

Editorial

The National Programme on Occupational Safety, Occupational Health During 2011–2015 of Viet Nam

In December 2010, the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued Decision No. 2010 / QĐ-TTg which approved the National Programme on occupational safety and health (OSH) between 2011 and 2015. This is intended to improve working conditions, reduce pollution in the working environment, prevent occupational accidents and occupational diseases, provide health care for workers, raise awareness, ensure compliance with Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) laws; and to protect physical safety and the life of workers, assets of the State, of business and of the organization; all of which will contribute to the sustainable development of the country.

Legal Basis

The draft Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) for period 2011–2020 states that “to ensure the harmonious industrial relations; to improve working environment and conditions”; “to develop strongly and diversely insurance systems including social insurance, unemployment insurance, insurance for occupational accidents and occupational diseases...”.

The draft political report submitted to the XI Party Congress clearly proposes that “to pay special attention to labour protection, improvement of working conditions and prevention of occupational accidents”; and “to study, supplement and improve policies on labour protection, social insurance, maternity leave and other benefits for female workers”.

Current Situation of Labour Protection in Viet Nam

Under the support of the Programme in the period 2006–2010, Viet Nam has made positive progress and significant achievements in improving work conditions and ensuring safety, life and health for workers, developing the production, creating favourable conditions for international cooperation and integration. However, we have been facing with a lot of difficulties and shortcomings in OSH which must be addressed, particularly in the enforcement

of regulations on prevention of occupational accidents and occupational diseases. The frequency rate of occupational accidents, the new incidence of occupational diseases have been reduced but not settled down. The number of serious and fatal occupational accidents, number of new cases with occupational diseases and environment pollution keeps growing and seems to be difficult to control, especially in agricultural production, craft villages, cooperative, private households, non-state owned SMEs. This causes the great loss to the economy. The expenses paid by insurance agencies for workers with occupational accidents and occupational diseases is more than 150 billion VND per year.

International Commitments

Viet Nam has ratified the ILO Convention No. 155 on OSH and working environment (1981). The Convention stipulates that the ratified countries are responsible for developing and implementing policies and national programmes on OSH, ensuring the improved working conditions with an aim to prevent accidents and injuries at workplaces.

The ILO passed the Convention No. 187 on Promotional Framework on Safety and Health on 31st May, 2006. The Convention recommended that member countries should develop national policies and programmes on OSH. In the Action Plan of 2010–2016 adopted by ILO at the 307th session, there are many contents to support and promote the implementation of National Program on OSH and the compliance with Convention No. 155 and Convention No. 187.

In the Action Plan of 2010–2015 adopted at the ASEAN Labour Minister’s Conference dated May 24th 2010, there was a commitment for further cooperation on the National OSH programme.

Risks and Challenges

In the period of 2011–2015, occupational accidents and occupational diseases tend to increase sharply over the

period 2006–2010 for the following reasons:

- The rapid growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with backward technology and equipment and little attention paid to OSH;

- The import and application of new machines, equipment, technology and materials will bring more unforeseen risks of OSH because structure and the form of machines may not fit with height and health of Vietnamese workers as well as their capability of mastering the new technology;

- The strong growth of mining industry, construction and engineering is placing an increase of risks of safety, health and working environment pollution;

- The labour force is increasing with more than 1 new million per year; along with a large shift from agricultural area to industrial field without qualifications and professional skills contribute to increasing the risk of occupational accidents and occupational diseases.

- During the equalization and privatization process, enterprises have to face with management issues. This is one of the reasons making the labour protection more challenging and difficult, especially in the management, enforcement of laws and legal policies.

- The number of workers in agriculture, forestry and fishery accounts for 52.62% of total labour force in the country. During the process of industrialization in agricultural production and rural areas, farmers have been facing with lots of occupational accidents and poisoning of plant protection chemicals due to use of agriculture machines, equipment, chemical fertilizers, plant protection chemicals... etc., while there is no officials in charge of labour protection at commune level.

Besides, the international economic integration requires the Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) performance in related to OSH. This is the big challenge for enterprises working in export activities. In addition, the financial crisis and global economic downturn have certain impacts to the economic development in Viet Nam.

