



International  
Labour  
Organization

# ▶ Safety and health at work

2022

## Key messages

- ▶ The rapidly changing world of work poses new risks to workers in every industry and across global supply chains. The COVID-19 pandemic confirmed how essential occupational safety and health (OSH) is for human life and resilient enterprises. In order to ensure healthy populations and sustainable economies, we need to reaffirm the importance of OSH.
- ▶ Occupational safety and health was central to the creation of the ILO and a safe and healthy working environment [has now been added to the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#). We bring together governments, workers' and employers' organizations to design, develop and implement integrated policy approaches, specifically those that prioritize OSH systems and offer human-centred solutions.
- ▶ The ILO provides technical assistance to its 187 Member States, guided by our Global Strategy on OSH, which sets out the main strategic pillars and proposes a national and workplace level model for action to improve safety and health at work.
- ▶ A key feature of the ILO response is the [Safety+Health for All Flagship Programme](#), which includes the G7 supported [Vision Zero Fund](#). Since 2016, 138 million workers in 22 countries have benefited from Safety + Health for All interventions.
- ▶ The ILO is uniquely aligned with the [EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027](#), including monitoring new OSH risks, anticipating future OSH crises, prioritizing modern preventative approaches to reduce injuries and diseases, and promoting effective OSH standards worldwide, in particular fostering OSH in global supply chains.

This programming note provides an overview of the ILO's work to improve the occupational safety and health of workers around the world. It offers concise information about the ILO's approach, tools, ongoing initiatives and partnerships in this area. The ILO's mandate and expertise can impactfully contribute to the achievement of the priorities set within the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

## Safety and health at work

### The challenge

- ▶ Annually, an estimated **2.9 million workers die** due to occupational accidents and diseases, and at least **402 million workers** are injured at work.
- ▶ Work-related **diseases are responsible for 81% of all work-related deaths**, with fatalities due to occupational injuries accounting for the remaining 19%.

- ▶ The occupational risk factor with the largest number of attributable deaths is exposure to **long working hours**, followed by **exposure to particulate matter, gases and fumes**, underscoring the need to focus on **occupational cancers and circulatory diseases**.
- ▶ Occupational accidents and diseases result in a **loss of 5.4% of annual GDP**.
- ▶ Less tangible costs relate to the broader economic impact and human suffering. These include presenteeism (working with less effectiveness), **productivity losses** associated with permanent impairment, and staff-turnover costs (i.e. loss of skilled staff).

### The ILO approach

The ILO strategically monitors and responds to a **changing world of work**, characterized by **digitalisation, demographic shifts**, and a profound change in **working arrangements and environments**.

Leveraging the strength of the **international labour standards**, our unique tripartite structure, and the vehicle of **social dialogue**, the ILO promotes an **integrated approach** to the proactive prevention of all risks and hazards in the world of work, including **physical, biological, chemical, ergonomic and psychosocial hazards**, among many others. In recent years, the ILO has focused on addressing **environmental concerns and climate change**, using a **just transition approach to ensure safe and healthy workers, green jobs and resilient carbon neutral economies**. The global OSH threat posed by **hazardous substances, chemicals, heavy metals and e-waste** has further prompted the development of new research and development cooperation agendas to strengthen the **evidence base on toxic workplace exposures**.

The ILO has long been an advocate for an inclusive view of OSH, focusing on the **prevention of psychosocial risks** to promote mental health and well-being in the workplace. The ILO's work is closely aligned with the EU's Strategic Framework focus on **anticipating and managing change in the context of green, digital and demographic transitions**.



## The ILO response

To respond to the most pressing global OSH challenges, the ILO offers solutions based on:

- ▶ **Promotion, awareness raising and advocacy on OSH:** The fostering and promotion of a preventative safety and health culture is a fundamental basis for improving OSH performance in the long term. The ILO takes a leading advocacy role through different initiatives, including the [World Congress on Safety and Health](#).
- ▶ **Development and implementation of ILO OSH standards:** The adoption and promotion of OSH-related legal and policy instruments occupies a central place in our activities. In an ever-changing world of work, these [40+ OSH instruments](#) and [41+ Codes of Practice](#) address modern OSH challenges.
- ▶ **Technical assistance:** The ILO provides crucial technical advisory support to developing countries and countries in transition for the strengthening of their national OSH capacities, services and programmes. This is of particular importance in the context of rapid changes in the global economy, supply chains, digitisation and environmental concerns.
- ▶ **Knowledge development, management and dissemination:** The ILO continues to [develop, analyse and disseminate global OSH knowledge and data](#). This includes technical guidance, methodologies, accident and disease statistics, good practices, educational and

training tools, research on hazard and risk assessment data, in several languages and formats. Selected ILO resources include:

- ▶ [Nine Business Practices for Improving Safety and Health Through Supply Chains](#)
- ▶ [Improving occupational safety and health in the coffee supply chain. A toolkit for action](#)
- ▶ **Development cooperation:** [The ILO Safety + Health for All Programme](#), one of the five ILO flagship programmes, aims to improve the safety and health of workers particularly in low and middle-income countries and high-risk sectors, targeting recurrent and new OSH challenges, and workers in vulnerable conditions. Safety + Health for All mobilizes key stakeholders by building knowledge, creating conducive policy and legal frameworks, strengthening national capacities and promoting demand for safe and healthy workplaces. [Vision Zero Fund](#) is a central component of the programme.
- ▶ **Ensuring policy coherence at the international level:** The ILO collaborates with a number of international organizations and bodies involved in various activities related to OSH, including with WHO and other UN agencies. This has proven to be a very effective way of ensuring that ILO values and views are taken into account and used as a basis for the development of technical standards and methodologies pertaining to OSH.



