

Occupational Safety Health Workshop Report April 2026

Report on the Observation of International Occupational Safety and Health at Work Day and Workshop on Occupational Health Hazards for Women Textile Workers, Women Shrimp Culture and Prawn Culture Workers, and Women Sanitation Workers

April 28–29, 2026 | YMCA, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Organised by Jeevan Rekha Parishad (JRP) with the Support of DWOI, USA



1. Introduction

International Occupational Safety and Health at Work Day is globally observed every year on 28 April to promote safe, healthy, and dignified working conditions for workers across all sectors. In recognition of this important occasion, Jeevan Rekha Parishad (JRP), with the support of DWOI, USA, organised a two-day awareness workshop and observation programme on 28–29 April 2026 at YMCA, Bhubaneswar.

The programme primarily focused on women workers engaged in textile work, shrimp culture and prawn culture activities, and sanitation services. These groups of workers often face multiple occupational health (OH) hazards due to unsafe working conditions, prolonged working hours, lack of protective equipment, poor sanitation, inadequate awareness, and limited access to healthcare facilities.



The event aimed to create awareness among women workers about occupational safety and health, provide practical guidance on preventive measures, encourage collective dialogue on workplace challenges, and promote women's rights to safe and healthy working environments. Around 85 women workers from Bhubaneswar, Odisha actively participated in the programme.

The workshop also served as a platform for women workers to share their lived experiences, stories of hardship, workplace challenges, and examples of resilience through storytelling sessions, group discussions, and cultural performances.

2. Objectives of the Programme

The key objectives of the two-day programme were:

- To observe International Occupational Safety and Health at Work Day.
- To raise awareness among women workers about occupational health hazards.
- To educate workers on preventive health and safety measures at workplaces.
- To encourage women workers to demand safe, dignified, and equitable working conditions.
- To promote collective learning and mutual support among women workers from different sectors.
- To strengthen networking among civil society organisations, labour groups, and women workers.
- To provide emotional and cultural space for women workers through storytelling and cultural events.

3. Participants and Representation

The workshop witnessed active participation from:

- Women textile workers from small weaving and garment units (20 women).
- Women shrimp culture and prawn culture workers engaged in prawn processing, and packaging.(15 women).
- Women sanitation workers working in municipalities, institutions, and informal sectors.(30 women)

- Representatives from women’s groups and community-based organisations.(10 rep)
- Social activists, labour rights advocates, health educators, and development professionals.(5 rep)
- Staff members and volunteers of Jeevanrekha Parishad.(5 members)

The participants represented diverse social and economic backgrounds, including tribal women, migrant workers, informal sector labourers, and self-employed women workers.

4. Inaugural Session

The programme began with a welcome address by Dr. Manoranjan Mishra, Director of Jeevan Rekha Parishad, who highlighted the importance of occupational safety and health, especially for women workers in unorganised sectors. The speakers like Mr. Surya Mohanty, the Former Director- OH and Safety Department, KIIT University. S.K.Patra, Former Director General Health Services , Government of India, Dr Pratyush Mishra Consultant Max Hospital, Dr Lata from Dental Care Hospital, Dr, Ashish Mohanty



from , Keonjhar Medical College, Dr. R.N. Ratha, Former Regional Director, Health Sevices , Government of India, Mr. Sudhanshu Sekhar Nayak, Secretary, YMCA, Mr. Deepak Barik, Assistant Director JRP and a public Health Specialist emphasised that women often face double burdens of workplace hazards and unpaid domestic responsibilities.

Representatives from Civil Society organisations, UNICEF, Youth for Water Plus conveyed solidarity messages and appreciated the efforts of JRP in empowering marginalised women workers through awareness, education, and advocacy initiatives.

The inaugural session also included:

- Lighting of the ceremonial lamp.
- Introduction of participants.
- Sharing of programme objectives.
- Observance of silence in memory of workers who lost their lives due to unsafe working conditions.

The atmosphere of the session reflected solidarity, dignity, and commitment towards workers’ rights and health.

5. Technical Sessions on Occupational Health Hazards

Several technical and interactive sessions were conducted during the workshop by resource persons, health professionals, and labour activists.

5.1 Occupational Hazards Faced by Women Textile Workers

The session Chaired by Dr. S. K.Patra discussed various occupational hazards commonly faced by women in textile and garment sectors, including:

- Exposure to cotton dust and fabric particles leading to respiratory problems.
- Continuous sitting and repetitive movements causing back pain, neck pain, and joint disorders.
- Eye strain due to poor lighting.
- Mental stress due to production pressure and low wages.
- Skin allergies caused by chemical dyes and detergents.



The resource persons explained preventive measures such as proper ventilation, use of masks and gloves, ergonomic seating arrangements, regular health check-ups, and workplace hygiene.

