

Border/Line Health & Safety

NEWSLETTER OF THE MAQUILADORA HEALTH & SAFETY SUPPORT NETWORK

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ANROAV Conference Sets Asian OHS Agenda

The 150 delegates to the annual conference of the Asia Network for the Rights of Occupational Accident Victims (ANROAV) in Bandung, Indonesia, adopted a comprehensive declaration (see box) on October 20th calling for improved working conditions in job sites all across Asia.

ANROAV is a network of more than 20 injured workers' groups, trade unions, community and labor rights groups in 14 Asian countries, as well as affiliate members in Europe and the United States. The network was formed in 1997 following the catastrophic Kader and Zhili factory fires in Thailand and China that killed and injured hundreds of workers.

Annual conferences are held to share experiences, resources and expertise among ANROAV member groups, and to coordinate joint campaigns. Immediately preceding the ANROAV conference, an Indonesian "Ban Asbestos" organization was launched as part of a global network of groups working to eliminate the use of cancer-causing asbestos.

In addition to plenary sessions, three "skills share" workshops were conducted during the three-day event, including courses on lung diseases, victims organizing, and health hazards in the global electronics industry.

The electronics hazards workshop was led by Robin Dewey and Laura Stock of the Labor

(See **ANROAV Conference**, page 3)

Dr. Kong, SHARPS Win Award, Tour California

The largest awards luncheon ever of the Occupational Health and Safety Section of the American Public Health Association gave Dr. Jeong-ok Kong a standing ovation when she received the organization's International Health & Safety Award on November 9th at its annual convention in Denver.

Dr. Kong, an occupational physician in Korea, is a leader of SHARPS – Supporters for the Health and Rights of People in the Semiconductor Industry – a network of unions, human rights organizations, progressive political activists, and occupational health professionals. Dr. Kong is also an executive committee member of the Korean Institute for Labor Safety and Health (KILSH).

SHARPS, formed in November 2007, has been waging a valiant campaign to publicize a cluster of cancers among young, mostly

women, workers at Samsung's many electronics facilities in Korea. At least 80 Samsung workers have contracted cancer over the last five years, and 30 have already died of leukemia, lung, brain and other cancers. Many of the stricken workers were in their early 20s and the oldest known cancer fatality was 43 at the time of his death.

The Samsung cancers are very reminiscent of cancer clusters among electronics workers in California's Silicon Valley (such as the famous IBM "corporate mortality file"), and cancers among semiconductor workers in Scotland.

Dr. Kong and her organization have organized the ill workers and the families of the deceased to bring these workplace illnesses to public attention, to demand that the Korean

(See **Dr. Kong**, page 5)

Letter from the Coordinator

Rarely do workplace health and safety stories get the kind of attention that the October rescue of the 33 Chilean miners after more than two months underground received, and it was a stirring story:

- The 33 miners who organized themselves to survive for 17 days before they were discovered alive, and then another 52 days underground, through their own determination, ingenuity, collective effort and solidarity;
- The non-stop rescue efforts of the government, backed by international cooperation, which showed what governments can do when they have the political will and resources to put human needs first and foremost.

The 69 days underground was a life-altering experience for the miners, and an example for the rest of us that working people can organize themselves for collective benefit, and the power of the old slogan “one for all and all for one.”

But, as always, the “back story” to this happy narrative was at least as important and hardly reported. Just now we are learning a few things that put into context the “Chilean miracle” and its meaning:

- the “crew boss” (equivalent to a “lead man” in the US) who was widely credited for organizing his crew to survive is a socialist and his father was killed by the US-supported dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet;
- the brother of the current president (billionaire Sebastian Piñera) was Pinochet’s labor minister and responsible for privatizing the San José mine and effectively eliminating both unions and health and safety regulations throughout Chilean mining and other industries;
- the San José mine was closed for major safety violations in 2007 but quickly reopened without verification of hazard corrections. The mine had received at least 42 notices of safety violations and three miners were killed in the last six years;
- on July 30th, a Labor Department report warned again of “serious safety deficiencies” at the mine, but no action was taken. Six days later a roof collapse trapped the miners in a tunnel with no exit deep underground.

