

Volume One, Number Four, December 2007

Message from Gerry Eijkemans

As the French say, "Partir, c'est mourir un peu..."

This is how it feels, leaving the occupational health programme in WHO. I will miss working with the fantastic people I have worked with over the last years.

Change is always a good moment for reflection, for taking a step back and repositioning towards the future. After almost 15 years in WHO (and some in ILO) in the field of workers' health, I will be going to the WHO office in Mexico, and will work on climate change, employment policies, and determinants of health, such as water, sanitation, and, of course, workers' health.

In this transition, there are a few things that come to my mind. One of our largest challenges we have in the field of workers' health is the creation of a vision, of a positive new outlook on workers' health. Over the last decades, there have been few success stories in this field. Too often and in too many countries, I have seen a general pessimism around developments regarding occupational health and safety. The situation analysis at national level frequently includes issues such as lack of political support and visibility of workers' health in general, lack of resources, both financially and human, and insufficient planning and financing. And it's true, the coverage of workers by occupational health services is extremely low (less than 15% at global level) and has not increased over the last years. If services exist, they tend to focus more on early detection of diseases and general medical check-ups than on primary prevention, more on counting diseases and deaths than on preventing them.

A situation analysis like this immediately shows the need for a renewed focus, one that is optimistic and forward looking. I believe there is a need for a paradigm shift. Most workers in the world can be found in small enterprises and in the informal economy. In this case, the traditional employer-worker relationship doesn't exist and the owner of the company cannot be held solely responsible for the health and safety of the employees. The state will have to play a role here.

I have tried to make some contributions towards this paradigm shift, by focusing on the implementation of concrete, practical action in workplaces. The development and application of the concept of Basic Occupational Health Services (BOHS), by WHO together with ILO and ICOH, is an example of this. The content of BOHS will depend on the local economic and social situation, and will be based on the highest priority risks. We regularly make those priorities all the time in public health, and it is time that we start doing this for workers' health too, if we want to expand coverage. Work ongoing in China shows that it is possible to move quickly and effectively with BOHS. Another example is the work on "control banding." Favouring primary prevention and risk management over risk assessment is essential within this logic. WHO, together with partners such as ILO, IOHA, NIOSH, GTZ, and many others has developed occupational risk management toolkits that can play a role in targeted interventions based on rapid risk assessments.

In my last years here, my efforts have gone towards the development of an updated global framework on occupational health from a public health point of view. The Global Strategy on Occupational Health for All from 1996 needed a revision, calling for renewed policy attention and stronger focus on primary



Gerry Eijkemans, Co-coordinator of the WHO Network of Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health

prevention. Additionally, it was important to step outside the framework of the health and labour sectors being the only players determining the health of workers.

In consultation with the countries, regional offices, Network of Collaborating Centres, unions, and employers' organizations, the Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health was developed and was endorsed by the Ministers of Health in the World Health Assembly in 2007.

In the light of huge global challenges, the implementation of the Global Plan of Action can only be effective if it is accompanied by strong regional and national frameworks, policies, and action plans. Special efforts have been made to strengthen regional planning and coherence between the regional and national policies and plans, and to push workers' health higher on the international development agenda.

Partnerships are fundamental for the success of workers' health. Not only are traditional partnerships with ILO and other UN agencies, and new partners such as the trade unions and the employers' organizations important, but the real impact is in country level partnerships. This is where the Network of Collaborating Centres is an important player. Obviously, looking at the map of the world, it is clear that where we have fewer Collaborating Centres, the needs are greatest. This calls for intelligent networking; where partnerships go beyond supporting regional initiatives, and where tools and products that are developed and used by more advanced countries can be transferred to others, along with resources to assist with the implementation.

Furthermore, linkages between rapidly developing countries such as Brasil, China, India, South Africa, and Mexico need to be strengthened. There are lessons to be learned from each other, on how to obtain economic development that is sustainable and fair and does not have a negative impact on the health of workers. The Network can play a key role in this. New partners are needed, but most of all, sharing and recognizing opportunities to develop and grow are fundamental. You know that the Network of Collaborating Centres on Occupational Health in WHO is seen as an example within and outside the organization, but I am convinced that we can even do better.

I will miss working with all of you. It has been a privilege for me to get to know you and work with you. I am sure our paths will keep crossing. Thank you for all your support and fantastic work.

Welcome to Collaborating Centre Connection!

