

First round of trainings begin!

The OHS Initiative launched its “training of trainers” program with a five-day course on effective training techniques and basic occupational health and safety concepts in September. Twenty-nine participants – 15 women – from five organizations attended classes held at the training center of the public health organization Gonoshasthya Kendra in Savar, just outside Dhaka.



Participants in the Bangladesh OHS Initiative’s first “Train the Trainer” course.

Instructors for the residential program were Shakil Akter of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), A.K.M. Masum-ul-Alam of the International Labor Organization’s Dhaka office, and Masud Parvez, Training Manager of the OHS Initiative. They used a variety of teaching methods, including lecture, audio-visuals, small group exercises and case studies, to inspire the worker educators with a range of effective techniques for conducting trainings and emphasizing key concepts in occupational health and safety.

The September intensive was followed by 14 separate one-day courses on specific OHS topics to be held between September and November. The goal of the OHS Initiative is to provide training participants – already experienced worker educators in their own organizations – with the information and skills needed to conduct grassroots-level trainings with workers and community members on OHS topics. Over a three-year period, 75 trainers will expand their repertoire through the “train the trainer” courses to include OHS themes and then conduct workshops with 6,000 workers and community members.

Training Modules

Based on a probing needs assessment conducted earlier this year, the OHS Initiative staff has developed 16 training modules for the course. The first 2 modules were given during the initial 5-day residential training in September; the remaining 14 modules were presented as 1-day trainings over 3 months. The residential training provided participants with an intensive introduction on the basic skills of designing and facilitating trainings.

Day 1: What constitutes training, why it’s important, the training cycle, how to conduct a training needs assessment, and determining training objectives.

Day 2: Training methodologies, how to use brainstorming, role plays, small group discussions, guided studies, etc., to engage participants, selecting and developing training materials, planning and conducting trainings.

Day 3: Facilitation skills, trainer “do’s and don’ts,” and follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.

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“I already organized a training for the home-based workers I work with, modifying the curriculum to reflect the needs of workers who do not work at a factory, but who are exposed to risks nevertheless — for instance, insufficient light, use of needles, use of dangerous chemicals without appropriate gear, and ergonomics.”

— Tasmin Jahan Suma
A project coordinator at OSHE

Member organizations of the OHS Initiative

The OHS Initiative for Workers and Community consists of six Bangladeshi non-governmental organizations.

Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS) Founded by garment workers, BCWS provides 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.

Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) conducts training, research, policy advocacy and support services for workers in garment, shipbreaking and other industries.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK) runs clinics, hospitals, and health training programs serving Bangladesh's poor.

IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) is over 20 trade unions in garment, chemical and metalworking industries, affiliated with IndustriALL Global Union.

Naripokkho is a women's organization that provides information, training and support to women workers on violence, discrimination, and other gender issues.

California Collaborative, formed to support the OHS Initiative, is a joint effort of Hesperian Health Guides, Labor Occupational Health Program (UC Berkeley), Labor Occupational Safety and Health program (UCLA), and Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network.



Work Plan for 2018

Activities for the second year of the Initiative include:

- recruitment of the second class of trainer participants and conducting the second course series with them;
- developing and carrying out a set of “refresher” classes for the first class of the Initiative's worker educators; and
- providing the first class of trainer participants with follow-up assistance to conduct their own OHS workshops with their organizations' staff, workers and community members.

The budget for the second year includes additional staff to support this expanded training program.



Md Forhad Hossain was a volunteer rescue worker at the site of the Rana Plaza collapse where 1,138 workers were killed and has been a counselor to injured workers and families of the deceased. Forhad explains, “I've thought to myself many times what I could have done to prevent such an occurrence. This training has been a revelation for me – I have learnt many new things that I would never have known. It will be very valuable if we can disperse this knowledge among workers. In the end, real change will occur only when they demand it.”

Day 4: Each participant facilitated a 30-minute session, developing materials and choosing methodologies.

On the fifth day, participants explored Occupational Health and Safety basics: What is OHS? What national and international OHS frameworks safeguard workers? What are workplace risks and hazards? What safety measures can prevent or eliminate worker injuries and illnesses?

In the 14 separate days of training between September and November, participants reviewed Modules 3 to 16 to cover a wide variety of OHS topics:

- Hazard identification, evaluation and risk assessment;
- Types of control measures;
- Industrial accident investigation and prevention;
- Gender aspects of OHS for women workers;
- Training on fire and electrical safety, working with chemicals, ergonomic hazards, boiler and natural gas line safety, and building risk assessment in earthquake zones;
- Leadership skills and conflict resolution;
- Effective participation in factory health & safety committees; and
- The role of government inspection agencies and trade unions in factory-level health and safety programs.