Alas, it is not only Chile that has allowed miners to work in unsafe mines. In 2010, 70 Ugandan gold miners were killed in a roof collapse and more than 60 Colombian coal miners died in a gas explosion. At least 66 miners died in underground blasts at the Raspadskaya mine in Russia earlier this year. Twenty-nine miners have just died in a New Zealand mine.

Just days after the rescue in Chile, 37 coal miners in China were killed in the same mine were 23 miners died in a similar explosion two years ago. Last year 2,600 miners in China were officially recognized as dying on the job – a statistic widely believed to undercount the death toll by at least 50%.

The fatalities in mine accidents also do not even address the thousands of miners around the world who die agonizing deaths suffocating from Black Lung, silicosis and other occupational diseases. The environmental destruction of the

communities where miners and their families live is also often invisible.

The United States is also a player in this shameful parade with the death of 29 miners in Massey Energy coal mine in Upper Big Branch, WV, this year as well as the deaths of 21 miners in the Crandall Canyon, UT, and Sago, WV, major mine disasters in 2007 and 2006. At least three other Massey Energy miners have been killed on the job this year since the Upper Big Branch disaster.

What connects all these deaths is a multi-strand thread of corporate greed and recklessness, government corruption and failure to enforce, and the lack of unions and the inability of miners to protect themselves on the job.

Mining companies, especially transnational corporations, have tremendous economic power, and therefore political influence and power. They set the terms and conditions of employment which individual, impoverished miners have no choice but to accept. They ignore, corrupt or intimidate government inspectors. They buy, or simply lease, politicians at all levels to prevent workplace and environmental regulation and protections.

It’s only when a global spotlight is held on events like those in Chile that the outlines of the background stories begin to emerge. It is moments like these when those of us concerned about workers’ health and safety have a chance to push for real, long-lasting changes in the way the world’s mines actually operate.

When the last miner reached the surface in Chile, President Piñera declared: “Never again in our country will we permit people to work in conditions so unsafe and inhuman as they worked in the San José mine, and in many other places in our country.”

We’ll have to see if his actions match his words, but let’s also demand that the presidents of all other mining countries in the world (including ours) make, and implement, the same pledge. ■

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(ANROAV Conference, from page 1)

Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at UC Berkeley, with an assist from Ted Smith of the International Campaign for Responsible Technology (ICRT) and MHSSN coordinator Garrett Brown. The 25-plus participants in the two-day workshop represented organizations in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States.

Plenary sessions were devoted to reports from ANROAV member organizations on national OHS issues and activities; and reports on key ANROAV campaigns around asbestos, silicosis, cadmium poisoning of Gold Peak battery workers in China, and cancers among Samsung workers in Korea. Gerhard Elsigan from the European

Work Hazards Network and Dr. Ramin Mehrdad of Iran also spoke about OSH issues and activities in their countries.

Twelve people from the United States attended the conference, representing the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), the Hesperian Foundation, the Developing World Outreach Initiative (DWOI) of the Northern California Section of the American Industrial Hygiene Association, LOHP, ICRT and the MHSSN. Independent journalist Elizabeth Grossman also attended.

David Hornung of DWOI in California gave the joint report from the US delegation. Hornung focused on recent workplace disasters (such as the Deepwater Horizon oil rig and the Upper Big Branch coal mine) that dem-

onstrate ongoing hazards in US workplaces, and the efforts of the revitalized Federal OSHA agency to address long-neglected issues.

At the Bandung meeting, the network also decided to change the organization's name to reflect the increasing overlap between occupational and environmental health risks. The organization is now ANROAEV – the Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims.