In this issue: [***Sign Up to Receive the Collaborating Centre Connection***](#)

[Message from Gerry Eijkemans](#)

[Spotlight: Stavroula Leka, AA3 Manager](#)

[International Seminar on the Prevention of Occupational Diseases](#)

[Croatian Congress](#)

[Third Regional Workshop on the Practical Application of Risk Management \(Control Banding\) Techniques](#)

[Occupational Health is Progress in Europe](#)

[Read past issues of Collaborating Centre Connection](#)

[Sign Up to Receive the Collaborating Centre Connection](#)

Spotlight: Stavroula Leka, AA3 Manager

Stavroula Leka, AA3 Manager, is Associate Professor in Occupational Health Psychology in the Institute of Work, Health & Organisations, University of Nottingham, where she is Director of its postgraduate programme in Occupational Health Psychology and Head of its e-learning team. She is also Director of the Institute's WHO Programme. Stavroula completed her undergraduate studies in psychology in Greece and her postgraduate studies (MSc and PhD in Occupational Health

Psychology) at the Institute. She is a chartered psychologist, a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, and a member of the British Psychological Society, the International Commission on Occupational Health, and the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology. Additionally, Stavroula is secretary of the ICOH scientific committee "Work Organisation and Psychosocial Factors" and a member of the Executive Committee of the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology. She is part of a consortium that supports the European Parliament in relation to occupational health and safety policy issues and she is a founding member of the European Platform for Corporate Social Responsibility and Health Management at Work.

Stavroula's expertise lies in the translation of occupational health and safety knowledge and policy into effective practice. Her research has a strong applied focus and aims at facilitating effective occupational health and safety management in different organisational contexts, with a particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises. A key theme in her research is the management of psychosocial risks and work-related stress and the promotion of mental health at the workplace level.

As part of her interest in policy implementation, she has been conducting research on the promotion of occupational health and safety through a corporate social responsibility framework.



Stavroula Leka, AA3 Manager

Stavroula is Manager of AA3, which focuses on "Practical Approaches to Identify & Reduce Occupational Risks" and spans across a number of key occupational health and safety areas. Its aim is to promote the effective implementation of existing knowledge and policy in occupational health and safety into effective practice through the development of practical and user-friendly tools for use primarily at the workplace level. Stavroula sees this as one of the key priorities in occupational health that calls for co-ordination of efforts at a number of levels, from policy and stakeholder involvement to awareness building, expertise development, the provision of effective occupational health services, and the management of occupational health at the workplace level.

Stavroula has been married for a bit over a year and enjoys painting, reading, football, formula 1 and a good bottle of wine!

International Seminar on the Prevention of Occupational Diseases

By Olga Mayan, National Institute of Health, Porto, Portugal

The International Seminar on the Prevention of Occupational Diseases for Portuguese-speaking countries took place in Porto, Portugal on October 30-31. The Centre of Environmental and Occupational Health of the National Institute of Health, Portugal (a WHO CC candidate), under the leadership of Olga Mayan, organized the meeting with the collaboration of two WHO CCs: FUNDACENTRO (Brazil) and National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH) of South Africa, along with the help of SENAC (Brazil) (a WHO



International Seminar on the Prevention of Occupational Diseases, Porto, Portugal

CC candidate), and the University of Porto.

The main objectives of this seminar were to raise awareness concerning the importance of primary prevention and of occupational hygiene in the protection of workers' health, to discuss the required competencies, and to promote exchanges and collaboration among institutions and persons from Portuguese-speaking countries.

The seminar was successful, with close to 200 participants, including participation of technicians from Portuguese speaking countries of Africa. Berenice Goelzer, WHO, provided a summary of WHO Global Plan of Action on Workers Health. Claudina Nogueira, NIOH, introduced the WHO Colaborating Centres Network Plan (2006-2010). Key presentations highlighted the need for primary prevention and a multidisciplinary approach toward all types of occupational risk factors. After the seminar, an informal meeting of WHO CCs and representatives of Portuguese speaking countries of Africa took place to build a network of Portuguese-speaking countries for the promotion of Occupational Health.

Croatian Congress

By Rothko Kim, WHO/EURO Centre for Environment and Health, Germany

A joint meeting of the 4th Croatian Congress of Occupational Health and the 14th International Congress of Occupational Health Services was held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on November 9-11. During the meeting, delegates from WHO CCs and focal points from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Israel, Macedonia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Serbia, Sweden, and Turkey met in a special session to discuss the progress of activities and prepare a regional plan of implementation of the Global Plan of Action on Workers Health.



Croatian Congress, Dubrovnik, Croatia

Prior to the Croatian Congress, Dr. Rokho Kim, acting manager of the occupational health programme of WHO Europe, reported endorsement of the Global Plan of Action on Workers Health 2008-2017 at the World Health Assembly. The activities of the Baltic Sea Network (BSN) on Occupational Health and Safety, and the South East European (SEE) Network on Workers Health are included in this work. The workplan of 2008-2009 will focus on regional implementation of the GPA and country support activities in Armenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia.

At the Congress, participants proposed several priority topics such as development of national strategies on workers health and capacity building of the national institutes in the transitional economies. The sub-regional networks, BSN, and SEE were considered important instruments for exchanging information and experience of good practice. WHO Europe's initiative for possible coordinated activities with ILO and EU in 2008-2009 was welcomed by the participants. The European Network of WHO CCs in Occupational Health will meet in Madrid in November 2008 at the 6th Meeting hosted by European Institute of Health and Social Welfare of Spain.

