

American Industrial Hygiene Association Emerging Economies Microgrant Advisory Group

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) International Affairs Committee (IAC) created the Emerging Economies Microgrant Subcommittee as a means to provide financial support for occupational hygiene research and training projects to improve worker health and safety in developing parts of the world. The goals of the subcommittee were to improve the transparency and fairness regarding the evaluation and funding of international projects by AIHA. The subcommittee also provided a clear process for proposal submission and descriptions of criteria used in selecting projects to support. Its mission was to build occupational hygiene capacity worldwide, at the grassroots level.

In 2018, the subcommittee developed operating procedures, proposal selection criteria, ranking methods, and project reporting and tracking requirements. Subcommittee members were comprised of willing volunteers from the IAC, who had international experience with philanthropic research and training groups.

In 2022, the AIHA Board formed the opinion that the efforts of this group warranted an advisory structure – the Emerging Economies Microgrant Advisory Group (EEMAG) – to solidify the programme and establish a permanent fund to build upon over time. The creation of the EEMAG provided greater stability, visibility, and oversight than is typically undertaken by a technical committee subcommittee. The EEMAG facilitates networking

and information exchange among members, contributes to public policy debate, and assists with collaboration among allied organisations. The commitment to the EEMAG programme is reflected in the AIHA Strategic Plan 2022–2024: Advancement and Dissemination of Knowledge (<https://www.aiha.org/about-aiha/aiha-strategic-plan>).

AIHA EMERGING ECONOMIES MICROGRANT ADVISORY GROUP CHARTER

Mission

The mission of the AIHA Emerging Economies Microgrant Advisory Group is to provide a fair, structured, transparent, and consistent mechanism for funding educational and research projects that promote occupational hygiene in economically developing nations.

Vision

The vision of the group is to expand occupational hygiene awareness and capacity, globally, in order to reduce the risk of injury, illness, and fatality to workers in nations with the fewest resources.

PROJECTS FUNDED TO DATE

Since 2018, the subcommittee and, subsequently, the EEMAG has funded 52 projects to the value of USD148 550. Table 1 provides a full accounting of projects, funding provided, and countries, by year, since the programme's inception.

Table 1. Microgrant projects funded, 2018–2023

Year/Country	Project title	Amount (USD)
2018		
Lebanon, India, Nepal	DWOI Block Grant for three proposals: exposure assessment training in Beirut, Lebanon; environmental monitoring for asbestos, Environics, India; training on OHS in Nepal. Developing and implementing training, performing asbestos sampling	3 000
Various	DWOI: Technical Projects and Training Block Grant	5 000
Various	Belgian Centre for Occupational Hygiene: training video of air sampling process for sampling silica during brick production in developing countries	1 500
Vietnam	Centre for Development and Integration (CDI)	5 000
	OHS capacity building on chemical hazards in the electronics industry	
Nepal	WHWH: establishing a Centre for Environmental and Occupational Health (related to Brick Kiln) at Kathmandu University	2 500
Mexico	Training and workshops (under the leadership of US Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network)	3 000
	Total	20 000
2019		
Various	DWOI: 2019–2020 Technical Project and Training Workshop Block Grant Request	5 000
Various	DWOI: Block Grant Request for three proposals	3 258
Bangladesh	Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network OHS Initiative for Workers and Community, Dhaka	5 000
Various	Training video of air sampling process for sampling silica during brick production in developing countries	2 242
Nepal	Establishment of the Centre for Environmental and Occupational Health	4 500
	Total	20 000

