

PROMOTING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH FOR COMBATING WORKERS' VULNERABILITY TO ILL HEALTH

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Background: Since 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has maintained and developed a system of **international labour standards** aimed at promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. In today's globalized economy, international labour standards is an essential component in the international framework for ensuring that the growth of the global economy provides benefits to all.

Indian Scenario: India as a founding member of ILO lags behind in providing occupational health care to its workers. The statutes promulgated by the Indian Ministry of Labour do not cover such vitally important segments of economy as agriculture, and emerging sectors of information technology. There is no national occupational health policy despite the idea being mooted almost a decade back. The identification of occupational illness and underlying causes of injuries at work have not been seriously dealt with. Recording of such data does not get the seriousness it deserves. In consequence, serious policy interventions can not be made.

Need of the Hour: The globalization is depriving workers of their basic human right, that is to be able to work in a 'safe and healthful workplace'. The authorities need to address capacity building in core disciplines of occupational health such as industrial medicine, industrial hygiene, ergonomics etc. upgrading existing ones to train workers in health and safety is required. India can also take lead in ratifying some of the key International Labour Standards such as Convention No. 155 on occupational safety, No. 161 on Occupational Health Services, and No. 162 on Asbestos until such time its use is totally prohibited.

Key Words: International Labour Standards, occupational health, human rights