries Executing Agencies and contractors. The level of involvement at each level will depend on the Bank's policy position as to the degree of oversight it wants to exercise for each project. This could extend from active audits and assessments to the receiving of reports and information from other participants.
- The overriding objective should be to ensure that hazards are being identified and effectively managed for each project. This is the essence of the ILO's "management systems" approach for safety and health. There must be standards and a robust management and audit process that ensures the standards are adhered to at work sites.
- If applicable, hazard management plans must be specific to each project. Generic standards (ILO Conventions/Recommendations) can form the basis for the development of these plans but there must be a focus on the particular hazards and their controls for each project. A "generic" or generalized set of standards will not be sufficient for ensuring safety on individual sites. These standards must be specifically applied to the circumstances of the work and the characteristics and site factors taken into account.
- There must also be a clearly defined management process, and accountabilities for translating these plans into practical reality on each project.
- At the implementation stage, the ADB has the opportunity of specifying the Bank's requirements and expectations in reasonably specific terms. These requirements could be based on specific areas of economic activity for which funding could be provided. The obvious categories are likely to cover:
 1. Safety and health standards for projects involving construction work such as earth moving, structural work etc.
 2. Agricultural development projects
 3. Forestry development
 4. Mining and quarrying projects.

- These requirements would be based on ILO Conventions and other international best practice. They would not be a substitute for developing countries legislation or for the detailed planning that would be required of executing agencies and contractors. The requirements would provide a minimum set of expectations and standards to guide the development of project safety and health plans.



