



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET



# MODULE 7

## Promoting occupational health and safety and hygienic measures at landfill sites

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"Promotion of BAT/BEP to reduce uPOPs releases from waste open burning in the participating African countries of SADC sub-region"



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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

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## Definition of health and safety

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) define H&S as:

- The promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental, and social well-being of workers in all occupations.
- The prevention amongst workers of departures from health caused by their working conditions.
- The protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health.
- The placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to his/her physiological and psychological capabilities.

In practice, guaranteeing health and safety involves assessing the risks and then modifying the working conditions to mitigate or eliminate them.

In SWM, there are deep difference between working as:

- Informal workers: collecting waste or recycling from the bulk of waste in a dump or non-sanitary landfill
- Professional workers in public or private companies that ensure good standards of health and safety.

Safety and health conditions of SWM workers improve with the development of an effective SWM system.

In fact, the risk for workers is strictly dependent from the level of safety guaranteed in each plant which is strictly dependent from the development of the existing SWM system.

## What are the types of risk workers in SWM are exposed to?

The risks can be classified as:

- Biological: from bacteria, virus, fungi, and other pathogens that are present in the waste workers get exposed to
- Chemical: contact with toxic substances deposited or formed during open air combustion could results in respiratory diseases, allergy, eye infections, ...
- Accidents: injury from working equipment, injuries from sharp objects and glass
- Vermin: from insects, snakes, rats, ...
- Other physical or psychological impacts: heavy lifts, musculoskeletal damages, noise, social stigma.

## What are the main steps of any health and safety procedure?

The Comprehensive Health and Safety Plan is composed of:

1. Standard operating procedures for how things are done.
2. The identification of all potential risk associated to the activities performed and the equipment used.
3. An injury and illness prevention program: a proactive process to help employers find and fix workplace hazards before workers are hurt. Management leadership and active worker participation are essential to ensuring that all hazards are identified and addressed.
4. A health and safety plan: 1) what to do when injuries or accidents take place; 2) who is responsible for doing what.
5. A training program to train the employees on all these things.
6. A program to collect data, measure all safety-related issues and assess the procedures being undertaken at a site.
7. Continuously improve this process by starting again from step 1.

### **POLICY-MAKERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT**

Independently of the development of the SWM system, local authorities and employers must adopt the means to protect workers in every working conditions

## How can local authorities protect informal workers?

Local authorities should provide:

- Security fence to minimize entrance of unauthorized people and animals to the dumpsite.
- Facilities with running water and sanitary services.
- Protection against injuries: the use of Personal Protection Equipment by workers should be mandatory.
- Waste pickers should be provided with protection for their feet and lower legs with shoes or boots of appropriate size, shape, material, and condition.
- Protection of body and clothes: the contamination of clothes is significant because most waste pickers wear the same clothes at work and at home.
- Respiratory tract protection: bacteria in and around dump sites are very mobile, particularly when attached to fine particulate matter blown by the wind.
- Use of waste-sorting tools so that workers don't have to use their hands.
- Immunization against life-threatening diseases, such as tetanus, meningitis, and hepatitis.



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