## How we work to address challenges

The ILO offers expert technical guidance and comprehensive support to Member States in **the development, organisation and implementation of their OSH management systems, both at the national and workplace levels**, including the following key components:

Summary	ILO Data, Materials and Resources
<b>Support the development of national OSH policy and regulatory frameworks</b>	
<p>This includes laws and regulations, collective agreements, and any other relevant instruments on OSH and mechanisms for ensuring compliance with national laws and regulations. The changing world of work and various OSH crises have emphasized the need for OSH legislation which can adapt to unforeseen contexts and allow for rapid and appropriate responses, thus enabling the management of newly emerging OSH risks.</p>	<p>Selected resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#">Support Kit for Developing Occupational Safety and Health Legislation</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Anticipate, prepare and respond to crises – Invest now in resilient OSH systems</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">The Prevention of Occupational Diseases</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Safe and healthy working environments free from violence and harassment</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">All You Need to Know: Convention No. 170</a></li> </ul>
<b>Support the development of national OSH policy and regulatory frameworks</b>	
<p>This includes the authorities/bodies responsible for OSH, designated in accordance with national law and practice. The ILO assists its Member States in the development and continued support towards an OSH national tripartite advisory body in which all or most of the ministries, institutions and social partners involved are represented.</p>	<p>Some examples of initiatives in this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#">Act together to build a positive safety and health culture</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Anticipate, prepare and respond to crises: Invest now in resilient occupational safety and health systems</a></li> </ul>
<b>Support monitoring and implementing mechanisms to ensure compliance with national law</b>	
<p>The ILO assists Member States in developing mechanisms for ensuring <a href="#">compliance, including all actions taken to promote, monitor and enforce compliance with relevant OSH laws and regulations at the workplace</a>. A strong labour inspection system in place is a prerequisite for giving effect to OSH regulations, identifying cases of non-compliance, helping to rectify them, and preventing new cases.</p>	<p>Selected resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#">ILO Guidelines on General Principles of Labour Inspection</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Strategic Compliance Portal</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Labour Inspection Good Practices</a></li> </ul>
<b>Provide training</b>	
<p>The provision of OSH training is critical, also when responding to crises, as workers need to be trained on changing work arrangements and new procedures.</p>	<p>Selected training resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#">International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin) – Courses on Occupational Safety and Health</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">The SOLVE training package: Integrating health promotion into workplace OSH policies</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Training Package on Workplace Risk Assessment and Management for SMEs</a></li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen OSH management at the enterprise level</b>	
<p>The ILO assists Member States to promote, at the level of the undertaking, cooperation between management, workers and their representatives as an essential element of workplace-related prevention measures and support mechanisms for a progressive improvement of OSH conditions in micro-enterprises, SMEs and in the informal economy. Social dialogue is essential to create a safety culture in which workers are engaged and participate in finding solutions for mitigating risk.</p>	<p><a href="#">More info</a></p>

## Examples of ILO interventions

Projects	Countries	Duration	Partners	Activities and Results
<b>Vision Zero Fund</b>	Global, Ethiopia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Honduras, Madagascar, Colombia, Mexico and Myanmar	Active since 2016 (current strategy 2019-2023)	EU, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, UK, USA, Siemens and Nike	The Fund mobilizes relevant stakeholders on targeted global supply chains (agriculture, garment, construction) to act collectively to address the underlying root-causes of workplace accidents, injuries and diseases. ( <a href="#">Details</a> ) Since 2016, the work of the Fund benefited 7,1 million of the world's most vulnerable workers.
<b>Improving safety and health of workers in the textile and construction sectors in Madagascar, a Vision Zero Fund project</b>	Madagascar	2018-September 2022	France, BMAS	The project improved OSH in the lychee supply chain and is currently making similar strides in the textile and construction supply chains. It has a strong focus on social dialogue and labour inspection. ( <a href="#">Details</a> )
<b>Improving OSH in the coffee supply chain, a Vision Zero Fund project</b>	Mexico, Colombia, Honduras and Vietnam	2019-2022 2020-2023	EU, BMZ	The project seeks to reduce the exposure to OSH hazards of workers coffee cultivation and processing. Actions were developed through sectoral social dialogue and include south-south cooperation and learning between countries. (Details: <a href="#">Latin America</a> , <a href="#">Vietnam</a> )
<b>Upholding sustainable delivery mechanisms to promote OSH in SMEs</b>	Global, Cameroon, Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Tunisia, Mozambique and Zambia	2018-2021	Republic of Korea	This project took stock of experiences and initiatives to improve OSH in SMEs. The ILO empowered and supported entrepreneurs, managers, workers and/or farmers to strengthen OSH, working conditions and productivity. The project developed a <a href="#">report</a> , a collection of <a href="#">five case studies</a> and a how-to guide, which was piloted in Mozambique and Zambia. ( <a href="#">Details</a> )
<b>Implementation of the GHS, preventing chemical accidents and strengthening OSH, a joint ILO-UNITAR project</b>	Global, Lebanon	2021-2022	German Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	This project aims to strengthen OSH with regard to chemicals management, while promoting the prevention of major industrial accidents. This includes a recent publication on <a href="#">GHS in the world of work</a> . It also includes a national component in Lebanon, which aims to strengthen regulatory frameworks and stakeholder capacity on OSH, chemical safety and the prevention of major industrial accidents. ( <a href="#">Details</a> )
<b>Enhancing the role and engagement of the world of work actors in international chemicals management</b>	Global	2019-2021	German Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	This project seeks to enhance the role and engagement of the labour sector and its stakeholders in the Strategic approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. This project supported promotion and ratification of ILO Conventions and ILO Codes of Practice, and developed tools on chemical safety. ( <a href="#">Details</a> )

### Contact details

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