The 2011 ANROAEV conference will be held in India, likely in November, and a special effort will be made to have sizeable delegations from Europe and the United States to establish a truly global network grassroots OHS activists in Asia, Europe and the US. ■

Bandung Declaration on Occupational Safety and Health in Asia ANROAV Annual Conference Bandung, Indonesia October 17 to 20, 2010

We the participants of the 15th ANROAV conference, recognize the significance of the historic city of Bandung that upheld the principles of independence, freedom, sovereignty and dignity of people in the Asia Africa meeting to form the Non Aligned Nations 55 years ago. Asia has now taken centre stage of the global industrial production. The Asian region also suffers from the highest rates of industrial accidents, diseases and deaths with more than a million people dying every year due to work related reasons. This massacre of workers is an insult to the human rights framework that was soul of the Bandung declaration in 1955. Therefore in the spirit of the Bandung declaration, we the members of the ANROAV network pledge to work individually and collectively to: To take and support actions to develop 'good work': work that is safe, meaningful, socially just and environmentally sustainable; work that enables workers to develop skills and knowledge and have a reasonable life/ work balance; work where workers are treated with dignity and respect. To achieve this we will work and urge our governments to:

- Acknowledge the magnitude of the problem, when more than a million workers are dying every year in Asia and millions more are getting sick or injured;
- Act urgently, decisively and in good faith by making occupational safety and health (OSH) a priority policy issue. This should include the requirement of reporting all cases of occupational deaths and diseases in the respective countries. ILO Convention 155 should be ratified by all the governments in the region;
- Recognize that health and safety at the workplace is a fundamental human right of workers and that existing problems are due to the institutional failures and denial of these fundamental rights not because of the 'carelessness of the workers' which is often promoted by the corporate sector; Actively promote legislation and enforcement of laws to protect all workers irrespective of their legal status, especially the undocumented, informal and migrant workers and resist the attempts to weaken the existing laws and agreements which protect workers;
- Recognize that workers and their organizations have to crucial role in implementation of the better health and safety at the workplace Organized and unionized workplaces are safe workplaces and efforts are made to protect the freedom of association at the workplaces;
- Ensure that injured and sick workers receive prompt and immediate treatment, just compensation and rehabilitation within a reasonable timeframe. The whole process should be simplified to ensure that victims are not further penalized by unwarranted delays;

(See **Bandung Declaration**, page 5)



David Hornung gives the report about OHS activities in the United States to the plenary session.



Part of the 150 conference participants from 10 Asian countries.

**ANROAV Conference
in Bandung, Indonesia,
October 18–20, 2010**



LOHP staffers Robin Dewey and Laura Stock with Hesperian Foundation staff member Miriam Lara. Journalist Elizabeth Grossman is seated behind Lara.



Chinese OHS activists in a “skills share” workshop use stickers to indicate body parts adversely affected by chemicals in the electronics industry.

(Bandung Declaration, from page 3)

- Ensure the proper diagnosis of occupational diseases by providing sufficient diagnostic clinics and specialists that are independent, transparent, and accountable;
- Recognize that certain sections of the population are more vulnerable to the hazards at the workplace, due to their social exclusion and unequal status in the society. Special attention should be paid to protect these workers that include undocumented workers, migrants, women, and people of color and minorities to protect them and uphold their dignity;
- Establish a legal framework which holds companies, brands and individual directors accountable for the criminal negligence leading to death, injury and exposure to disease of workers and citizens in any country. Companies should be also held accountable for the actions of their subsidiaries and sub-contractors;
- Ensure that victims and their organizations are included in the decision making processes related to OSH policy. We also affirm that we will:
- Develop solidarity with working people throughout the world to resist the transfer of risk from one country to another, with a major goal being a global ban on asbestos; make efforts to hold the global electronics industry responsible for the harm caused by unsafe working conditions and continue our efforts to ensure that the industry cleans up the whole supply chain;
- Develop an active and democratically operating global network of health and safety activists where the unique and diverse organizing initiatives in different countries are respected and supported.

Stop the Massacre of Workers in Asia NOW!

(Dr. Kong, from page 1)

government and Samsung provide compensation to the ill workers and their survivors, and that Samsung take immediate measures to control and then eliminate worker exposures to carcinogenic agents (chemicals, radiation) in its electronics facilities.

