



Initiative Trainers Brave Cyclone to Share Experiences

More than 45 people battled bad weather – a cyclone that killed several dozen people in neighboring India – to come together on Saturday, May 4th in Dhaka to share experiences and materials they have used to conduct community-level workshops on occupational health and safety (OHS).



All participants in the May 4th Trainers Network Meeting

The participants in the Trainers Network Meeting, hosted by the OHS Initiative for Workers and Community, included most of the 59 worker educators that have passed through the 20-day “train-the-trainer” (ToT) activities organized by the Initiative in 2017 and 2018. The trainers were nominated by the six founding organizations of the Initiative (see page 2) to gain knowledge of fundamental OHS concepts and the teaching skills needed to pass this information on to workers and community members in working class neighborhoods in the Dhaka region.

Eight trainers opened the four-hour network meeting by describing their successes and challenges imparting OHS information to workers in garment and other industrial sectors, as well as to community members. Then five small groups were formed to collectively discuss how to improve the community workshops, what teaching materials work best, and how the Initiative office can assist trainers in carrying out effective and engaging

OHS workshops. The five groups reported on their conclusions to the entire assembly to draw out the lessons learned from two years of activity.

Among the challenges the trainers reported were:

- Limited free time for workshop participants who work six days a week and have family business to conduct on their single day off;
- Finding known, accessible venues for the community workshops;
- Developing accessible, informative materials for participants with limited (if any) formal education; and
- Funding transportation and food for workshop participants who are very poorly paid, with near-zero disposable income.

Despite these challenges, the Network trainers noted many successes: a high level of interest among workers and community members for OHS information; the development in previous network meetings of better OHS materials, more easily understood by workers; the use of social media (YouTube videos and Facebook groups) particularly by younger workers who use their phones to reach the internet; a greater awareness and understanding of workers’ legal rights; and their ability to conduct effective OHS workshops.

A proposal emerged from discussion to establish closer links among Initiative-trained worker educators and to facilitate joint workshops led by two or more “co-trainers”. Trainers also requested additional refresher trainings and network meetings to maximize the impact of the Initiative program.



Initiative trainers small group work at the May Trainers Network Meeting

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Member organizations of the OHS Initiative

The OHS Initiative for Workers and Community consists of six Bangladeshi non-governmental organizations. These organizations each have one representative on the Initiative's Governing Board and the California Collaborative has a seventh seat on the Board. The Initiative's member organizations are:

Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS) is one of the country's most prominent labor rights groups. Former garment workers founded BCWS in 2001 to improve working conditions and promote workers' rights by building the capacity of workers to advocate for themselves, and providing services such as labor rights education, leadership training and legal aid.

Bangladesh Institute for Labour Studies (BILS) provides research and information on labor laws and economic issues to unions and worker organizations in a variety of industrial sectors. BILS is widely respected among labor groups and works in an ecumenical fashion with all sectors of the fractured labor movement in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) is a leading OHS non-governmental organization that conducts training, research, policy advocacy and support services for workers in the garment and shipbreaking industries, among other economic sectors.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK) is a public health organization with clinics and hospitals serving Bangladesh's poor, including workers in many industries. GK's health facilities in Dhaka and Savar have also treated Rana Plaza collapse survivors and their families, as well as injured workers in numerous other industries.

IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) is made up of more than 20 trade unions in the garment, chemical and metalworking industries, including a dozen unions in the garment industry. The IBC is the national council of unions affiliated with the Geneva-based IndustriALL Global Union.

Naripokkho is a women's organization that provides information, training and support on gender issues for women workers on topics such as domestic violence and social discrimination. Naripokkho works with garment workers and their families in the Savar industrial area of Dhaka, including survivors of the Rana Plaza building collapse.



Role of the California Collaborative

The California Collaborative, formed in 2015 to support the creation of the OHS Initiative, consists of four OHS organizations in the state of California: Hesperian Health Guides in Berkeley; Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at the University of California at Berkeley; Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) program at the University of California at Los Angeles; and the Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN) in Berkeley.

The California Collaborative has fundraised for the first three years of the Initiative's operations, and will continue to offer limited support. The project is currently transitioning to become self-sustaining.

The Collaborative has worked with the staff and Governing Board of the Initiative, as requested, to provide technical assistance on both OHS and pedagogical issues, and to provide appropriate curriculum and teaching materials. The Collaborative has also collected and posted a web page of Bangla-language materials on occupational health and safety.

In addition, the MHSSN hosts periodic conference calls for OHS professionals in North America to report on OHS issues in Bangladesh, covering activities of the OHS Initiative as well as other national and international efforts to improve workplace safety and health in Bangladesh.