Continued on page 98

Continued from page 97

Year/Country	Project title	Amount (USD)
2020		
Cameroon	Air monitoring of safer artisanal mining practices, eastern Cameroon	4 190
Various	DWOI Block Grant for 2021 Technical Projects and Training Workshops	7 500
India	Health and safety education to promote wellbeing at work for women informal workers	2 500
Various	Strengthening productivity and improving working conditions for small to mid-sized enterprises by applying OSH methods	2 535
Vietnam	Improving the ability to identify the OEH hazards of e-waste for employers and workers	2 535
Vietnam	One-day training workshop on OHS for the OSH officers working at healthcare facilities	500
Mozambique	Occupational risk assessment at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM)	1 000
Peru	Peruvian Cooperation for Elimination of Silicosis	3 000
	Total	23 760
2021		
Various	DWOI Block Grant for 2022 Technical Projects and Training Workshops	5 050
Malaysia	In the new norm of COVID-19 pandemic: industrial hygiene practices guideline for Malaysian small and medium-sized enterprise workers	2 200
Various	Intervention of occupational injury through applying occupational safety practice in large-scale textile industries	2 000
Vietnam	Evaluation of airborne silica dust using video exposure monitoring (VEM) to pinpoint high exposure processes	4 000
Bangladesh	OHS initiative for workers and community	2 250
Guyana	Promoting occupational health and safety in artisanal and small-scale gold mining	2 000
Various	Capacity building and skills improvement training for African OSH and labour inspectors	1 500
Malaysia	Building capacity of an effective management of occupational health hazards in the plantation industry	3 500
India	Respiratory protection training for waste pickers	2 500
	Total	25 000
2022		
Philippines	A descriptive exploration on the OHS risks for Filipino jeepney drivers in the time of COVID-19 for the promotion of OHS committee and policy building	2 000
Bangladesh	A study on OSH practices in the stone crushing sector	2 000
Vietnam	Addressing the mental health impacts among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic	3 500
Cameroon	Air monitoring of safer artisanal mining practices, eastern Cameroon	644
Ethiopia	Ethiopia Initiative – OHS and industrial hygiene capacity building collaboration, WHWB-US Branch and Wolaita Sodo University	1 000
Malaysia	Evaluating occupational health for Malaysian army personnel working in a World War II-era warehouse	3 450
Tanzania	Introduction of safer mining practices to artisanal miners, southern Tanzania	2 500
Sri Lanka	Mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic in the apparel sector and empowering women/factory workers to face day-to-day challengers along with the Pandemic	1 100
Bangladesh	OHS initiative for workers and community, Dhaka	3 500
Vietnam	One-day training workshop on risk assessment, prevention, and control measures of COVID-19 infection in workplace settings	900
Kenya	Prevention of hearing damage from exposure to high noise	2 250
DRC	Risk assessment and occupational hazards prevention in artisanal mines: a training programme, Kolwezi	3 500
Uganda	Study of the impact of mercury use by artisanal gold miners	2 000
India	Study of the hazardous effects of silicosis among mineworkers and improving their quality of life while increasing their lifespan	2 500
Mongolia	Welding fume exposure assessment	3 480
	Total	34 324
2023		
Ghana	Informal sector: roadside mechanic shop activities	3 500
Kenya	OSH in the informal sector	3 500
Uganda	Status of chemical exposure among workers in textile industries: a case study of industries along the shores of Lake Victoria at Walukuba-Masese, Jinja	2 000
Uganda	Training farmers on the safe use of pesticides, central Uganda	3 500
Bangladesh	A study on OHS conditions of sanitation workers, Dhaka	3 226
Malaysia	OSH pocket book as a simple yet practical guide for small-medium enterprises	2 800
Uganda	Enhancement of protective workplace practices in small-scale mining	3 440
Tanzania	Prevention of respiratory health problems caused by welding fumes exposure	3 500
Vietnam	Conference support grant for hazardous substances in manufacturing and construction sectors	3 500
	Total	25 466
	Grand Total	148 550

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo, DWOI: Developing World Outreach Initiative, OEH: occupational and environmental health, OHS: occupational health and safety, OSH: occupational safety and health, WHWB: Workplace Health Without Borders, US: United States

Funding has been provided each year since 2018, with the full support of the AIHA Board. In 2022 and 2023, projects were supported with additional funding from Amazon, with donations of USD25 000 each year. Amazon has pledged an additional USD25 000 for the Microgrants Programme for 2024. Amazon employee, Jake Ward, is a valued volunteer member of the EEMAG.

PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCESS

Educational and research project proposals can be submitted on the AIHA Emerging Economies Microgrant Group project proposal webpage portal (<https://www.aiha.org/get-involved/volunteer-groups/emerging-economy-micro-grants-program>) at any time throughout the year. Proposals are distributed to Advisory Group members for review, ranking, and decisions about funding and the amount, if approved.

Proposal selection criteria

The Advisory Group will review project proposals and recommend the allocation of funds, according to the following criteria. Higher scores are awarded to those projects that reflect these parameters.