Based on the survey conducted in 2009 and the forecast in period from 2010 to 2015, there are around 170,000 people who suffer from occupational accidents, of which 1,700 fatalities and number of new cases with occupational diseases will be increasing by more than 1,000 annually, causing the loss of over 2,000 billion VND per year.

Urgent Issues to be Addressed in the OSH Programme Period 2011–2015

From the current situation and the forecast of occupa-

tional accidents and occupational diseases in the coming years, the following urgent issues should be addressed during the period 2011–2015:

- To prevent the increase in occupational accidents, especially serious and fatal accidents in construction, mining, metal production, coal mining, chemical production, electricity use, use of machines, equipment and substances with strict requirements on OSH.

- To monitor the pollution of working environment, gradually improve working conditions, build the safety culture and raise the CSR performance, particularly enterprises operating in the export sector.

- To raise awareness of employers and workers, particularly in craft villages, agricultural areas, in SMEs about OSH in associated with environmental protection, public health, employment and sustainable development.

Based on above results and lessons learned in the implementation of the Programme period 2006–2010, the development and implementation of the 2nd OSH Programme period 2011–2015 is essential to sustain and promote further outcomes gained by the first Programme, contributing positively to environment protection and sustainable development of the country.

While the whole economy of Vietnam has been in difficult time recently, funding the 35 million dollars program shows a great interest of Vietnam government in this field. Many effective practical systems and specific missions have been carrying out in the National Programme on Occupational Safety, Occupational Health during 2011–2015 of Viet Nam (Appendix 1).

The frequency rate of fatal accident declined from 6.49/100,000 (increased by 18% compared with 2010) in 2011 to 5.07/100,000 in 2012 (decreased by 21% compared with 2011) because of the impact of this programme. It is expected that the frequency rate of fatal accident in 2013 will be fell by 6%.

In the field of taking care of workers' health, the number of units/establishments in 2012 which monitored the work environment were over 31,500, increased by 5% (compared with 2011). Moreover, the number of workers examined medical check-ups to detect occupational disease reached 119,072 cases, increased by 100% from 2011 to 2012.

Furthermore, the program annually provided OSH training for over 60,000 workers working in occupations and jobs with strict OSH requirements, over 52,000 people working in hard, hazardous, dangerous jobs and over 40,000 OSH officials working in enterprises and units.

The objectives of this program in 2014 are to decrease by 3% in the frequency rate of fatal accident in the high

potential risk industries of coal, stone, ore mining; attempt to gain more 150,000 small and medium enterprises applying effectively OSH management systems; provide OSH training for over 20,000 people working in occupations and jobs with strict OSH requirements and 20,000 OSH officials working in enterprises.

In order to fulfill these above objectives in 2014, the main actions of this program will focus on amending and supplementing OSH regulation and implementing training,

consultancy and support to prevent occupational accidents and diseases by applying OSH management systems and personal protective equipment, consulting to improve working environment in enterprises. Moreover, OSH propagandas and educations will be giving attentively to people working in occupations and jobs with strict OSH requirements, in hard, hazardous, dangerous jobs and in craft villages, agriculture sectors in order to gradually build up the safety culture in enterprises.

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Appendix 1. Outline of the National Programme on Occupational Safety, Occupational Health During 2011–2015 of Viet Nam

1. Specific targets of the 2nd OSH Programme

- (1) Reduce annually by 5% frequency rate of fatal occupational accidents in highly hazardous sectors of mining, construction, use of electricity, metal and chemical production;
- (2) Increase annually by 5% medical units providing periodical medical check-ups for workers, increase by 5% number of workers who are examined to detect occupational diseases, and increase by 3% number of units having work environment monitored and supervised;
- (3) Increase annually by an average of 2,000 small and medium sized-enterprises (SMEs) which apply effectively the OSH management system;
- (4) Provide OSH training to an average of more than 40,000 people who are working in occupations, jobs with strict OSH requirements; to 10,000 people who are doing hard, hazardous or dangerous occupations and jobs and to 40,000 OSH officials in enterprises per year;
- (5) Disseminate appropriate OSH information to more than 1,000 craft villages, 5,000 cooperatives and 30,000 SMEs by 2015;
- (6) 100% of workers certified with occupational accidents and diseases are provided with health care and rehabilitation in line with laws.
- (7) 100% of fatal occupational accidents are investigated and settled in compliance with laws.