5.2 Occupational Hazards among Women Shrimp Culture and Prawn Culture Workers

Women involved in shrimp culture and prawn culture shared their experiences related to:

- Exposure to OH hazards during processing the prawns for long duration.
- Skin Diseases and skin irritation.
- Long working hours in poorly ventilated environments.
- Musculoskeletal disorders due to repetitive manual work.
- Lack of access to first aid and protective equipment.



Experts recommended the use of protective gloves, improved workstations, proper hydration, safe handling methods, and regular awareness training.

5.3 Occupational Hazards among Women Sanitation Workers

This session under the Chairmanship of Dr. R.N.Ratha generated deep discussions on the challenges faced by women sanitation workers, including:

- Exposure to toxic waste and harmful chemicals.
- Risk of infections and communicable diseases.
- Lack of gloves, masks, boots, and uniforms.
- Social stigma and discrimination.
- Psychological stress and insecurity.

The resource persons stressed the importance of:

- Personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Access to health insurance and regular medical camps.
- Vaccination and sanitation awareness.
- Government accountability and labour rights.
- Dignity and recognition of sanitation workers.

The sessions encouraged active interaction, questions, and experience sharing among participants.

6. Storytelling and Experience Sharing by Women Workers

One of the most powerful components of the programme was the storytelling session where women workers openly shared their personal experiences.

Women textile workers narrated how continuous work without breaks affected their physical health and family life. Some participants spoke about wage discrimination and lack of maternity support.

Women shrimp culture and prawn culture workers shared stories of burns, body pain, and financial insecurity during off-seasons. They also highlighted the lack of institutional support and training.

Women sanitation workers emotionally described their struggles with social stigma, unsafe working conditions, and health problems. Many participants spoke about the absence of dignity and respect in their work despite providing essential public services.

These sessions created a strong sense of solidarity among participants. Many women expressed that it was the first time they were able to publicly speak about their pain, struggles, and aspirations.



7. Cultural Events and Group Activities

The evenings of both days included cultural activities performed by participants and community groups. The cultural programmes highlighted themes of labour dignity, women's empowerment, health awareness, and social justice.

Activities included:

- Folk songs by women workers.
- Group dances representing traditional culture.
- Street theatre on workplace safety.
- Motivational songs on women's unity and rights.
- Poetry recitation and awareness messages.

These activities helped create an inclusive and participatory atmosphere. The cultural events also encouraged confidence, creativity, and emotional expression among the participants.



8. Recommendations and Preventive Measures Proposed

At the end of the workshop, participants and experts jointly proposed several preventive measures and recommendations:

Health and Safety Measures

- Provision of protective equipment such as gloves, masks, boots, and uniforms.
- Regular occupational health check-up camps.
- Awareness programmes on workplace safety.
- Improved ventilation and sanitation facilities at workplaces.
- Access to clean drinking water and rest facilities.

Rights and Welfare Measures

- Recognition of women workers in informal sectors.
- Equal wages and social security benefits.
- Access to maternity support and health insurance.
- Formation and strengthening of women workers’ collectives.
- Greater involvement of local government and labour departments.

Capacity Building Measures

- Training on occupational safety standards.
- Skill enhancement and leadership development.
- Awareness on labour laws and entitlements.
- Promotion of mental health and stress management.

The participants resolved to continue collective advocacy for safer and healthier working environments.

9. Outcomes of the Programme

The workshop achieved several positive outcomes:

- Increased awareness among women workers regarding occupational health hazards.
- Better understanding of preventive and safety measures.
- Strengthened solidarity among women workers from different sectors.
- Enhanced confidence among participants to speak about workplace challenges.
- Increased interest in forming support groups and networks.
- Greater recognition of the need for dignity, health, and rights of women workers.



Participants expressed appreciation to JRP and DWOI, USA for organising such a meaningful and inclusive programme.

10. Conclusion

The observation of International Occupational Safety and Health at Work Day and the two-day workshop at YMCA, Bhubaneswar successfully highlighted the urgent need to address occupational health hazards faced by women workers in textile, shrimp culture and prawn culture, and sanitation sectors.

The programme created an important platform for awareness, learning, dialogue, and collective action. Through lectures, storytelling sessions, cultural activities, and group discussions, participants gained practical knowledge as well as emotional strength and solidarity.

Jeevanrekha Parishad, with the support of DWOI, USA, reaffirmed its commitment to promoting safe working conditions, women's rights, occupational health awareness, and social justice for vulnerable workers.

The workshop concluded with a collective pledge by participants to continue advocating for healthier, safer, and more dignified workplaces for all women workers.

Acknowledgement

Jeevan Rekha Parishad expresses sincere gratitude to DWOI, USA for their valuable support and encouragement in organising this important programme. Special thanks are extended to all participants, resource persons, volunteers, cultural teams, YMCA Bhubaneswar authorities, and partner organisations for their active cooperation and contribution to the successful completion of the event.

Together, the programme strengthened the voice and visibility of women workers and reinforced the importance of occupational safety, health, and dignity at work.

