

South Asia

In the Western State of Maharashtra, the MBLKS carried out a **weeklong campaign against use of asbestos from 22-28 April 2005 at two of its prominent organizing cities - Aurangabad (Union Headquarter) and Nagpur**. As part of its awareness raising activities, the union **published simple pamphlets and posters in local language** and distributed them in labour residential colonies, *thiyas* (labour contact-points) and construction worksites. Also, **posters were pasted** at important crossings all over the two cities to raise public awareness at large.

During this 7-day period, the MBLKS also **held several small public meetings at / near construction sites throughout the two cities** and were addressed by the top brass of the union leadership. To monitor the health and safety conditions and particularly use of asbestos, the MBLKS **formed Workers' Committees at several strategic organizing locations**. On 27-28 April, with the campaign at its peak, **a cycle rally was also organized with nearly 100 cyclists distributing materials**. On 28th April, large public meetings were organized and a two-minute mourning for the dead workers was observed. Overall, thousands of workers have benefited and gained information due to the MBLKS campaign. The union activities were well covered and widely reported in the local dailies. The MBLKS leadership felt that the campaign shall give a big boost to their union enrolment drive in the coming months.

In the Southern State of Tamil Nadu, six IFBWW Affiliates - TMKTS, INRLF, RWO, SGEU, AIKTMS and UNIFRONT came together to **organize a major event on 28th April** at Thirupputhur, Sivagangai District, Tamil Nadu State. Senior officials from all the five unions were present along with **more than 1,200 construction workers, reflecting on the importance attached to IWMD**. The affiliates had **prepared posters, pamphlets in local language (Tamil)** for distribution. The workers were quite motivated with the inspirational messages delivered by the leaders and realized the ill effects of asbestos usage. The workers also took a pledge to create awareness among fellow workers on the use of asbestos. Also, they realized that worksite accidents can be prevented, provided adequate precautions and safety measures are taken.

Also, a 3-day OHS Sub-Regional Seminar was organised on 13-15 August 2005 at Yercaud, Tamil Nadu (India). The program aimed to follow-up on the progress made by affiliates in relation to framing of state rules and formation of construction welfare boards on the lines of the Central Construction Legislation enacted in 1996. Also, the seminar looked into the alarming use of asbestos in the construction sector, its harmful effects, and strategies to raise awareness amongst workers and to build a trade union campaign for its gradual ban in India. Twenty-one (21) participants from thirteen (13) affiliates in India and Nepal took part in the seminar. The unions in their presentations emphasized the following aspects:

- OHS Committees in all unions and some even have district committees
- Institutional participation is quite less at this stage
- There is legislation for construction workers (including OHS provisions), however, its implementation needs improvement

- ❑ Due to the large presence of contractors / sub-contractors in construction sector, there is non direct employer-employee relationship and thus OHS issues receive less priority
- ❑ Awareness / training programs have been conducted and also resulted in increased membership. Also materials in local languages have been made attracting workers attention
- ❑ Unions are campaigning for the framing of state rules and proper functioning of construction welfare boards. The IWMD is gaining popularity and has become an annual feature of union activities.

Departing from this sub-regional event, series of one-day tripartite OSH workshops, one-day training for OSH representatives and a 3-day intensive training for OSH representatives and committee members were conducted.



Three 1-day Tripartite Workshop(s) were each organized by INBCWF, MBLKS and BMS (Gujarat). These workshops aimed at bringing the Trade Unions, Employers' / Contractors' Associations and the Labour Department on a common footing so as to develop a better understanding on the impending health and safety issues in the construction industry. The workshops received a good response with the positive participation,

especially that of the employers. Taking the lead, BMS in Gujarat is spearheading a proposal for the formation of a Joint Committee, which shall be entrusted upon the task of monitoring OHS issues at construction sites, to start with, in Ahmedabad city.

■ One-Day Training Workshop for OHS Reps

Classrooms training were extended to the work site, with a series of one-day basic work-site training for Union OHS representatives. These programs were organized separately by three affiliates - BMS, INBCWF & MBLKS at major construction sites in the States of Gujarat, Orissa & Maharashtra respectively. These training workshops aimed to draw workers' attention on basic preventive measures at construction sites, use of PPE and so on.



The BMS (Gujarat) used this opportunity to organize a live painting-cum-exhibition whereby a 100 feet long canvas was painted by students of Fine Arts College, Ahmedabad in the presence of a large gathering of workers. In the near future, the union is planning to use these paintings to design simple posters for mass awareness.

▪ **3-day Intensive Training Workshop for OHS Reps and Committee Members: 22-24 December 2005, IRWEC, Thuraimangalam (Tamil Nadu)**



A three-day training workshop for OHS representatives and committee members was organized at IRWEC, Thuraimangalam (Tamil Nadu) from 22-24 December 2005. A total of 20 participants (including 10 women) took part from five affiliates in Tamil Nadu. The workshop focused on key areas of work site health and safety management. Effective learning

methods such as group discussion, brainstorming and buzz groups strengthened the deliberations.

▪ **Material Development Workshop: 29 December 2005, Kathmandu (Nepal)**

On 29th December 2005, a one-day material development workshop was organized at Kathmandu for the affiliates – CAWUN, CUPPEC & NBCWU in Nepal. 14 OHS activists – mainly grass-root level activists (including 3 women) from the three Nepal affiliates were in attendance. The workshop gave a first-hand opportunity to discuss the OHS situation and challenges in the Nepal construction industry. Detailed interaction took place on how to raise OHS awareness amongst the construction workers. The affiliates have sought support for development of materials in local language at two levels – union-wise and jointly (through the Nepal Affiliates Committee). The affiliates propose to use leaflets, handouts, posters and so on. It was also felt that statistics at national and regional level in the country is deficient and old – hence, there is a need to collect information on accidents/casualties to highlight and spread awareness about the dangerous conditions of work. The unions shall try to gather this information through their district offices and local organizers.



Finally, The IFBWW Film – *Labouring Brick by Brick* was made available to affiliates in four languages – English, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil. The film is being used by affiliates for conducting OHS activities, especially for women workers. As requested by the Nepal Affiliates, the work of translating the film into Nepali is underway which shall enable its mass usage in raising awareness amongst construction workers in Nepal.