SHARPS has initiated an international petition campaign directed at Samsung and the Korean government (<http://www.gopetition.com/petition/40246.html>). There is also a “causes” Facebook page (<http://www.causes.com/causes/546307-samsung-accountability-campaign>), and the campaign has a website at <http://stopsamsung.wordpress.com>.

The current issue of Ms. magazine has an article on the cancers in Korean electronics (<http://www.ms magazine.com/Fall2010/index.asp>). The English-language Korean magazine “The Hankyoreh” has run several key articles about the cancers at Samsung and the SHARPS campaign (see <http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/ENGISSUE/74/430105.html> and http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/421106.html).

Accompanying Dr. Kong to the

United States were two other activists in SHARPS – Sukkoun Lee and Anseok Jang. The three toured the San Francisco Bay Area after the APHA conference speaking at area universities and public health organizations.

The trio had speaking engagements at Santa Clara University in Silicon Valley, the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) School of Nursing, as well as the Elihu Harris State Office Building in Oakland, and the Hesperian Foundation offices in Berkeley. The Korean activists met with the staffs of the Hesperian Foundation and the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at UC Berkeley to discuss future areas of collaboration.

Dr. Kong had several media interviews, including with the San Jose Mercury News, KGNU radio in Boulder, CO, and KPFA radio in Berkeley. An article on Dr. Kong’s award and the California tour also appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle.

SHARPS is continuing its public education efforts around workplace illnesses and deaths at Samsung and is very



Dr. Kong receives her award at APHA.

interested in collaborating with occupational health professionals in the United States in support of workers throughout the global electronics industry. Anyone interested in more information, please contact Ted Smith of the International Campaign for Responsible Technology (ICRT) at tsmith@igc.org. ■

Fruitful Partnership with AIHA's DWOI

Members of our network were among the founders of the "Developing World Outreach Initiative" (DWOI) of the Northern California Section of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) in the spring of 2006. Since then the DWOI has gained national recognition within AIHA as well as becoming a vibrant, ongoing committee of the San Francisco Bay Area local AIHA section.

This year has been a particularly fruitful year of collaboration between DWOI and the MHSSN. In 2010, the organizations jointly funded scholarships to send 10 grassroots activists – two in Indonesia, two in India and six in China – to professional OHS courses in Asia put on by the Golder Associates consulting firm and the China Training Institute of the US-based Business for Social Responsibility (BSR).

The goal of the scholarships is to build the capacity of the participants and their organizations to understand, use, and explain to others, key concepts in hazard recognition, risk assessment, control of hazards, and effective worker training and worker participation in workplace health and safety committees.

Both Golder and BSR generously have provided 50% discounts – "two for the price of one" – for the NGO participants in their courses. Since 2008, 20 grassroots activists have received scholarships to attend professional OHS courses in Asia.

Also in 2010, DWOI and MHSSN funded an OHS course for 30 chemical workers – both permanent employees and contract workers – in India to be put on in December by the People's Training and Resource Centre in Gujarat led by Jagdish Patel.

In all, more than \$1,700 in scholarships were provided this year, with DWOI contributing \$200 and the MHSSN and the International Affairs Committee (IAC) of the national AIHA matching each other's \$750 grants, or \$1,500 together. The IAC has proposed to national AIHA the

renewal of matching grant funds for 2011.

Photos of the scholarship recipients and comments from them on the usefulness of the OHS course are posted on the DWOI's webpage on the Northern California local section's website: <http://www.aiha-ncs.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=20>.

In 2010, MHSSN members also contributed "sweat equity" in a DWOI project to send OHS reference and resource books to NGOs on the African continent. The process includes collecting books from AIHA members, sorting and cataloguing them, and then shipping them in response to request for specific books. During this year, five shipments were sent to Kenya, Nigeria, Singapore and Zambia. Since DWOI's founding, book shipments have been sent to 14 universities and NGOs in nine countries. In addition a shipment to a Nigerian university of industrial hygiene equipment donated by the SKC company was facilitated by the DWOI.

