

The year of 2012 has been a fruitful one for ICOEPH (International Center for Occupational, Environmental and Public Health). We have been involved in many activities at different geographical settings in Bolivia, Uganda, Philippines, Ghana, Tanzania and Nepal. Our network and our collaboration with national and international colleagues has grown leading to a multidisciplinary working field between professionals and students from different careers – and that is really inspiring!

Actual projects

Projects are run together with NGO Dialogos, where ICOEPH has the role of integrating professional OHS (Occupational Health and Safety) knowledge to the projects. At the moment we are involved in the following projects: 1) Pesticide Health and Environment project phase 3 in Bolivia about to finish in September 2013, 2) Pesticide Health and Environment project in Uganda about to finish in June 2013 and 3) Mercury free gold mining project at the Philippines phase 1 ending in 2014.

We have funds to extend the two former projects a couple of months, and then by April 2013 we will apply for a new pesticide project with the local partner in Bolivia and a Phase two project on Pesticide Health and Environment in Uganda with the local partner UNACOH (Uganda National Committee on Occupational Health). More detailed information on the projects can be found on the websites www.icoeph.org, www.dialogos.dk, www.unacoh.ug and www.plagbol.org.bo.

Coming projects

In December NGO Dialogos received grants for a new project in Nepal on Farmers Health to be started with our local partner ‘Nepal Public Health Foundation’ in April 2013. ICOEPH will have the same role as in previous project collaborations with NGO Dialogos.

OHS training have being held in Ghana and Tanzania this December 2012 together with local OHS NGOs, health services (Ghana Health Services) and universities (Muhimbili University in Tanzania). ICOEPH will evaluate the outcome of these partner activities and possibly try to elaborate a proposal for further project activities in the two countries. ICOEPH will have the overall responsibility for such activities apart from bringing professional OHS input – a possible theme for the projects could be OHS in Small and Medium Scale Industries.

Through NGO Dialogos we are collaborating with GEUS, Blacksmith Institute and local partners on three applications for pilot projects on mercury free gold mining in Bolivia and Peru.

Students and Research

For some years lectures on OHS in developing countries have been taking place at three Danish universities Copenhagen (KU), Aarhus (AAU) and Odense (SDU). The positive effect has been a growing number of students writing bachelor thesis, master thesis and doing studies on the projects and in the fields of OHS in developing countries. Roughly estimated a number of 40-45 students have written theses during the last few years - this year 17 students from Medicine and Public Health have either been or are involved in studies. Student activity is very important as the growing number of activities need more people to be involved. The upcoming Nepal project will e.g. probably be staffed with one of our master students, continuing with a PhD, and a young researcher from the Copenhagen Clinic of Occupational Medicine at Bispebjerg Hospital doing a one-year study on the effect of basic personal protection and pesticide exposure.

Building Stronger Universities

ICOEPH's current involvement as a working group in OHS in the Health Platform through the program Building Stronger Universities was the inspiration for starting up activities in Ghana and Tanzania. This will probably result in some further collaboration not only with local NGO's but also with the Universities from Accra in Ghana and from Dar-Es-Salam in Tanzania.

The Health Platform granted ICOEPH 15.000 DKK to celebrate a seminar in Copenhagen in October 2012. The seminar entailed a presentation of ICOEPH activities and the outcome of some of the studies made on the projects - in total nine presentations were given. Flemming Konradsen, head of the Health Platform attended the seminar and gave a presentation of the status of Building Stronger Universities. The seminar was very successful and will be celebrated again in 2013. A Danish summary of the seminar is attached.

International collaborators

On the ICOH conference in Cancun in Mexico March 2012 we celebrated a session on Prevention of Pesticide Intoxications with a focus on developing countries. At the conference our partners from Bolivia and Uganda participated as well, to share their experiences on prevention of poisonings through their project efforts. Apart from members of ICOEPH presenting several orals and posters on pesticides, also our work on mercury free gold mining was presented and caught much attention. As a result hereof a WHO network was formed named 'Knowledge Network on Occupational Health in Mining' (KNOHMi). KNOHMi is chaired by ICOEPH and has so far been joined by quite a few people from all over the world. Guidelines for the KNOHMi work have been elaborated, the board has been formed and a virtual board meeting has been celebrated to plan actions and knowledge sharing. Through the network contacts has been made to different countries trying to explore the field of mercury free gold mining.

Based on our project experiences we have participated in a WHO meeting in Cancun of which a result is our involvement in the elaboration of WHO's 5 years plan on OHS where we will focus on knowledge sharing on agriculture, mining and in trying out tools for OHS in Small and Medium Enterprises in developing countries.

International OHS on the Clinics of Occupational Medicine and in the Danish Society for Occupational and Environmental Medicine

ICOEPH is experiencing a growing interest for prioritising Global OHS activities in the Danish Clinics/Departments of Occupational Medicine and in the Danish Society of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (DASAM). In the past year the Clinics in Aarhus, Herning, Bispebjerg and Odense have participated actively in administrative work in Denmark, in OHS courses at the Danish universities and by sending personnel to do teaching, planning and evaluation on the ongoing and coming projects abroad.

The Clinic of Occupational Medicine at Odense University Hospital is hosting ICOEPH's secretariat since it started, and without this support it would not have been possible to develop ICOEPH as it is. The Clinic is also the formal contact to the WHO system as they do not accept networks or NGOs as a Collaborating Centre.

Vision for 2013

We will work on expanding our activities as described above, activities that give us the possibility of sharing knowledge with colleagues from many parts of the world, not only in the mentioned countries, but through our networks in ICOH and WHO as well. Based on our extended

activities and experiences on OHS in the Scandinavian countries we believe that these experiences should be shared with countries suffering from unjust social circumstances and poor OHS standards. However, it is also a pleasure to learn from our colleagues from other parts of the world and from their different realities, and it is our impression that all of us get mutually enriched and inspired.

Hopefully, our professionalism on OHS will continue to be of value and demanded for minimizing the suffering happening to a big part of the worlds workers, including workers in the factories abroad where we are getting most of our goods produced. It is our hope that the research being done in OHS will expand and involve developing countries to a greater extent than today, where it is easier to identify possible causal relations and evaluate exposure-relationships due to a higher exposure level of noxious agents and dangerous circumstances in the working environment. Globalisation makes it every day more necessary to document dangerous working exposures and global environmental pollution to be able to plan and act with preventive measures for the benefit for all of us.

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