2. Projects of the 2nd OSH Programme

(1) Project 1. improved capacity and efficiency of state management on OSH

Executing agency: ministry of labour, invalids and social affairs (MOLISA).

Specific objectives by 2015

- Decrease annually by 6% frequency rate of serious accidents, by 5% frequency rate of fatal accidents in hazardous sectors of mining, construction, use of electricity, metal and chemical production.
- Strengthen the system of OSH inspection and supervision; ensure that 100% of officials in charge of state management in OSH are provided with knowledge and essential working facilities;
- Improve the reporting system on occupational accidents; ensure that the number of enterprises making report of occupational accidents increases by 30% per year;
- 100% of the fatal occupational accidents will be declared, investigated and handled;
- More 2,000 SMEs apply effectively OSH management systems every year;
- 100% of the workers who have been confirmed and certified with occupational accidents and diseases are received benefits, compensation, care, treatment and rehabilitation.

(2) Project 2. Prevention of occupational diseases and taking care of workers' health

Executing agency: Ministry of Health

Specific objectives by 2015

- Increase by 15% number of medical clinics which are fully capable of monitoring and supervising work environment and detecting occupational diseases for workers by 2015;
- Increase annually by 3% number of units/establishments to be monitored and supervised by 2015;
- Increase annually by 5% number of units/establishments which provide periodically medical check-ups for workers, by 5% number of workers who are examined to detect occupational diseases;
- Add 5 occupational diseases into the list of diseases to be entitled to insurance by 2015; study, amend and supplement regulations on regimes and policies on occupational health and occupational diseases.
- 100% of units/establishments with TNT – related techniques and products are evaluated, documented with statistics and analyzed with working environment;
- 100% of officials, soldiers, workers who are working for national defense and in related fields to TNT at technical units/establishments are provided with OSH training, examination and treatment for occupational diseases.
- Control initially occupational diseases in production units, particularly in agricultural sector, preserving and processing of seafood materials with high risk of occupational diseases.

(3) Project 3. Propaganda, education, training, consultancy and support for the application of OSH technical measures

Executing agency: MOLISA

Specific objectives by 2015

- Provide OSH training for over 40,000 people working in occupations and jobs with strict OSH requirements; 10,000 people working in hard, hazardous, dangerous jobs; 40,000 OSH officials working in enterprises and units per year;
- Disseminate appropriate information on OSH to over 10,000 households, cooperative groups, 1,000 craft villages, 5,000 cooperatives, 30,000 SMEs, 2 million farmer members;
- More 200 enterprises apply criteria to build OSH culture every year;
- Over 70% of occupational accidents due to technical reasons are addressed to ensure not to occur again in the fields of mining, electricity and construction;
- Promote the participation of trade unions at all levels, especially at local level, in the OSH management system in production and business units, gradually build up the safety culture in enterprises; provide training for 70% of union officials who are in charge of labour protection from local or higher level;
- Ensure that 100% of OSH members have access to information about methods and operational skills; develop the network of OSH members to reach 180,000 people; support training for 5% of total OSH members;
- Make sure the quality of and complete the OSH training curriculum to be delivered in universities, colleges and technical schools by 80%;
- Improve teaching materials on OSH to be suitable with learners: 100% for schools and institutions training scientific and technical staff, 80% for specialized schools which have little relation to labour protection, OSH, 40% for schools which deliver labour protection and OSH in different degrees and different forms;
- 50% of trainers of labour protection, OSH in universities, colleges and technical schools are trained and fostered with appropriate contents and teaching methods

(4) Project 4. Study and application of science and technology of OSH

Executing agency: VGCL (NILP)

Specific objectives by 2015

- Improve and upgrade at least 2 special – used laboratories to assess the risks of occupational hazards, develop safety indicators and solutions to improve the working environment with a view to reduce diseases and improve workers' health.
- Propose and apply a number of technical solutions to deal with pollution and improving work environment in order to minimize risks of occupational diseases for workers in certain hazardous occupations.
- Propose and make some pilot tests of a number of management solutions and safety techniques to reduce occupational accidents for workers in some hazardous industries. These solutions and techniques must be in conformity with international practice and the actual condition of production in Viet Nam.