DWOI and MHSSN have also collaborated since 2008 to sponsor two "International Affiliate" memberships in

the AIHA a year for the leaders of the Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC) and the Asia Network for the Rights of Occupational Accident Victims (ANROAV).

For more information on DWOI activities – and how to establish a similar effort in the AIHA section in your area – contact DWOI coordinator Richard Hirsh at: RHirsh@nektar.com. ■

Selected New Articles and Reports on Website

- A list of selected articles and reports from August to November 2010 on global working conditions has been posted on the website at: <http://mhssn.igc.org/ListReports2010.htm>
- Additionally, a list of articles and reports on the global electronics industry is also posted in the "New Postings" section of the website. <http://mhssn.igc.org/ListReports.htm>



MHSSN Participates in Mexico City Labor Conference

Network coordinator Garrett Brown was invited to participate in the second US-Mexico conference on labor issues hosted by the Labor Center at UCLA and the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Iztapalapa, in Mexico City in September 2010. A host of officials and activists from US and Mexican labor unions, universities and non-government organizations (NGOs) attended the two-day event.

Brown spoke about the network's 17 years' worth of work on the US-Mexico border and projects in the interior of the country. Also present at the conference

were previous partners in binational projects, including Genaro Artega Trejo of the Mexican Miners union and David Campbell of United Steel Workers (USW) union Local 675, with whom we worked in the 2007 health survey of copper miners in Cananea, Mexico.

Other speakers at the event were Blanca Velázquez Díaz of the grassroots CAT (Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador, AC) organization in Puebla, María Teresa Cortes of Oxfam Mexico, and Alejandra Ancheita of the ProDESC (Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales, AC) based in

Mexico City.

Velázquez of CAT spoke at the successful efforts by workers at a Johnson Controls plant in Puebla, Mexico, to establish a member-selected and controlled union (a local section of the Mexican Miners union).

Anchieta of ProDESC spoke about the efforts of indigenous gold miners to establish a local section of the Mexican Miners union that would respect indigenous culture, be democratic in internal functioning, and would protect the local environment as well as the economic interests of its

(See **Mexico City Conference**, page 8)

NETWORKING NOTES

- Network coordinator Garrett Brown gave a presentation November 10th at a special session on the impact of international trade agreements on workplace health and safety at the American Public Health Association (APHA) annual conference in Denver, CO. Brown spoke with four other leaders of the APHA's "Trade and Health Forum" which studies and documents the adverse impact of trade treaties of numerous aspects of public health.
- The 2012 summer Olympic games will be held in London and workers around the world will be involved in preparations – from textile workers stitching footballs to immigrant construction workers building the arenas. Groups in the UK, including the Trade Union Congress and Labour Behind the Label, are working to prevent the serious labor rights abuses uncovered in the run up to the Olympic games in Sydney in 2000, Athens in 2004 and Beijing in 2008. The international "Playfair Campaign" first met with Olympic officials in 2004 about poverty wages, child labor, forced overtime and anti-union firings among suppliers of equipment, sports shoes, uniforms, clothing and toys, but little has been done to end these abuses. More information on the "Playfair 2010" effort is available at www.playfair2012.org.uk.
- Electronic workers at Foxconn plants in India have been engaged in several battles against the giant Taiwan-based supplier of most of the world's electronics retailers including Apple, Dell, HP and Nokia. In July, several dozen workers at mobile telephone parts were sickened in what the company called a "routine pesticide spraying," and workers say was a gas leak. In September hundreds of workers conducted sit-down strikes to gain recognition – as yet unachieved – of a member-selected and controlled trade union. Twenty-three workers were fired by Foxconn at that plant. In October, 12 workers have been imprisoned at plants producing for Foxconn and Nokia after industrial actions to secure a union and better working conditions. Efforts to support the Foxconn workers in India are being publicized by the International Metalworkers Federation, with info available at www.imfmetal.org.
- Garment workers in Bangladesh have waged a campaign this fall to raise their starvation wages in plants producing for well-known US and European clothing retailers. For their efforts, the Bangladeshi government and major corporations have cracked down on union leaders and labor rights non-governmental organizations. Leaders of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity were detained and still have criminal charges pending against them, while other worker leaders have suffered harassment, arrest and torture while in custody. Two members of the US Congress joined three labor rights groups in sending a September letter to six major clothing retailers – Wal-Mart, JC Penney, Cintas, VF, H&M and Sears/Kmart – asking them to intervene with their contract suppliers and the Bangladeshi government. More information is available at www.laborrights.org, www.workersrights.org and www.maquilasolidarity.org.
- Garment workers in Cambodia have also been waging a campaign to improve their wages from US\$61 a month to US\$93 a month in plants producing for popular US and European clothing retailers. In September, more than 200,000 garment workers in 100 plants struck for higher wages. In response, 17 factories suspended hundreds of workers and 13 factories actually filed legal claims against the workers for "lost profits." Labor rights groups around the world are mobilizing to support the Cambodian garment workers and their unions, and more information is available at www.maquilasolidarity.org.

