



**World Health
Organization**

Healthy workplaces: A model for action



**Dr Maria Neira
Director
Dept of Public Health &
Environment
WHO headquarters
Geneva, Switzerland**

I. Our target population: 'the global workforce'

Most of the world's 2.8 billion workers can benefit from a "healthy workplace" approach, and particularly...

- the 1.9 billion workers who are employed in unhealthy & unsafe working conditions...and that include 170 million children



World Health
Organization

II. Healthy workplaces: a new way of thinking

A comprehensive approach that embraces:

- ▶ Traditional & emerging occupational health – minimizing workers' exposure to job-related physical & psychosocial risks
- ▶ Health promotion – promoting healthy behaviours among workers, both job- and lifestyle-related
- ▶ Enterprise involvement in community – to address broader social & environmental determinants of workers health

Occupational health risks →

- ▶ 160 million new cases of work-related illness every year
- ▶ Occupational risks play a big role in chronic diseases:
 - ▶ 26% CVD & chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
 - ▶ 15% asthma
 - ▶ 10% cancer
 - ▶ 8% injuries
 - ▶ 8 % depression

Health promotion: improved workers' health → better performance

Workplace-based initiatives can help support, for instance:

- ▶ Smoking cessation
- ▶ Obesity control
- ▶ Cardiovascular health
- ▶ HIV/TB testing & treatment
- ▶ Exercise & physical activity



Enterprise community involvement

→ social & environmental determinants

- ▶ Safe/healthy access to work – public transport, carpools, walking, cycling
- ▶ Voluntary pollution/waste control & cleanup
- ▶ Primary health care measures unavailable through health care services

III. A little history...

Healthy workplaces is inspired by the WHO definition of health as:

“a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”

WHO constitution, signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States and entered into force on 7 April 1948



World Health
Organization

Paradigm shift

From: Labour approach
Occupational health



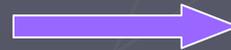
To: Public health approach
Workers' health

Action at workplace



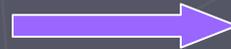
Action to include workers'
families & communities

Work-related health issues
only



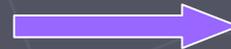
Include all health determinants

Work under labour contract



Include all workers (self-
employed, informal workers)

Employers' responsibility



All stakeholders' responsible
(insurance, health & environm.
authorities, a.o.)

Negotiation between workers
and employers

Health protection is a non-
negotiable



World Health
Organization

Increased business awareness

1. The 'right' thing to do: businesses are part of society and ethical/social frameworks
2. The 'legal' thing to do: in our globalized world, businesses that ignore or undermine workers' health are open to litigation and media scrutiny
3. The 'smart' thing to do: businesses that protect workers' health are among the most successful over time

IV. Global policy anchors

- ▶ WHO Global Strategy on Occupational health for All, 1996
- ▶ ILO Global Strategy 2003 & Promotional Framework
- ▶ World Health Assembly *Worker's health: global plan of action* (2007)

V. The 'Healthy Workplaces' model :

Combining health protection & health promotion

- ▣ Developed by leading occupational health experts out of systematic review of literature
- ▣ Peer-reviewed by WHO regions, ILO, other key agencies
- ▣ October 2009 workshop involving 56 experts from 22 countries, international worker & employer representatives

