



Case Report

Occupational Safety and Health Activities Conducted across Countries in Asia

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 September 2014

Received in revised form

11 March 2015

Accepted 11 March 2015

Available online 31 March 2015

Keywords:

informal economy workplaces
occupational safety and health
participatory action-oriented training
small–medium-sized enterprises
working conditions

ABSTRACT

Three occupational safety and health (OSH) activities, one international and two national workshops, were documented as part of OSH activities conducted under the International Labor Organization/Korea Partnership Program in the year 2011–2012. This study aimed to provide information on what the three OSH activities were implemented and how they contributed to the improvement of OSH in Asian countries. The international workshop was useful for the participants to understand a variety of information on OSH as well as participatory action-oriented training (PAOT) approaches at the regional and global levels. The two national workshops were practical for participants to strengthen their knowledge and skills on the PAOT at the enterprise and national levels. The study shows that the three OSH activities contributed to the understanding of the participants on OSH and PAOT, and that the activities promoted the improvement of OSH across countries in Asia.

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1. Introduction

Occupational safety and health (OSH) has been promoted in Asia and the Pacific at national and international levels by a number of bodies including the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) as well as the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The ILO/Korea Partnership Program (referred to as “the Program” herein) has been implemented across countries in Asia since the Korean Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) and the ILO signed a memorandum of understanding on a partnership for development in 2003 [1]. The Program supports the following three thematic areas of the regional priorities: (1) competitiveness, productivity, and jobs; (2) labor market governance and social protection; and (3) labor migration management [1,2]. The second thematic area includes the OSH component in which there are OSH activities including workshops, training programs, and development of OSH manuals. An OSH expert joined the ILO Decent Work Team in Bangkok (DWT-Bangkok) from the KOSHA since July 2011 [3].

For over a decade, the OSH activities were primarily performed to improve OSH and working conditions in the small–medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and informal economy (IE) workplaces in the region. It was evaluated that the Program including OSH activities was relevant and effective at national and regional levels [1]. However, there is not enough information on such OSH activities in the literature as well as even in an ILO evaluation project report published recently [1]. In this regard, we aimed to document three OSH activities performed in the year 2011–2012 under the Program to provide information on the OSH activities across countries in Asia.

2. Materials and methods

The OSH activities were planned, implemented, and reported regularly by an OSH team of the DWT-Bangkok under the Program. Normally, there are six to seven work items in the OSH work plan every year and they are implemented during the fiscal year. The annual report for the 2011–2012 OSH activities was documented

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and reviewed for a period by both the ILO and the MOEL [2]. The OSH component of the annual report, among others, was reviewed for this study as it was endorsed in 2013.

For the fiscal year 2011–2012, the OSH work plan consisted of seven work items such as two international training workshops, four national workshops/training programs, and one manual development. Three of the seven work items were expediently selected as study activities in that they were assumed to be typical OSH activities conducted under the Program (Table 1) and also that they were designed and implemented based on participatory action-oriented training (PAOT) approaches by the authors [4–6]. The three OSH activities were examined and their design, implementation strategy, and details on how they would contribute to the improvement of OSH in Asian countries were documented.

3. Results

3.1. International workshop on participatory approaches

This workshop was held by the DWT-Bangkok and the KOSHA in Incheon, Korea in August 2011 to improve working and employment conditions in SMEs and IE across countries in Asia. Participants were 18 tripartite representatives from seven countries namely Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The workshop included 23 sessions including the following: (1) the Work Improvement in Small Enterprises (WISE) program including seven sessions after an SME factory visit for the WISE checklist exercise; (2) Korean experiences on the PAOT approaches, national OSH systems, and accident prevention; (3) ILO standards relating to OSH and working conditions; (4) extending participatory approaches on job stress and working time for home workers, farmers, and waste collectors; (5) local economic development and participatory approaches; (6) working conditions and family life—role of social partners; and (7) improving work environment in SMEs and the basic occupational health services.

The participants prepared and presented action plans by country to apply them, as follow-up activities after the workshop, in their home countries.

