

GREAT Women Project



Valuing Occupational Safety and Health Among Informal Sector Workers

Results of Partnership between PCW-GREAT Women Project and DOLE-OSHC



February 2013

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Summary This case study showcases the journey of DOLE's Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) towards extending its services to microenterprises and the informal sector. Through the interventions of the GREAT Women Project, it recognized the need to address the occupational safety and health issues of workers in the informal sector through various interventions such as policy advocacy, training, database and tools development, among others.

Background The Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) is an attached agency of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). It serves as the national authority for research and training on work safety and health. It is mandated to protect workers from work-related accidents and illnesses and promote their welfare through productivity, well-being and social protection programs.

In 2007, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) forged partnership with 12 key national government agencies involved in micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprise (MSME) development and 42 local government units to serve as partners in the implementation of the GREAT Women Project. OSHC was chosen as one of the partner agencies, particularly to support the promotion of occupational safety and health among microenterprises and informal sector workers in the project's target areas.

Occupational Safety and Health of Women Workers in Microenterprises and the Informal Sector

In broad terms, occupational safety and health (OSH) seeks "to increase productivity through better working environment, decrease in manpower and economic losses caused by occupational accidents, injuries and diseases, and to improve welfare of workers and their families."¹ It is an important cross-cutting theme for the project given the number of women workers in microenterprises and the informal sector, as well as the occupational safety and health issues affecting these workers.

There are about 25 million workers in the informal sector, making up 76% of the country's total workforce, and about 3.5 million of these workers are women (National Statistics Office, 2008). A significant proportion of these informal workers are operating at the household level either as self-employed or sub-contracted workers, vendors or petty retailers. These workers are often exposed to precarious conditions of work, low wages, poor working conditions, limited social protection and health care benefits.

Women are often in closer proximity than men to hazards brought about by the environment, use of technology, roles in the value chain, and varying practices in enterprises.

Footnote:

¹ Definition on Occupational Safety and Health was taken from the National Occupational Safety and Health Medium-Term Plan Brochure

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They are more exposed to changing and unsafe environments as they perform household chores and source raw materials. For example, WMEs producing smoked fish (tinapa) are often confined in dim makeshift dwellings and are exposed to heat, smoke and fumes from cooking. Women in other enterprises often face difficulty in using technologies and equipment that are initially designed for men, which pose health and safety risks later on with continued use. They are likewise exposed to chemicals and other substances in the workplace that could affect their health.

Before OSH interventions, many enterprises and women workers as well as local government units commonly show low appreciation and awareness on occupational safety and health as OSHC previously provides its services only to workers and companies in the formal sector.

In 2007, OSHC signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with PCW to implement a GREAT Women Project subproject, *“Occupational Safety and Health for Women Workers in Small Enterprises and Informal Economy.”*

From 2008 to 2009, the first implementation phase of the subproject focused on building or improving knowledge on OSH for women working in the informal sector. Case studies were developed to build knowledge products that would support awareness raising and capability building activities at the local government units and enterprise levels. Below are some of the highlights of the first implementation phase:

Development of OSH modules. OSHC conducted case studies on five women-led Metro Naga enterprises: pili processing in Naga City, bamboo craft manufacturing in Bula, seagrass processing in Milaor and San Fernando, smoked fish processing in Camaligan, and crabpaste processing in Gainza. It later on conducted case studies in Quezon enterprises: suman making in Infanta; woodcraft and herbal medicine processing in General Nakar; and hand-made paper craft and charcoal briquetting in Real. OSHC conducted interviews with the workers and workplace safety and health audits of enterprises. It likewise conducted consultation and focus group discussions among local government officials to determine their knowledge of OSH.

Results of the case studies were then used to develop a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for a new training program that would build OSH competence among women workers in the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) and improve the Occupational Safety and Health modules used for appreciation and trainings courses by the agency.

OSH and the GREAT Women Project

First Implementation Phase



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The improved OSH Module was adopted as part of the business support services of DOLE's Integrated Livelihood Program and the Inter-agency Programme to Nurture Peace, Security and Decent Work through Local Development in Conflict Areas of the Philippines. The programme implements local economic development activities that target agricultural and fisheries productivity, skills training, enterprise development, market support, community-based disaster risks management and maternal and child care. It is funded by the International Labour Organization, in partnership with the Government of Japan, through the United Nations Trust for Human Security (UNTFHS), and implemented by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Provincial Government of Quezon.