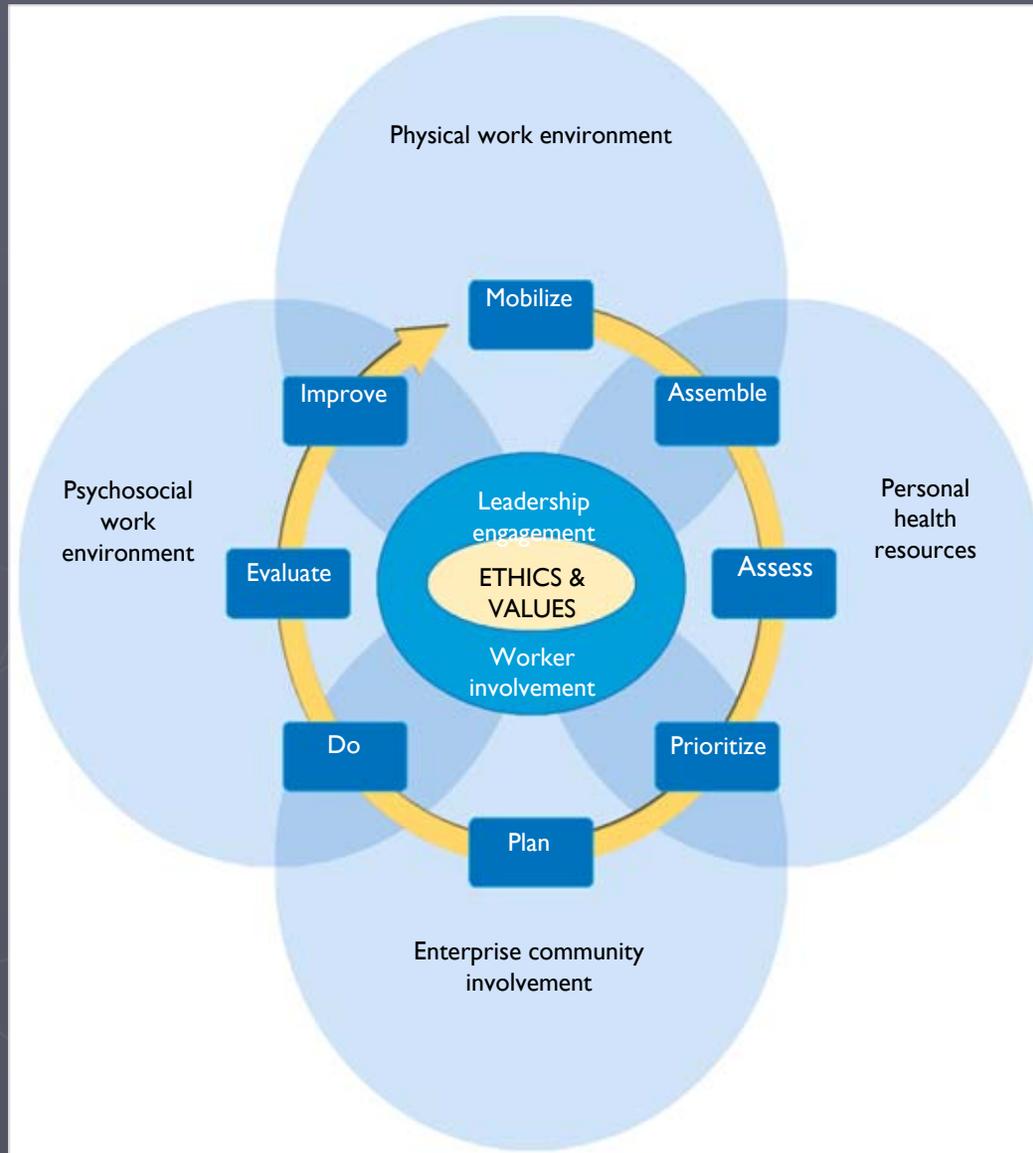


VI. A holistic framework for action

1. Action in four realms:

- Physical work
- Psychosocial environment
- Personal health
- Community involvement

2. A model of continuous improvement



Physical Work Environment practical examples

- ▶ Eliminate a toxic chemical or substitute with less hazardous
- ▶ Install machine guards/exhaust ventilation
- ▶ Train workers on safe operating procedures
- ▶ Personal protective equipment such as respirators or hard hats



Psychosocial Environment

practical examples

- ▣ Reallocate work to reduce workload
- ▣ Zero tolerance for harassment, bullying, discrimination
- ▣ Respect work-family balance
- ▣ Recognize and reward good performance
- ▣ Meaningful worker input into decisions that affect them



Personal Health Resources Support practical examples

- ▶ provide fitness facilities, classes or equipment for workers;
- ▶ provide healthy food choices (e.g., cafeteria)
- ▶ put no-smoking policies in place, provide smoking cessation assistance;
- ▶ provide information about alcohol and drugs, and employee assistance counseling



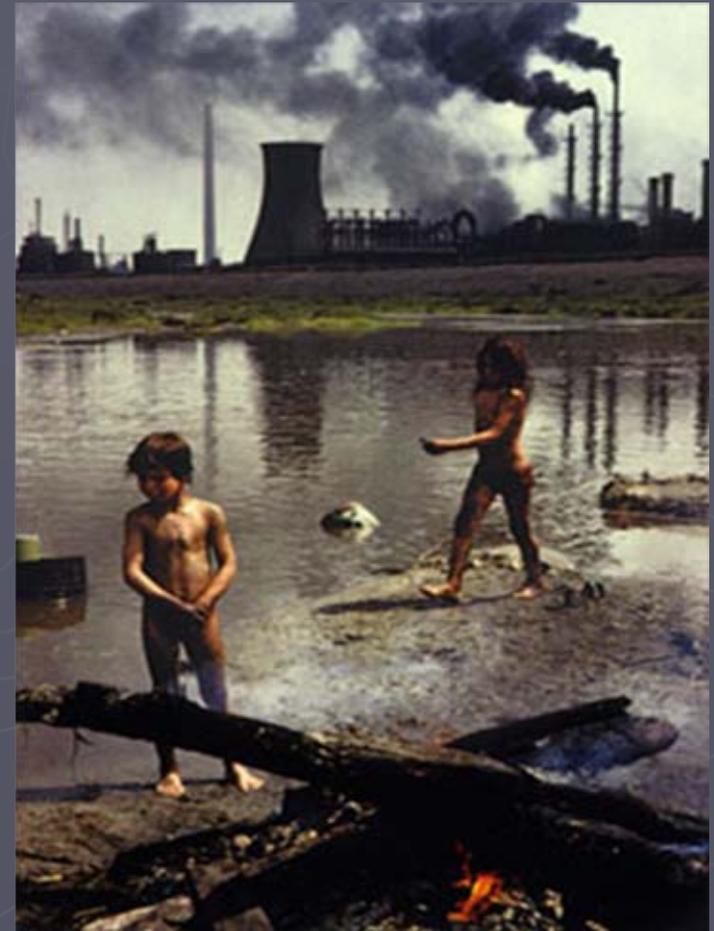
As an employer you can create or remove barriers to lifestyle changes!



**World Health
Organization**

Enterprise Community Environment practical examples

- Free/affordable Primary health care to workers/family members;
- Literacy education to workers/families;
- Voluntary controls over pollutants released into the air or water;
- Financial support to worthwhile community causes;
- Minimize greenhouse gas emissions.



VII. Crosscutting principles for success

- ▶ Leadership engagement
- ▶ Involve workers & their representatives
- ▶ Do an effective gap analysis
- ▶ Learn from others
- ▶ Integrate activities
- ▶ Evaluate and improve



VIII. Next steps

In line with further implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* for workers' health, collaboration between WHO, member states, collaborating centres, and civil society groups to develop further:

- ▶ Practical guidance
- ▶ Sector-specific guidance & tools
- ▶ Training modules



Thank you for your attention and your kind invitation !