



# Healthy workplaces: a model for action

*For employers, workers, policy-makers  
and practitioners*



**World Health  
Organization**



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*“The wealth of business depends on  
the health of workers.”*

Dr Maria Neira, *Director*, Department of Public Health and Environment,  
World Health Organization

COVER

*Vertical Job*. Photographer: Francisco Monterro, USA. Safe equipment and safe behaviours are both essential to preventing occupational risks associated with hazardous tasks (2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the WHO/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) photo contest 2010, *My work, my health*)

OVERLEAF

*Men's job, women's job*. Young workers in a pottery workshop in Amman, Jordan, 1993 © ILO







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## Introduction: a model for action

Workers' health, safety and well-being are vital concerns to hundreds of millions of working people worldwide. But the issue extends even further beyond individuals and their families. It is of paramount importance to the productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises, communities, and to national and regional economies.

Currently, an estimated two million people die each year as a result of occupational accidents and work-related illnesses or injuries (1). Another 268 million non-fatal workplace accidents result in an average of three lost workdays per casualty, as well as 160 million new cases of work-related illness each year (2). Additionally, 8% of the global burden of disease from depression is currently attributed to occupational risks (3).

These data, collected by the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization, only reflect the injuries and illnesses that occur in formally registered workplaces. In many countries, most workers are employed informally in factories and businesses where there are no records of work-related injuries or illnesses, let alone any programmes to prevent injuries or illnesses. Addressing this huge burden of disease, economic costs and long-term loss of human resources from unhealthy workplaces is a formidable challenge for national governments, eco-

nomic sectors, and health policy-makers and practitioners.

In 2007 the World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization endorsed the *Workers' health: global plan of action* (GPA) to provide new impetus for action by Member States. This is based upon the 1996 World Health Assembly *Global strategy for occupational health for all*. The 2006 *Stresa Declaration on Workers' Health*, the 2006 *Promotional framework for occupational health and safety convention* (ILO Convention 187) and the 2005 *Bangkok charter for health promotion in a globalized world* also provide important points of orientation.

The Global Plan of Action sets out five objectives:

- 1) To devise and implement policy instruments on workers' health;
- 2) To protect and promote health at the workplace;
- 3) To promote the performance of, and access to, occupational health services;
- 4) To provide and communicate evidence for action and practice;
- 5) To incorporate workers' health into other policies.

In line with the Global Plan of Action, this brochure provides a framework for the development of healthy workplace initiatives adaptable to diverse countries, workplaces and cultures.

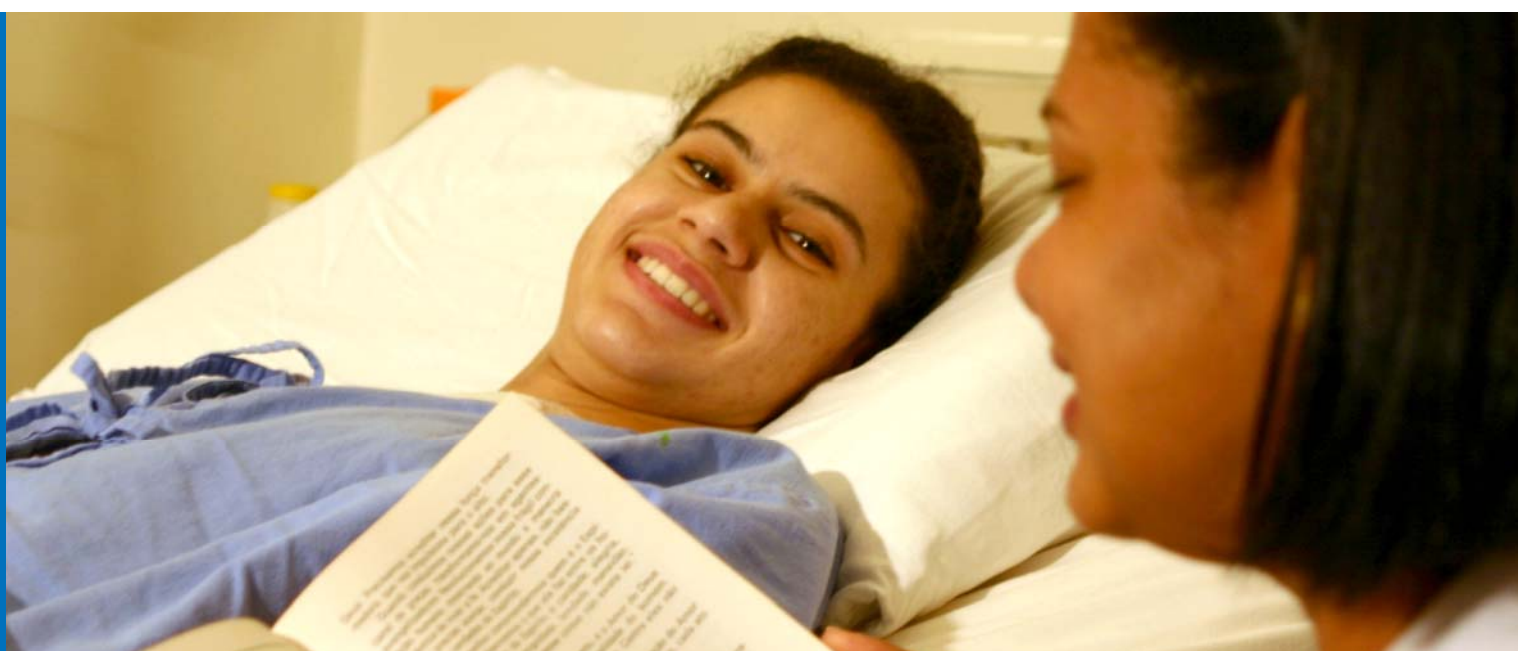


## OVERLEAF

*The strength of teamwork*. Photographer: Andrés Bernardo López Carrasco, Mexico. Workers in a warehouse lift a heavy metal structure in unison to prevent injury (1<sup>st</sup> prize in the WHO/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) photo contest 2010, *My work, my health*)

## BELOW

*Humanizing work*. Photographer: Marcelo Henrique Silveira, Brazil. A nurse in a Brazilian hospital takes time to read to a patient, offering a moment of mutual enjoyment (3<sup>rd</sup> prize in the WHO/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) photo contest 2010, *My work, my health*)



Subsequently, practical guidance specific to sectors, enterprises, countries and cultures will be developed by WHO, in collaboration with coun-

The review of this evidence is available in a 2010 background document, *Healthy workplaces: a global framework and model: review of literature and*

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