Development of a Communications Plan. A communication plan and a package of IEC materials were developed to disseminate the case studies. The plan included development of an information materials package such as posters in Filipino and Bikolano version, comics, flyers, radio dramas, case studies documentaries, photo exhibit and press releases. A press conference was also held in Metro Naga in 2009-2010 among local chief executives and select members of the media to discuss OSH programs and services supported by the GREAT Women Project.



The IEC materials were produced and distributed to LGUs, industry groups, stakeholders and the private sector and among national government agency partners. Both IEC materials (including case studies) were used as a framework for designing OSH-responsive equipment such as Quezon's *Hardin ng Kalikasan* paper equipment and as inputs for local enterprise development training such as in Pavia, Iloilo. Some LGUs became conscious in checking OSH compliance in the LGU and among women-led enterprises. In Sta. Cruz of Davao del Sur, for example, the mayor advised its human resources department to check on its OSH compliance by ensuring annual health employee check-up as well as assessment and inventory of facilities and equipment.

The materials likewise increased the demand for more capacity development and improved enterprise practices among women-led enterprises. Women microentrepreneurs in the project areas, in general, improved their practice of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and reported adopting interventions to ensure occupational safety and health of workers.

In Metro Naga, a network was established to serve as a local resource group on OSH.

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The network is composed of volunteers which cascaded OSH orientation among micro-food processors in Magarao, in coordination with DTI- Camarines Sur in 2010.

The second implementation phase which began in 2010, zeroed-in on advocating for OSH and replicating the lessons of the initial implementation phase to the main bureaus of DOLE, starting with Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns. OSHC also embarked on intensifying workforce-focused programs for workers in the informal economy in local development plans and ensuring that these programs are gender-responsive. Below are some of the highlights of this phase:

*Second
Implementation
Phase*

Roll-out trainings to women microentrepreneurs. OSHC developed a four-module training program for microenterprises, covering the following modules: a) OSH Appreciation Course, b) Safety and Health Audit on Women Workers, c) Presentation of Case Studies on OSH for Women in the Informal Sector (home-based production activities), and d) Training for Trainers on OSH in the Informal Sector.

- a) **OSH Appreciation Course.** The OSH Appreciation Course Module trains women microentrepreneurs to improve working conditions in the enterprise. It includes topics such as good housekeeping, ergonomics, fire safety, waste handling, and safe handling of materials and handtools. It also introduces low-cost OSH improvements for the enterprise.

OSHC initially offered the course to women microentrepreneurs and local government representatives in Metro Naga and Quezon from 2008 to 2010. Common service facilities (CSFs) installed in the project sites, on the other hand, used the course modules. Later, the agency set the objective to deliver the course and assist at least 300 women microentrepreneurs in each of the 10 GREAT Women Project project sites. The training course was then conducted later on in Camaligan, Pili, and Bonbon in Metro Naga; Pamilacan, Bohol and the Provincial Government of Bohol; Quezon; and Pavia, Iloilo. Often, microenterprises adopted low-cost OSH interventions to improve OSH compliance, including use of personal protective equipment, improved lighting and ventilation, among others.

OSHC also taught the course to non-project sites such as Commonwealth West, Quezon City; San Jose, Occidental Mindoro; Mabitac, Laguna; General Santos City; Dumaguete City; Valencia, Negros Oriental; Cebu City, Tu-



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guegarao, Cagayan and La Union. These are LGUs that have sought OSH services from the Center. The agency monitors re-entry and action plans of women microentrepreneurs who completed the course.

