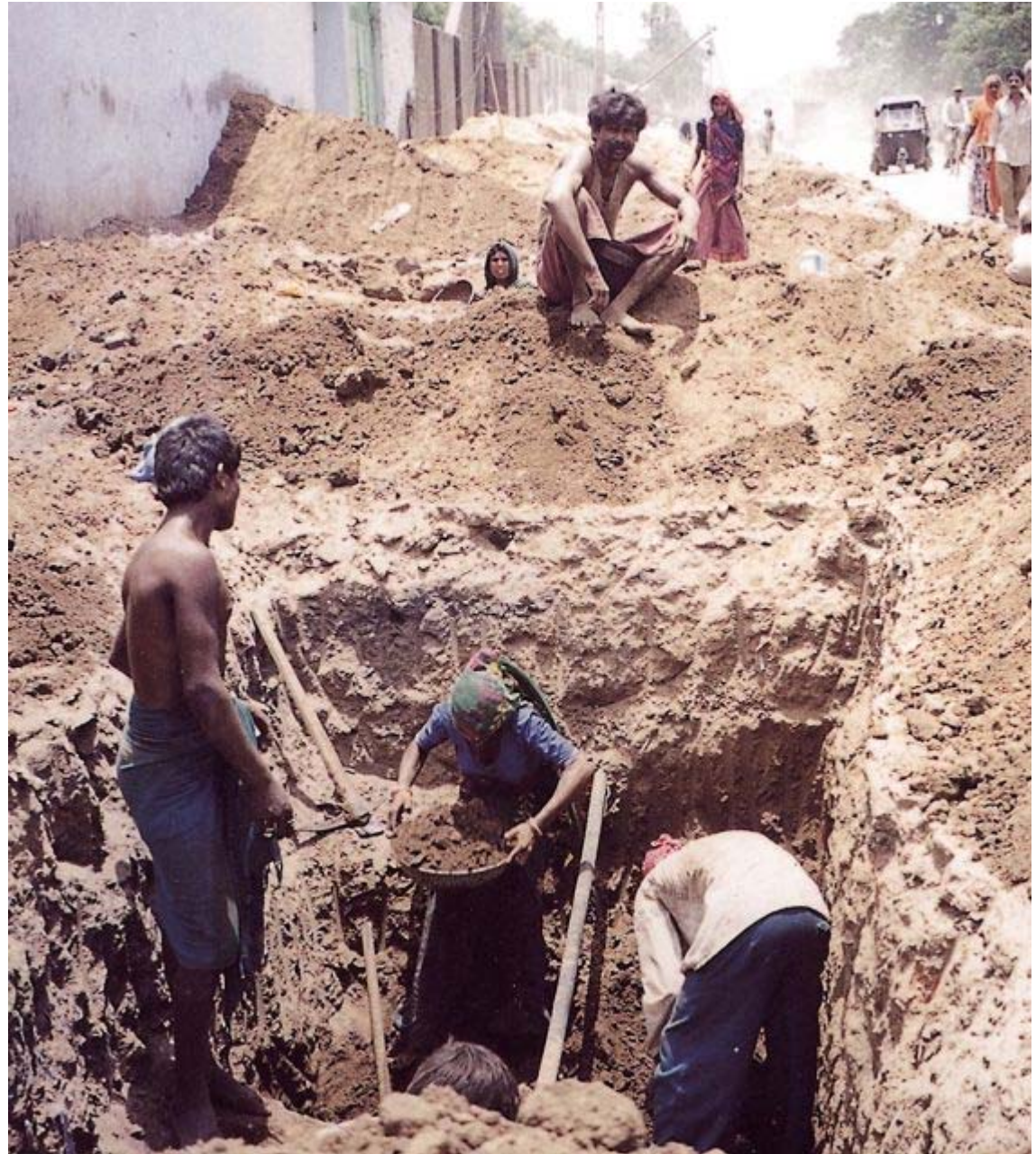


Construction OS&H

**Workers'
perspectives**

**Trade Union
approach**



The three sections of the workers' perspectives

The Trade Union Approach to Health and Safety
Organising for a Healthy and Safe Workplace
Getting Management to Make Improvements

Aims

1. Identify the main health and safety problems in our workplaces
2. Develop a Trade Union approach to occupational safety and health
3. Investigate hazards at work
4. Build workers' involvement, awareness, and support on occupational safety and health
5. Develop trade union organisation to ensure that employers eliminate or control risks
6. Develop confidence, knowledge and skills

Which will:

- Lead to practical action in the workplace
- Improve health and safety conditions for workers

Experience has shown us that Trade Union education should be based upon the principles of co-operation and sharing. These are the basic principles of trade union democracy.