Third Regional Workshop on the Practical Application of Risk Management (Control Banding) Techniques

By Kalpana Balakrishnan, Sri Ramachandra University, India

The South-East Asian regional office of the WHO recently organized an inter-country consultation on the practical application of risk management techniques at Sri Ramachandra University Chennai, India, the newest WHO CC



Third Regional Workshop on the Practical

in South East Asia. Thirty five participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Myanmar, Colombo, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, and representatives from the WHO Headquarters (Geneva), GTZ (Bonn), NIOSH (Washington DC), and Occupational Knowledge International (San Francisco) attended.

*Application of Risk Management Techniques,
Chennai, India*

The primary objective of the workshop was to improve the awareness on the availability and use of “toolkit” based approaches amongst member countries and enable post-workshop actions aimed at improving occupational safety and health conditions. Case-studies from several countries and additional practical training on use of tool kits were provided. The workshop was able to identify specific challenges as well as propose possible in-country actions, taking advantage of the broad based representation from labour and health departments and WHO CCs. Specific follow up actions include: populating available web resources with multiple process specific guidance sheets; creating incentives for active use of tool-kits; increasing awareness for stakeholders on such approaches; integrating in-country efforts of multiple sectors (especially health and labour departments); and engaging in pilot projects to allow subsequent large-scale applications.

Occupational Health is Progress in Europe

By Timo Leino, AA5 Manager

Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, was in focus in November when three important meetings on workers' health were organised there.

On November 14, a joint meeting between WHO, ILO, and EU, with the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety (BSN) and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) discussed common strategies on occupational health and safety and how best to implement them. The meeting was initiated by WHO/EURO.

The meeting recommended:

- to enhance the process of cooperation between WHO, ILO and EU, in partnership with ICOH and other professional organisations, as well as between sub-regional networks, such as BSN and the Occupational Safety and Health Network of South East European Countries;
- to utilise WHO, ILO and EU occupational safety and health strategies to prepare national occupational health and safety systems;
- increase cooperation at the national level to utilise all health and safety resources;
- consider links between public health, occupational health, and life style issues within a work place context;
- and support the adoption of the NDPHS Partnership Strategy on Health at Work.

The Occupational Safety and Health subgroup of the Social Inclusion, Health and Work Ability group (SHILWA) of NDPHS had prepared the NDPHS Partnership Strategy on Health at Work. The strategy was discussed in the NDPHS Forum: Healthy Life – Healthy Work on November 15 and adopted in the Partnership Annual Conference (PAC) the next day. PAC is the highest decision making forum of the NDPHS, a cooperative effort of thirteen governments, the European Commission, and eight inter-governmental organisations. The Partnership's mission is to promote sustainable development of the Northern Dimension area by improving peoples' health and social well-being.

The Partnership Strategy on Health at Work aims to develop policies, programmes, and systems for health at work and linking the public health and occupational health systems for a coherent and effective delivery of health services for the working age population. The Partnership Strategy will be one component to help realize the occupational safety and health strategies of the WHO, the ILO, and the European Union.

The Partnership resolved:

- the multifaceted interactions of work and health should be integrated in all policies;
- the strategies on occupational health and safety of WHO and ILO, as well as of the EU for the EU member countries, are to be implemented effectively;
- the ILO Convention No. 187 on Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health adopted and implemented in full;
- actively diminishing the inequity in health between and within countries;
- joint activities in the field of workplace health promotion to reduce communicable and non-communicable diseases;
- allocating sufficient resources to projects and to development of occupational health service systems;
- and a closer collaboration between primary health care and occupational health services, including competence and capacity building.

The Partnership Strategy on Health and Work will be translated into practical activities in NDPHS countries through the Baltic Sea Network and NDPHS SIHLWA OSH Group in 2008-2009. Five main activities were identified:

- preparation of National OSH profiles;
- preparation of National OSH programs;
- providing basic occupational health services;
- improving health and preventing accidents in high-risk sectors, such as transport and health sectors;
- and sharing information and raising awareness on OSH.

The national OSH profiles and programs will form a part of the NDPHS data base and will be produced so that they are usable for the ILO and WHO data bases on OSH.

The importance of OSH as part of public health and workplace as an arena for workers' health promotion is gaining ground in Europe. Functional basic and advanced level occupational health services are asked for and seen as an investment not only for health, safety, and well-being, but also for stable labour markets, better productivity, and improved quality of services and products. The Finnish Government announced that it would contribute 1.5 million Euros for project development and implementation through the NDPHS Project Pipeline.

Read past issues of *Collaborating Centre Connection*

Please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ccc/> to read previous issues of *Collaborating Centre Connection*.

Sign Up to Receive the *Collaborating Centre Connection*

Everyone is welcome to sign up to receive the *Collaborating Centre Connection* in your email inbox. To sign up, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/CCC/signup.html>, click on "Subscribe to *Collaborating Centre Connection*," enter your email address, and then click "Go" and "Finish."