- b) **Safety and Health Audits on Women Workers.** OSHC conducted safety and health audits for selected livelihood trades in MNDC and Quezon (including Hardin ng Kalikasan), which included a walk-thru survey, individual interviews and work environment measurements of noise, illumination, ambient temperature, and chemical and dust levels in various workplaces.
- c) **Presentation of case study findings.** In 2009, OSHC prepared a final report of case study findings of home-based enterprises in MNDC and Quezon.
- d) **Training of Trainers on OSH in Informal Sector.** OSHC conducted a 'Training of Trainers on the Appreciation Course on OSH in the Informal Sector', which included training of productivity specialists within the DOLE network of agencies. These productivity specialists are tasked to provide various 'upscaling' services to microentrepreneurs such technical assistance on productivity, bookkeeping or basic financial management, planning, leading, organizing, marketing and OSH skills, among others, to assist DOLE's priority livelihood beneficiaries.

Strengthening capacities of OSHC trainers. Staff involved in OSH trainings were provided additional knowledge and skills on gender and development and women's economic empowerment to enhance their current capacities. Support of Division Chiefs to GAD-WEE CD activities was instrumental in building GAD-WEE capacities within the Agency.

Infusion of OSH in National Plans. The Philippine Labor and Employment Plan (PLEP) 2011-2016 recognized the social protection issues of workers in the informal sector, particularly on OSH. The plan recommended the adoption of OSH strategies such as: (1) intensified campaign on the integration of OSH in local development plans for workers in the informal economy; (2) implementation of gender-responsive OSH programs; and (3) advocacy for the integration of OSH in the secondary and tertiary educational curricula.

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The integration of gender-responsive OSH in the PLEP, in particular, was a result of advocacy and lobbying of DOLE-OSHC Executive Director and GWP Focal Person.

Integration of OSH in National Programs. Previously, OSH services were mainly provided to formal and large-scale enterprises. Through the GREAT Women Project and using the National Labor Code and the Magna Carta of Women as bases, OSHC delivered programs to the informal sector. It also increased its GAD budget from PhP 650,000 to 2.5 million in year 2012, which enabled the creation of a regular OSH for workers in the informal economy which was not included in the regular programs of OSHC prior to the project. Since 2011, a regular OSH program has been provided to GREAT Women Project sites and non-project sites (i.e., General Santos, Dumaguete, Cebu, Tuguegarao, La Union, Zamboanga, and Cotabato).

OSHC also introduced sexual and reproductive health rights in its modules, discussing particular hazards to men and women. It also introduced a new program, “OSH for MSMEs and LGUs,” which covers OSH training, safety and health audits, and provision of services toward process and productivity enhancements of enterprises at the local level.

OSHC likewise advocated for the inclusion of OSH in other national programs such

as DOLE’s Integrated Livelihood Program for the Informal Sector and Productivity Specialist Program, and DOLE’s Enhanced Technical and Advisory Visits (ETAV), a business support service provided to microenterprises to ensure minimum compliance to labor standards and enhancement of productivity.

Incorporating OSH in other tools. OSH Modules later served as a primary reference in the development of tools and modules under the GREAT Women Project such as DENR’s Gender-Responsive Environmental and Natural Resources Enterprises in the Philippines: A Kit for Upland, Lowland-Urban, and Coastal Ecosystems



The other agencies and LGUs (outside of GWP) have caught interest in the OSH Appreciation module developed under GWP and would like to expand these to more concerns (of the micro and home based enterprises).”

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(GREEN Kit), TESDA's Technical Skills Training Modules and Work Improvement in Social Enterprise (WISE). It was also used by DOLE's productivity specialists who provide technical assistance to micro and small enterprises. DOLE's Tool to Assess Gender Responsiveness of Technologies Relevant to Women Microentrepreneurs included recommendations to undertake action on OSH, good manufacturing practices, 5S, workers' insurance, and improvement of existing facilities.

Monitoring and Evaluation of OSH Programs. OSHC established a sex-disaggregated database of its program clients. The database also maintains client profiles to address specific issues and concerns enrolled in the DOLE-SPRS. To enrich the database, OSHC developed a gender-responsive research questionnaire and checklist for its program clientele.

About The Project

The Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project is a governance and capacity development project that aims to promote and support a gender-responsive enabling environment for women's economic empowerment, particularly those in microenterprises.

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), the national machinery for the advancement of women in the Philippines, is the lead executing agency for the Project.

The Commission forged partnership with key national government agencies involved in micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprise (MSME) development and select local government units to create a gender-responsive enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. This project receives technical and financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

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