3.2. National training of trainers on the WISE program

The activity was undertaken for 40 participants (20 trainers from national tripartite organizations and 20 trainees from local workplaces) in Sentul, Indonesia in December 2011. It was organized by the ILO and the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (MOMT) to promote safety and health culture as well as to extend OSH protection to SMEs and IE in Indonesia.

A training of trainers (TOTs) program was initiated for the 20 trainers. The TOTs contents consisted of (1) introduction of the

PAOT methodology; (2) PAOT action checklist; (3) low-cost and good practices; (4) roles of WISE facilitators; (5) organizing a WISE training workshop; and (6) technical inputs of WISE training workshop. There was a workplace visit to collect good practices. A rehearsal session was designed to make the trainers understand and learn how the TOTs contents could be delivered based on the PAOT methodology.

A WISE workshop was conducted for the 20 trainees by the trainers on the last two dates. Six technical sessions were presented by the trainers as practiced at the rehearsal, and these covered the following: (1) materials storage and handling; (2) workstation design; (3) machine safety; (4) work environment; (5) welfare facilities and work organization; and (6) implementation of improvements. During the WISE workshop, the trainees visited a home workplace in the local area to complete the checklist exercise and then presented improvement ideas by group.

On the last date, the trainers developed and presented action plans, as follow-up activities on short-term (within 3 months) and long-term (≥ 6 months) bases, by organization to apply the WISE program to their own organizations across Indonesia.

3.3. National TOTs on the WISCON program

This workshop was held for 34 participants (22 trainers from national tripartite organizations and 12 trainees from local construction sites) in Vientiane Capital, Lao People's Democratic Republic in February 2012. The event was organized by the DWT-Bangkok and the Lao Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare to extend OSH protection to the construction sector as well as to promote safety and health culture in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The TOTs contents consisted of the following: (1) PAOT methodology; (2) PAOT tools (action checklist, low-cost, and good solutions); (3) roles of PAOT facilitators; (4) Organizing the Work Improvement for Small Construction Sites (WISCON) workshop; and (5) technical inputs of the WISCON program. In line with the TOTs program, all trainers were able to work in groups while they conducted a field visit to three selected construction sites to collect good practices. A rehearsal session was conducted in order for the trainers to become familiar with the skills of delivering the TOTs contents.

A WISCON workshop was undertaken for the 12 trainees by the trainers on the last two dates. Six technical sessions were conducted similar to the one at the TOTs/WISE workshop. The trainees visited a small construction site in the city to complete the checklist exercise, and also discussed good practices and improvements using the checklist results by group.

Action plans, two short-term and two long-term plans that focused on training and follow-up activities, were developed and presented by the trainers on the last date.

Table 1

Overview of the three occupational safety and health activities selected for this study

Activity	Description	Place and time	Organizer
International fellowship training workshop	Training on participatory approaches for tripartite representatives from 7 Asian countries	Incheon, Korea, Aug 29–Sep 2, 2011	The ILO DWT-Bangkok and KOSHA
National training of trainers workshop	Training on PAOT/WISE for tripartite representatives	Sentul, Indonesia, Dec 12–16, 2011	The ILO and Indonesia MOMT
National training of trainers workshop	Training on PAOT/WISCON for tripartite representatives	Vientiane Capital, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Feb 27–Mar 2, 2012	The ILO DWT-Bangkok and Lao MOLSW

DWT-Bangkok, Decent Work Team in Bangkok; ILO, International Labor Organization; KOSHA, Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency; MOLSW, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare; MOMT, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration; PAOT, participatory action-oriented training; WISCON, Work Improvement for Small Construction Sites; WISE, Work Improvement in Small Enterprises.

4. Discussion

The three activities were part of the OSH work items in the 2011–2012 work plan under the Program. The main features were documented for the one international and two national workshops.

During the international workshop, the participants had opportunities to understand how to improve working and employment conditions at work through activities such as field visit, presentations, dialogs, and group work. They observed either good practices or points to be improved in the factory visit and could understand how to improve working conditions at the factory by sharing observation results and control measures. At the end of the workshop, they were in certain positions to suggest recommendations for the effective implementation of participatory approaches based on lessons learned and their experiences. The workshop was useful for them to understand how to improve working and employment conditions in SMEs and IE workplaces although there were differences in language, religion, culture, climate, or food among the participants. The international workshop would have contributed to the development or improvement of OSH in Asia including the seven countries.