The first two groups of Initiative trainers have conducted more than 200 community-level workshops, reaching 2,240 workers from 112 factories, with 74% of workshop participants being women. Over 90% of the workshop participants have been under 35 years of age.

Initiative activities have led to the organization of legally recognized unions at two garment factories, the integration of OHS activities into each of the six partner organizations' ongoing work, and increased interest from Initiative trainers themselves to deepen their understanding and knowledge of OHS.

Initiative Coordinator Masud Parvez reported on efforts of the Initiative staff and Governing Board to raise additional funds to support the community-level workshops, the development of new materials for workshops to be printed in June, and the anticipated schedule of refresher trainings and network meetings following the ToT for the third batch of Initiative trainers that will occur from June to August.

Governing Board members Repon Chowdhury and Garrett Brown attended and spoke at the network meeting. Chowdhury is the Board Secretary and Executive Director of the OSHE Foundation in Dhaka. Brown is Coordinator of the California Collaborative, four OHS organizations in California (see page 2) that have raised funds and provided technical support for the Initiative. Both Board members saluted the work of the staff and pledged continued support for the trainers' impressive work at the community level.



Trainer shares her community-level workshop experiences at the May Trainers Network Meeting

OHS Initiative takes to social media!



A YouTube video makes available to all a session on trade unions led by BILS as part of the 2018 Training-of-Trainers course.

YouTube The OHS Initiative has produced and posted 19 short documentary videos on YouTube, now available online worldwide. The Initiative launched the YouTube page in May 2018 and more than 575 people visited the on-line site in the first four months. The videos contain sections of the trainers' presentations and recommendations, as well as the participants' activities and feedback. Watch the videos by typing "OHS Initiative for Workers and Community" in the YouTube search engine.

f A closed Facebook group for participants in the Initiative's two 20-day Training-of-Trainers courses was established to connect and support the ToT participants' efforts to prepare and conduct their own grassroots-level OHS workshops. Initiative staff post information, materials, and encouragement for the course graduates' follow-up trainings, and all participants are able to learn from the experiences of their fellow worker educators.

Third group of worker educators enters “Training of Trainers” program

The six partner organizations of the Initiative have proposed their nominees for the third group of trainers to undergo the 20-day “Train-the-Trainer” (ToT) program on occupational health and safety topics. The 30 members of the “third batch” will attend the initial 5-day residential on June 22-27th, to be followed by 15 one-day sessions spread throughout July and August 2019.

The ToT will feature many of the instructors from the first two rounds, including officials from the Ministry of Labour’s Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishment (DIFE); retired leaders of the national fire service; OHS experts from local universities; and experts from the partner organizations themselves. A field trip to practice inspection and hazard recognition skills in a functioning garment factory will also be organized.

The targets for 2019 activities are to complete the goals of the first three years of the OHS Initiative – to recruit, train and support at least 75 OHS trainers from the six partner organizations; and to conduct community-level workshops with 6,000 workers and community members on key OHS topics. Moreover, all three trainer groups will receive “refresher trainings” and hold Networking meetings to help them prepare further rounds of community workshops.

The first two years of the Initiative have yielded 54 trainers (five trainers dropped out due to job changes and related issues) who have conducted more than 200



Trainer reports on her small group’s discussion on how to make community-level OHS workshops more effective

community workshops with 2,240 workers (primarily garment workers) from 112 factories in the Dhaka area.

The Initiative is planning on expanding its work with the legally-required factory health and safety and gender committees by working closely with committee members in at least 10 factories in 2019.

In addition, the Initiative will conduct one-day seminars on “Gender and OHS” and “Youth and OHS” to highlight the impact of adverse working conditions on young and women workers. And responding to workers’ requests, a one-day training on OHS and leadership skills will be held with 75 women worker leaders.

Calendar of 2019 Activities

January – “Youth and OHS” one-day workshop

May – Governing Board meeting

May – Trainers Network Meeting

June – Expert Committee meets to review curriculum

June – 5-day residential “Train-the-Trainer” program to initiate the third trainers group

