Preventing occupational disease worldwide

Work-related disease kills more than 2 million people a year around the world – more than other well-recognized global health and safety challenges like HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and automobile crashes. Another 160 million people in the world get sick every year from occupational health hazards. Not only adults are affected: 152 million of the world’s children are child labourers, half of whom work in hazardous conditions. The International Labour Organization estimates that occupational injury and disease cost the world $2.8 trillion (USD) every year: 4% of the world’s Gross Domestic Product.

Dedication to the prevention of occupational disease motivated the creation of the non-profit organization Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB). Incorporated as a charity in Canada since 2011, WHWB has a network of more than 1,000 people around the world, including occupational hygienists, physicians and others concerned about workplace health. Branches have been formed in the United States, Australia and the UK.

Our Mission and Vision

WHWB’s vision is a world where workers, their families and communities do not get ill because of their work. Our mission is to prevent work-related disease around the world through shared expertise, knowledge and skills.

What We Do

WHWB members volunteer their time to offer training, mentoring and technical assistance to develop capacity for preventing occupational disease and injury around the world. Following are examples of our work.

1. Training Programs

Only 16 countries offer professional certification in occupational hygiene, the profession devoted to assessment and control of occupational health hazards. It is estimated that another 45,000 certified hygienists would be needed worldwide to offer the level of service available in those 16 countries. WHWB members volunteer their knowledge and services to help fill this gap.

WHWB offers training in occupational health and safety (OHS) in areas that need more professional OHS resources. WHWB is an approved training provider with the Occupational Hygiene Training Association
(OHTA), which maintains a program of training courses and certification in occupational hygiene. Each OHTA course consists of 5 days of instruction. Examples include Basic Principles of Occupational Hygiene, Control of Hazardous Substances, Measurement of Hazardous Substances, and Noise Measurements and Effects. We also offer a basic health and safety course and can customize courses to user needs. We have given training in Tanzania, Botswana, Swaziland, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, India and Viet Nam in partnership with universities and government agencies responsible for health and safety. WHWB also provides support to universities and schools that want to develop their own professional education programs in occupational hygiene and health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, WHWB offered successful online health and safety awareness program that blended a self-directed electronic course with real-time tutorials in multiple languages.

2. Mentoring Programs

WHWB offers a mentorship program, through which highly trained and experienced volunteer professionals around the world mentor new professionals. Mentors and mentees meet regularly, usually through electronic communications, for educational and guidance sessions.

3. Professional and Public Awareness

Our members organize, sponsor, and speak at seminars, professional and non-professional conferences, to universities and schools, and are available to the media to speak on global occupational health and safety. During the pandemic, WHWB held 17 webinars on topics related to COVID and infection control in a variety of countries.

4. Support for International NGOs

WHWB supported a US-based NGO working in the fight against Ebola. WHWB provided expertise in personal protective equipment and infection control. WHWB will also help NGOs protect the health and safety of their volunteers.

5. Projects

WHWB offers support and technical assistance for projects around the world to evaluate and control occupational health hazards. Examples of our projects include the following:

**Gem workers in India:** WHWB is addressing silica exposure among gem workers in India. Because the work is often located in the home, whole families, including children, get sick from breathing hazardous dust from cutting and polishing gemstones.
Brick plants in Africa and Asia: Brick plants are common throughout Africa, Asia and South America, often employing children. About 65% of child brick plant workers have been found to suffer from work-related injury or illness. WHWB has provided guidance on health standards for the Nepal brick plant industry and technical review for the International Labour Organization Child Labour Project on its report on child brick plant workers.

Waste Workers in Brazil: WHWB's Waste Workers Occupational Safety & Health Committee has sponsored a number of projects aimed at protecting the health and safety of waste workers, especially in Brazil. Most recently, it sponsored a project that trained hundreds of waste workers on proper use of respiratory protection.

Partners


For more information

1. www.whwb.org
2. www.whwb-us.org
3. American Industrial Hygiene Association article http://synergist.aiha.org/201710-pole-to-pole-whwb
4. Social media:
   a. Youtube channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj5PlvW65Lr0feeLYGVLBnmQ
   b. Facebook https://www.facebook.com/workplacehealthwithoutborders
   c. Twitter https://twitter.com/WHWB15
   d. Instagram https://instagram.com/whwb/
   e. LinkedIn https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4104875