To encourage this process, the training activities :

Are designed to be worked on by small groups of participants

Have aims describing what should result from the work

Have a task defining what the small group should do

Allow groups to report back, compare ideas, and reach conclusions

Discussion on pre-course activity: OS&H survey

Reminder

AIMS

To help us to:

Talk to workers and our Trade Union members

Obtain their views and other information

Make sure that the course is relevant to our situation

TASK

Before you come on the course, have a short discussion with a cross section of people at work. Make a note of their answers to the following questions, and bring your notes along to the course.

Questions & information

1. What are the main health, safety and welfare concerns that they have at work?
2. What is their employer doing to protect their health, safety and welfare?
3. Can the Union do more on health, safety and welfare matters?

Try to obtain information that you think will be helpful on the course.

For example:

- Union policies on Occupational Safety and Health
- Collective Bargaining Agreements relating to Occupational Health and Safety
- Safety Committee Minutes
- Company health and safety policy and site safety rules
- Other information on health and safety you think may be useful

What workers & trade union members think

AIMS

To help us to:

Discuss views on health and safety in our workplaces

Develop a Trade Union approach

TASK

In your small group, discuss what workers and union members said during the pre-course survey. Prepare a report on:

The main health, safety and welfare problems identified

What they think the employer is doing, and what the Union could do on health and safety

Elect a spokesperson to report back

The trade union approach to health and safety: workers know best

Institutional Participation – increase Trade Union contribution in tripartite and bipartite structures on health and safety at international, national, and local levels.

Participation in the Workplace and Collective Bargaining - establishment of Trade Union health and safety representatives and health and safety committees, negotiation of company health and safety policies.

Global Health and Safety Campaigns – including a worldwide ban on all new use of asbestos, and for better controls over work with existing asbestos.

Education and Training for Trade Union representatives to help them organise effectively on health and safety

Injuries and ill health are caused because employers fail to provide a safe and healthy working environment. The employer should provide:

A working environment where hazards are identified, removed or properly controlled before problems occur

Safe systems of work

Full information for workers

Good health and safety training programmes

Opportunities for workers through their Unions, to negotiate health and safety clauses in collective agreements, and participate actively in health and safety at work

Unions & OS&H

The best way to improve health and safety standards in the workplace is through a Trade Union organisation. Unions can raise awareness, put pressure on employers, and campaign for negotiated improvements.

There are laws that say what employers should do to prevent injuries and ill-health, but there are not enough inspectors, and they do not have the resources to effectively police every workplace.

No matter how strict the law is, or how many inspectors there are, workers and Unions have the direct interest. It is our lives, limbs and health that are at stake.

Unions & OS&H (2)

It is the job of Trade Unions and members at work to try to make sure that the employer keeps to his/her responsibilities.

Some of the ways to achieve this are as follows:

Building a strong Union membership

Electing Union Health and Safety Reps.

Organising on Health and Safety

The Trade Union approach (1)

It is the employer's responsibility to make the workplace healthy and safe

The role of the Trade Union is to insist that the employer acts responsibly

Employers must:

Eliminate or reduce hazards to workers, rather than expecting workers to adapt to the hazards around them

Ensure that health and welfare are dealt with as well as the more obvious risks to safety

Consider the environmental impact of work activity, and the hazards created for local communities

The Trade Union approach (2)

Unions must:

Involve, inform, and educate workers and union members to support the union's drive for healthy and safe working conditions

Work as a united body at all levels in the union. Health and safety is no different from any other trade union issue

Pressurise the employer to eliminate or control risks. Legal standards are helpful but we cannot rely on them.

Workplace TU reps & ILO agreements (1)

- Selection of representatives in health and safety by employees
- Protection of representatives from victimisation or discrimination
- Paid time off to be allowed to carry out the functions of safety representative
- Paid time off to be trained in order to function as a safety representative
- The right to receive adequate information from the employer
- The right to inspect the workplace
- The right to investigate complaints from workers on health and safety matters

Workplace TU reps & ILO agreements (2)

- The right to make representations to the employer on these matters and to negotiate
- The right to be consulted over health and safety arrangements
- The right to be consulted about the use of technical advisers by the employer and to call in technical advisers
- The right to accompany health and safety authority inspectors when they inspect the workplace and to make complaints to them when necessary.
- Participation, and equal representation, in the Joint Health and Safety Committee

Functions of Union reps

- Talking to workers and union members, and taking up their complaints with management
- Involving, informing, and consulting workers and union members on their priorities, and agreeing strategies for tackling risks
- Systematically inspecting the workplace on a regular basis
- Investigating accidents, ill-health and near misses
- Consulting with management
- Monitoring the employer's performance on health and safety
- Making representations, and negotiating with the employer to ensure the safety and health of workers
- Talking to Government health and safety inspectors
- Participating in joint management - union safety committees in the workplace

DIY research in the workplace

Passive research

- Publications
- Independent experts in governmental, non-governmental organisations & TUs
- Statistics: national, industry or workplace

Active research

- Risk mapping of the workplace
- Carrying out inspections
- Surveys and interviews on symptoms and hazards
- Body mapping
- Meetings
- Information exchange and training