July-August – 15 one-day trainings to complete the 20-day ToT

August – Governing Board meeting

September – Trainers Network Meeting

October – Women Worker’s Leadership workshop

October-November – Community level trainings with workers

November – Seminar on Gender and OHS

November – Seminar on Youth and OHS

November – Refresher Training for the three groups of Initiative trainers

December – Three-year project evaluation

December – Governing Board meeting

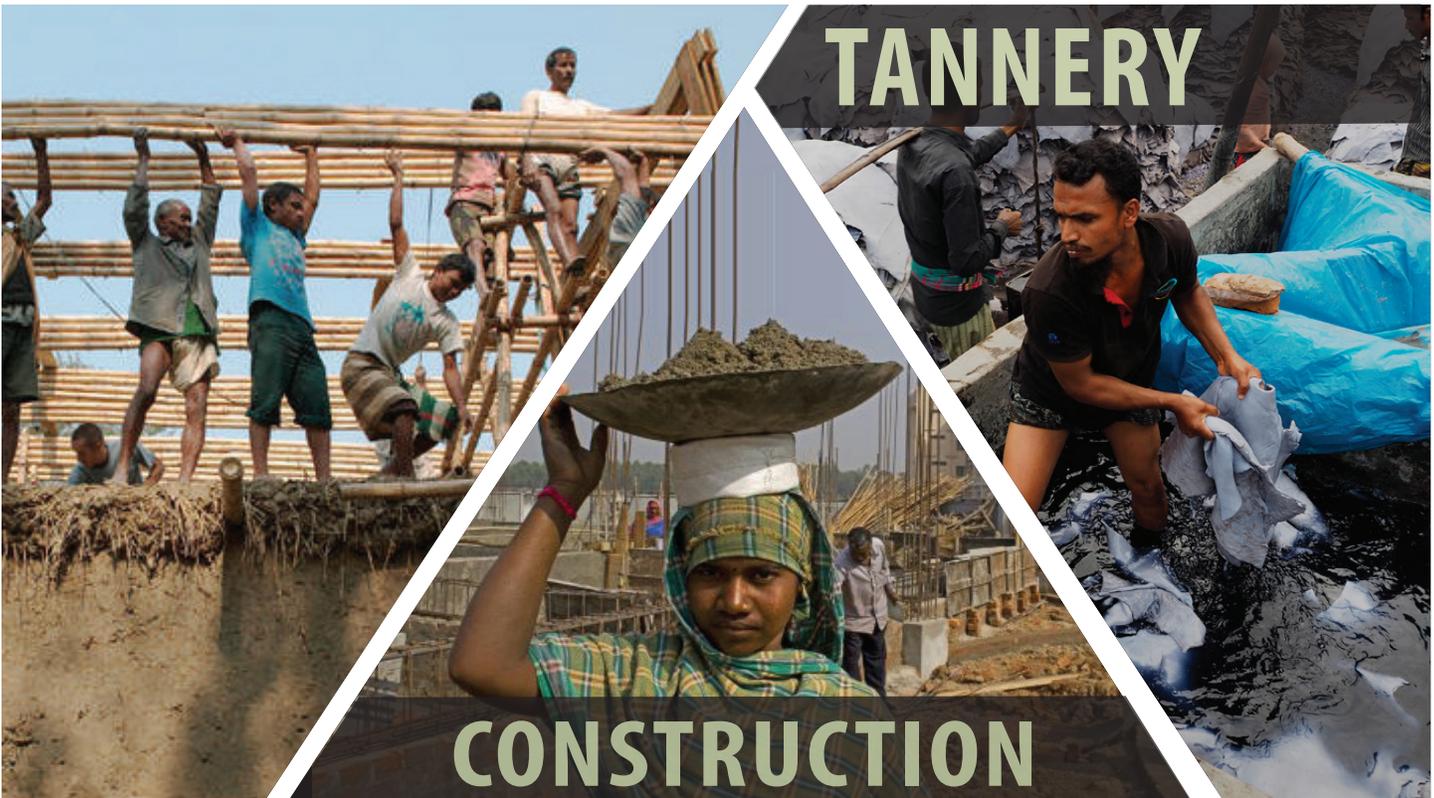


SHIP-BREAKING

GARMMENT

CONSTRUCTION

These workers in Bangladesh need the OHS Initiative for Workers and Community!



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Finances for Year Three

The first three years of the OHS Initiative have been funded by donations from OHS professional associations, individual OHS professionals, and labor and human rights organizations. Budgets for the three years were USD \$54,000, \$77,000 and \$93,000 respectively, totaling almost a quarter-million dollars.

- **Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (UK)**
– three years
- **LUSH Charity Pot (Canada)** – three years
- **San Francisco Donors Group (US)** – three years
- **Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network (US)**
v– three years
- **American Industrial Hygiene Association (US)** – two years
- **World Solidarity Movement (Belgium)** – two years
- **GlobalWorks Foundation (US)** – two years
- **C&A Foundation (EU)**
- **National Fire Protection Association (US)**
- **Numerous individual OHS professionals**

The Governing Board of the OHS Initiative is now investigating funding for 2020 and looking to increase contributions from sources inside as well as outside Bangladesh as a means of becoming self-sustaining.

“ This is an important project as it’s designed to help build capacity within Bangladeshi communities. Once trainers are trained, they will be able to provide training to many, thereby raising awareness of health and safety more widely. IOSH is very pleased to be involved and we’re delighted that the project has made such a positive start. ”

– *Richard Jones*

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