

# Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) for Women Workers in Small Enterprises and Informal Economy

Research Paper No. 2009-03



Department of Labor and Employment  
**Occupational Safety and Health Center**  
North Avenue corner Agham Road,  
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines



Management System  
ISO 9001:2015



www.tuv.com  
ID 9105081680

# **Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) for Women Workers in Small Enterprises and Informal Economy**

## **Abstract**

The GREAT Women Project is a collaborative activity between the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and various GOs, NGOs, LGUs, and private organizations. The Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) has been assisting informal sector workers in the Metro Naga area in applying good OSH practices in their livelihood activities.

The general objective of the OSH program is to raise awareness on OSH among working women in the informal sector and to develop their skills for applying good OSH practices. The methods for awareness raising and capability building include research, training, and networking. This presentation reports on the case studies in the Metro Naga area.

The OSH survey was conducted in the City of Naga and in the municipalities of Gainza, Milaor, Bula, and San Fernando. More specifically, case studies of hazardous livelihood projects were designed to provide the basis for the OSH training needs assessment on OSH and practical responses; the case studies were related to pili processing, bamboo craft manufacturing including bag and picture frame making, sea grass or agas processing, slippers and bags production from sea grass, and crab paste processing. Safety and health audits were complemented by questionnaire-guided interviews of the workers as well as by focus group discussions with local government officials.

In the study, female workers comprised 75% of the 30 respondents. More than 50% of the respondents were 40 years and older with age-ranges between 20 and 61 years. Frequently used tools included knives, cutters and

scissors for pili and sea grass processing; handsaw and “bolo” for bamboo craft manufacturing; and ladles and hand-made scooping utensils for crabpaste and pili processing. Almost all workers using sharp tools were aware of the risk in handling their tools; however less than 5% reported actual accidents, the most frequent being finger cuts. Frequent physical symptoms were joint pains and headaches. Many workers and LGU officials acknowledged the need for safety and health training for workers in the informal sector.

For informal sector workers the living and working areas are usually one and the same. There is continuous exposure to occupational hazards, specifically related to tools, chemicals and other materials. A majority of the respondents stressed the need for a common service facility, close to their homes, for practicing their livelihood activities. They recognized the importance of adopting good OSH practices in their daily work based on greater OSH awareness as well as on tools, materials, facilities and work processes adapted to the needs and means of the informal sector. External support would go a long way in reducing the number of potentially costly accidents and illnesses while improving the quality of products and their sales, thereby raising general working and living conditions in the informal sector.