1. *Organisation eligibility*: preference for projects led by non-profit entities, such as charities, and non-government, academic, and philanthropic organisations. Corporations and individuals are not excluded from applying, but the benefits to the project recipients should clearly outweigh the benefits to the individual or the company providing the services.
2. *Stand-alone project addressing primary prevention consistent with the AIHA's mission and strategic priorities*: project promotes occupational hygiene through education, research, training, and development.
3. *Development and promotion of the occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) profession*: project supports research and development efforts necessary to solve occupational health problems and improve working conditions/environment. Capacity building is evident through education, research, training, and outreach.
4. *Projects addressing known or potential worker health issues*: project demonstrates research on hazardous workplace exposures, outcomes, and emerging issues of control methods to minimise associated workplace risks. It may address any emerging or ongoing concerns related to occupational health and safety (OHS).
5. *Requested support does not exceed USD3 500 per project*: project can achieve its goals with a smaller overall budget, and still make significant impacts in regions of greatest need.
6. *Adequately describes needs to make project viable and successful*: project has a high likelihood of achieving its stated objectives within the required project timeframe (one year from funding).
7. *Sources of proposal support, technical assistance, and collaboration*: project describes how it may fit into a larger picture of regional or host country development through other support and organisations.
8. *Ability to improve public and environmental health, achieve results, feasibility, practicality*: whether through prior AIHA microgrant projects or other means, a project or sponsoring organisation can show past experience and success in goal-oriented projects.

AWARD NOTIFICATION, PROPOSAL PROJECT TRACKING, AND REPORTING

Once a determination regarding funding support is made by the Advisory Group, a letter is sent to the affected parties and monies are sent to the designated project manager. Stipulations are reiterated, upon award notification, that recipients are expected to provide quarterly reports regarding the status of their projects to the AIHA and the Advisory Group. Updates are to include documents such as written descriptions of activities completed to date, timelines, photographs of events or activities, and results of research activities. At the end of the project, a final report, summarising the activities and results of the project, must be provided. Copies of relevant videos,

photographs, or published reports should also be sent to the AIHA. These documents are then shared with the AIHA Board of Directors, microgrant sponsors, and the occupational hygiene community, to highlight successes of the programme in building worldwide occupational hygiene capacity at the grassroots level.

ADVANCEMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

In 2023, the EEMAG contributed to the AIHA's ability to explore, develop, and disseminate cutting-edge educational, technical, and career enrichment resources to advance the OEHS profession and professionals, by providing small-scale funding to several projects in emerging economy countries including Uganda, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Vietnam. Academic organisations and NGOs were, thus, enabled to purchase equipment, laboratory support, and other necessary materials to conduct meaningful and effective research on workplace hazards and exposures in developing nation workplaces. Results of these projects are disseminated in publications and at national and international conferences. Many EEMAG-funded projects are directly linked to training programme development and training provided to workers, managers, and regulatory agents. In parts of the world where occupational hazards are unknown and undocumented, the EEMAG programme provides an important platform for understanding occupational hazards, and for spreading awareness of the AIHA and its capabilities and resources.

INTEGRITY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

In 2023, the EEMAG Microgrant Programme solicited proposals and funded projects in Uganda, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Vietnam that facilitated the development of leading metrics, and best practices, for worker and community health and safety in those countries. The opportunity to expand research and training provides a rich opportunity to influence how workers, managers, educators, and society in general approach and view worker health and safety. Building the integrity of occupational hygiene practice is perhaps the most important benefit of the EEMAG grants.

ADVOCACY

In 2023, the EEMAG added to the AIHA's ability to influence the actions of the public and organisations to advance worker and community health and safety, by actively advocating OHS in regions of the world where it is in short supply. In developed countries, there are many well-educated and experienced industrial hygienists using modern technologies to evaluate and control hazardous exposures and conditions. But, in many parts of the world, millions of workers are not protected from workplace hazards. The EEMAG's 2023 promotion of the Microgrant Programme to facilitate small research projects and training programmes in Uganda, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Vietnam, using and developing local professionals, will help to address this problem. Beginning with small projects and training programmes, the AIHA can make a huge impact through outreach to dozens of nations and workers in need around the world.

CONCLUSION

Microgrants have been shown to be an effective and efficient means of allocating funds for humanitarian projects in developing regions of the globe. By allocating smaller packages of funds, broadly and transparently, distribution is equitable and impacts a larger number of workers. Microgrant benefits are maximised through the use of volunteers to oversee project proposal reviews, funding, and tracking of project completion. The AIHA Emerging Economies Microgrant Advisory Group has been successful in its implementing of this model. The AIHA, by creating an ongoing project proposal and acceptance review and funding process, has made a positive impact in the lives of thousands of workers in numerous developing regions of the world. 