The TOTs/WISE workshop was an opportunity to strengthen the understanding of OSH among the Indonesian government officers and their social partners. Although there were slightly different aspects including translation into local language, compared with the international event, the workshop was undertaken with a high commitment of the participants. It was noticeable that an agreement was signed by the tripartite for future collaboration in OSH improvement on the last date. Around 1 year later, 10 WISE workshops were planned and implemented by the MOMT in 10 provinces until the end of 2013 [7]. On average, 40 people participated in each of these workshops. Of the 10 follow-up activities, three provincial workshops were technically supported by an author (J.-K.P.) from the DWT-Bangkok. In addition, five WISCON workshops were further implemented for 250 participants, around 50 persons for each, by the MOMT in five provinces until the latter half of 2014 [7]. It is meaningful that, after the first national workshop in 2011, there were 15 follow-up activities where around 650 participants were trained at provincial levels using the WISE/WISCON approaches to improve OSH in the country over a number of years. It is shown that the national workshop contributed to the promotion of safety and health culture as well as the improvement of OSH in SMEs and IE workplaces in Indonesia.

For the TOTs/WISCON workshop in Lao People's Democratic Republic, there were challenges in implementing the event due in part to a lack of human resources and translation into the local language. The construction sector was one of the high contributors to injuries and diseases at work, and thus the construction OSH was primarily addressed by the ILO and/or the KOSHA in Lao People's Democratic Republic since 2005. The participants would have obtained the knowledge and skills of the WISCON program during the workshop, which might accelerate capacity building of the participants as well as awareness raising on OSH in the country. A project was launched for Lao Labor Law revision in February 2012. The OSH team of the DWT-Bangkok provided inputs for the OSH part of the revision several months later after the TOTs/WISCON workshop. Along with OSH activities conducted over a number of years, the workshop or its plan would have affected, directly or indirectly, the needs of this Law revision. It is believed that the workshop improved OSH and working conditions in the construction sector as well as promoted safety and health culture in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

There were similarities and differences, in terms of operational features, across the three OSH activities. For example, the similarities included that the workshops were part of OSH work items

planned in the fiscal year 2011–2012 under the Program. The PAOT approaches were applied to the training activities in which participants were tripartite representatives. Furthermore, the activities were organized and led by the DWT-Bangkok in cooperation with a government agency. The differences were in workshops, which were held at the national or international level. Training programs were operated for either fellowship or TOTs while participants' nationality groups varied among the three workshops.

Given that the training program features are described, the PAOT approaches were fundamentally and practically used in the three OSH activities. There were a series of sessions dealing with "good practices" and "points to be improved," through a field visit, in the approaches while there were also sessions handling "lessons learned" by group work during the training activities. Action plans were also proposed for follow-up activities in each of the three OSH activities, with the expectation that such activities could be explored more extensively in Asia including the participants' countries. However, the follow-up activities were implemented only after the TOTs/WISE workshop in Indonesia. A study may be needed to review the effects of such OSH workshops in further depth as it is out of the scope in this study. With regard to the participants' nationalities and numbers in the three OSH activities, there were 92 persons from seven countries. These were part of the 160 people from 16 countries who participated in all of the seven work items of the OSH component during the year 2011–2012. The allocated fund for the seven OSH work items was 13.6% of the total year-budget of US\$ 1,040,000 under the Program [2].

The international workshop was useful for participants to understand a variety of information on OSH as well as the WISE program at the regional and global levels. The two national workshops were practical for participants to strengthen their knowledge and skills on the WISE or WISCON program at the enterprise and national levels. The study shows that the three OSH activities contributed to participants' understanding of the OSH and participatory approaches, and that the activities promoted the improvement of OSH across countries in Asia.

Conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

Acknowledgments

This work benefited from the ILO/Korea Partnership Program.

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