



WHWB signs Memorandum of Understanding with IOHA



Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB) and the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA) signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Washington, D.C., USA, in September 2018, during the 11th IOHA International Scientific Conference.

This successfully formalised agreement was the culmination of proactive interaction and liaison between representatives of WHWB and IOHA, which started at the 32nd International Congress of Occupational Health (ICOH2018) in Dublin, Ireland earlier this year. Both organisations had a strong presence at the ICOH2018 Congress, which contributed to raising the profile of the occupational hygiene discipline within the broad field of global occupational health.

The membership of both organisations comprises mainly occupational hygiene professionals. Both WHWB and IOHA appreciate the importance of research and new knowledge in developing and applying preventive measures in occupational safety and health, and share a common mission to contribute to the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases. Hence, WHWB and IOHA plan to use their collaborative efforts and expertise to advance the protection of workers and to promote best practices to improve worker safety and health.

The MoU provides the framework for the two partner organisations, both non-profit entities, to work together to improve occupational health, specifically for under-represented workers and under-served populations, by reducing risks in their work environments and building capacity in the prevention of occupational disease and injury.

The MoU encompasses scientific and technical collaboration in a number of areas within the field of occupational hygiene specifically but, more broadly, occupational health and safety, for example:

- Identifying and publicising the need for volunteers with occupational health and hygiene expertise, and recruiting volunteers for training programmes and projects
- Maintaining a mentoring programme, where mentors are matched with individuals (protégés) who would like an ongoing professional relationship with a more experienced occupational hygiene practitioner
- Identification of occupational hygiene initiatives which lend themselves to collaboration between the two organisations, such as training courses, seminars, conferences, and networking platforms, as well as joint development of projects to address the needs of under-served and vulnerable worker populations

- Collaborative efforts for the purpose of raising funds to make joint initiatives possible and feasible.

The MoU serves as a pledge that WHWB and IOHA will work in partnership to maximise efforts to reach those in greatest need of occupational health, occupational hygiene and occupational safety resources and services, and progress toward the combined WHWB and IOHA Vision: 'A world in which workers, their families, and communities do not get ill because of their work, and a safe and healthy working environment for all'.



All-smiles stamp of approval – Peter-John 'Jakes' Jacobs, IOHA President 2018-2019 (and SAIOH Council Member and Past President) and Marianne Levitsky, WHWB Secretary and Founding President (representing WHWB President 2017-2018, Kevin Hedges) sign the WHWB-IOHA MoU in Washington, D.C., in September 2018

Photograph: Lydia Renton, WHWB Board member

WHWB FAST FACTS

- WHWB (www.whwb.org) was founded in 2011, as a non-profit organisation, to help address occupational health and hygiene issues in the developing world.
- WHWB's Vision: 'A world where workers, their families and communities do not get ill because of their work'.
- WHWB's Mission: 'To prevent work-related disease around the world through shared expertise, knowledge and skills'.
- The WHWB international organisation is based in Canada, with several branches across the world, e.g. WHWB-USA and WHWB-UK.
- Membership is voluntary and comprises professionals across various disciplines within occupational health, the most prominent being occupational hygiene. As of September 2018, there were 494 members, with most

being from the following countries: USA (130), Canada (119), UK (60), Australia (45), and Tanzania (43). There is a network of approximately 700 professionals from across the globe associated with WHWB, although only around 500 are official members.

- Through its established and growing network of professionals who volunteer their time and expertise, WHWB is able to offer capacity-building in the broad occupational health field through collaborations that benefit underserved populations and vulnerable workforces across the globe.
- To date, the WHWB activities have focused primarily on training, mentoring, development and translation of guidance materials, and technical assistance to build knowledge and capacity in occupational health and hygiene.
- Training accomplishments during 2018 (as of October): six training events; five countries (Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Vietnam (two locations), Zambia); 152 trainees.
- Training initiatives are under development for 2019 in the following countries, potentially: Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Israel, Senegal, and Tanzania.
- The mentorship programme comprises 40 mentors and 25 mentees (at three levels: student, early-career and mid-career occupational hygiene professionals). It is envisaged that, over time, WHWB will develop and maintain a library of teaching materials that all mentors and mentees can access and derive benefit from, for their daily work activities.
- WHWB builds awareness of global occupational health issues within the occupational health professions through monthly teleconference information sessions. WHWB members also organise, sponsor, and present at seminars and conferences on occupational health and safety topics. Members also present to more general audiences at conferences, universities and schools, and are available to speak to the media on global occupational health and safety.
- WHWB is available to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that do international development work, to help them protect their own volunteers from health hazards, and to ensure that their projects incorporate good control of occupational hazards.
- WHWB offers support and technical assistance for projects around the world, to evaluate and control occupational health hazards. Much of this work involves leveraging partnerships, e.g. introducing academic researchers to partner organisations that are working to address occupational health issues in developing countries; and arranging in-kind donations of occupational hygiene equipment and laboratory services.
- Examples of WHWB projects: addressing silica dust exposure in agate workers and stone crushers in India;

investigating occupational exposures in brick plant workers (e.g. heat and ergonomic stresses, silica dust, toxic kiln emissions, child labour) in Africa and Asia (e.g. Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Tanzania).

- *IOHA Collaboration Award* – The most notable achievement of 2018 for the 'WHWB Brick Kiln Committee' and 'Global Fairness Initiative' was being the first recipients of this new award at the 11th IOHA International Scientific Conference in September. The Award recognises an occupational hygiene organisation that has chosen to work with other countries or organisations to share ideas and technologies to improve the level of occupational health worldwide. The 2018 Award was bestowed on the aforementioned collaboration partners, in recognition of their remarkable efforts in establishing a dedicated centre at Kathmandu University in Nepal, to collect data on sampling, analysis, medical information, extent of child labour, and hazardous exposures in brick kilns.

IOHA IN A NUTSHELL

IOHA (<https://ioha.net/>) is an association of occupational hygiene organisations from across the world, all of which are dedicated to the discipline and application of the inherent principles of occupational hygiene. From its creation in 1987, IOHA has grown to 35 member organisations, representing more than 20 000 occupational hygienists worldwide. IOHA works to enhance the international network of occupational hygiene associations that promote, develop and improve occupational hygiene globally, providing safe and healthy work environments for all.

IOHA provides the occupational hygiene profession with an international voice through its recognition as a NGO by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). IOHA is working (via ILO and WHO) to raise the profile of occupational hygiene worldwide and to show that it can offer a cost-effective way to reduce the burden of injuries and disease in workplaces around the world. To achieve these goals, IOHA collaborates with a variety of international organisations and associations, including the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), the International Ergonomics Association (IEA), the International Society for Respiratory Protection (ISRP), the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA), and WHWB.

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