(Mexico City Conference, from page 9)
members at the Canadian-owned Goldcorp Inc. mine in Guerrero state.

Brown conducted preliminary discussions with the leaders of CAT and ProDESC to explore the possibility of a series of workshops on workplace health and safety in Mexico that would involve participants from CAT, ProDESC, the

Mexican Miners union, the USW and the UC Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP).

If adequate funding could be obtained, this could be a major project for our Network in 2011. Interested network members should contact coordinator Garrett Brown at garrettdbrown@comcast.net for details. ■

Our Network in Print and on the Web

Network coordinator Garrett Brown published articles in three occupational safety and health trade publications this fall. The articles can be found on the web as follows:

- “Global Electronics Factories in Spotlight” posted on August 4, 2010, on the website of the Occupational Health & Safety magazine: http://ohsonline.com/articles/2010/08/04/global-electronics-factories-in-spotlight.aspx?sc_lang=en
- “Fashion Kills: Industrial Manslaughter in the Global Supply Chain” published in the September 2010 issue of EHS Today magazine: http://mhssn.igc.org/EHSToday_FashionKills_Sept2010.pdf
- “More than an ad campaign: ‘No Sweat’ in the Dominican Republic,” published in the October 2010 issue of Industrial Safety and Hygiene News magazine: http://www.ishn.com/Articles/Feature_Article/BNP_GUID_9-5-2006_A_1000000000000918126



Quotes of the Month

“Our countries deny us the opportunity for economic development.” The [Central American] demonstrators said in a written statement, after marching through the city with covered faces. “But Mexico denies us the opportunity to live”... Simply put: It’s wrong that people have to undertake the journey to the U.S. in the first place. People shouldn’t have to leave the land of their ancestors, their extended families, their barrios and their farms. They leave because the promise of democracy in Mexico and Central America remains unfulfilled. The Tamaulipas murders [of 72 Central American migrants] are really just the most sickening expression of a vast system of inequality and corruption that still defines life for millions of people.”

— Hector Tobar, “Where’s the outrage over immigrant slayings in Mexico?”, Los Angeles Times, September 9, 2010.

“Low pay, and long hours are common in workshops but some also use bonded or prison labour, ban collective bargaining, threaten and harass workers and force women to undergo pregnancy testing. ‘Less productive’ workers face the sack. A decade after some shoppers boycotted Nike over the issue, the leading players in the 134 billion pound-a-year global sportswear industry seek to protect their reputations against allegations they profit from sweated labour by inspecting factories and blacklisting the worst. However, their own reports show they have had only partial success in cleaning up the industry, and that they continue to out-source production to countries where trade unions are banned or restricted.”

— Martin Hickman, “Blood, sweat and tears: the truth about how your sportswear is made,” The Independent (London), October 1, 2010.