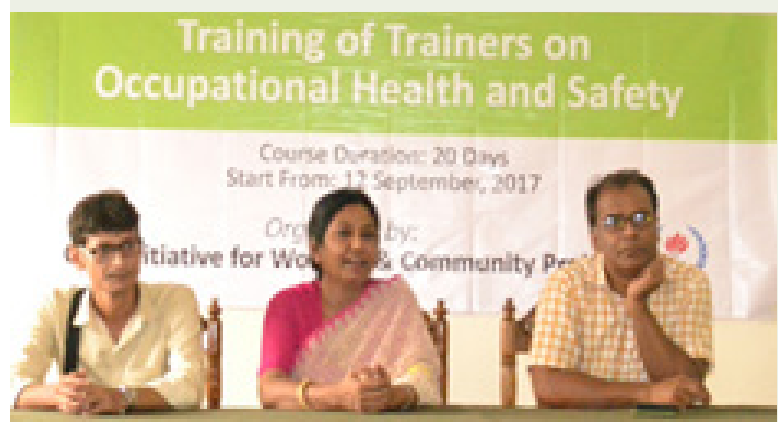
One of the single-day modules involved a field-trip to an operating garment factory to practice using inspection checklists and other on-site assessment methods (see page 4). The initial focus of the Initiative is the ready-made garment industry, but future courses will expand to cover hazards of the tannery, ship-breaking and construction industries.

Participants in the 5-day training received the training manual, hand-outs and lecture notes, copies of the national labor laws and guidebook, and a bag with the Initiative's logo to carry the materials to their own training workshops.

"Although we work on workers' health, our health practitioners do not really have much knowledge on occupational health and safety. This training is useful for us because it expands our understanding of health and occupational hazards, and better equips us to counsel workers. The training also provides a good opportunity to interact with and learn from workers about the real challenges to implementing safety measures at factories."

— Mahjebin Chowdhury

A doctor at GK providing free health services to workers



"Before the training, I knew how unsafe our factories can be, but I lacked concrete knowledge. I wasn't able to actually tell workers specifics about the kinds of risks and what to do if they came across such risks. Even a simple chair can have a lasting impact on your health, and more importantly, they deserve better than to just accept everything handed to them."

— Sumaiya Akhter

An organizer with BCWS and the youngest of the participants



Field day: Inspecting a garment factory



On October 13th, Mahfuzur Rahman, Deputy Inspector General of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) in the Ministry of Labour and Employment spoke about his department. Rahman detailed the inspection process and highlighted the crucial role that workers can play in ensuring a proper factory inspection. Then he taught the participants how to develop a checklist and how to use it effectively.

The next day, participants got a rare opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge of factory inspections to real life. Divided into two groups – one led by DIG Rahman, and the other by lead trainer Masum-ul-Alam – the participants inspected Dekko Apparels & Fashions Ltd., a factory with 600 workers. Each group was further divided into three groups – one looking into fire safety, another at machine safety, and the third at structural and general worker safety. A factory manager accompanied each of the groups and answered their queries.

After conducting their investigations, each group presented their findings, outlining the violations they had noted and suggesting remediation plans for the factory to ensure worker safety.

For a majority of the participants, it was the first time they could walk around and inspect a factory. One participant noted, “I’m a union organizer, but I would never be allowed to walk around a factory like this. And previously, even if I had been allowed, I would not have known what is and isn’t a violation.”

Another participant highlighted how being in the factory itself allowed them to make sense of the checklist. “If we had just been given the checklist, we wouldn’t get an idea about the actual lay of the land, and how to note the discrepancies. The DIG showed us exactly what to look for, and how to take down the notes.”

Since the factory is an Accord-enrolled factory and is far along in its remediation process, the participants noted what a compliant factory looks like. Participants pointed out that access to a less compliant factory would have generated, no doubt, a longer list of the irregularities and violations of safety standards.

Reported by Sushmita Preetha

Governing Board Support



The OHS Initiative is made up of six leading non-governmental organizations (see page 2), with one representative of each group sitting on the project's Governing Board. The Board demonstrated its strong support for the launch of the Initiative's courses by speaking at the opening and closing sessions of the five-day training.

At the opening session, A.R. Repon Chowdhury (*Executive Director of the OSHE Foundation and Secretary of the OSH Initiative's Board*) and Sultan Uddin Ahmed (*Executive Director of BILS*) encouraged participants to take full advantage of

the class. At the closing session, Tamanna Khan (*Naripokkho and Chair of the OSH Initiative's Board*), Kalpona Akter (*Executive Director of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity*), and Drs. Mizanur Rahman and Manzur Kadir (*executives of Gonoshasthaya Kendra*) summarized the importance of the first Initiative course. Saki Rejwana (*Chairwoman of the OSHE Foundation, which hosts the OSH Initiative's office in Dhaka*) also spoke to motivate participants to complete the planned series of 14 one-day trainings.





Finances for Years Two and Three

Planning for an expansion of Initiative staff by hiring additional trainers in both years two and three, the budgets for the Initiative increase to \$65,000 in year two and \$78,000 in year three. The fiscal years for the Initiative begin on January 1, 2018, and January 1, 2019.

Two first-year funders have generously committed to ongoing contributions: IOSH in the United Kingdom will donate 5,000 British pounds yearly for two years and the WSM in Belgium will contribute 8,000 Euros each year.

Another \$10,000 USD has been raised to support the Initiative's second year of operation. This includes the previously reported grant from the GlobalWorks Foundation, a \$2,500 donation from the American Industrial Hygiene Association, and more than \$4,500 in individual donations from OHS professionals in the US, including AIHA President Deborah Imel Nelson and John Henshaw, former chief of the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Renewed appeals will be made to other first-year funders to continue their support as well as reaching out to new potential contributors. Plans for the OHS Initiative call for it to become increasingly self-sustaining after the first 3 years of operation.

“ 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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