

**Good News**  
**Department of Labor and Employment**  
**Bureau of Working Conditions**  
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### **Combatting COVID-19 through societal approach**

*“Stop the pandemic: Safety and health at work can save lives.”* – World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2020 ILO theme

Global OSH experts were brought together in a webinar organized by the International Labour Organization in celebration of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work. The webinar was held on 28 April 2020 through Zoom teleconference and Youtube live broadcast. The primary aim of the webinar is to stimulate dialogue on the importance of ensuring safety and health at work as a means of protecting the lives of workers and ensuring business continuity.

Dr. Cucueco shared her insights on how the pandemic has created vulnerabilities on terms of occupational safety and health in the Philippines. “Due to lack of cure and vaccine, we have to look at safety and health prevention in reducing exposure and risk. Simple measures of handwashing, of physical distancing, and of wearing mask when you talk are ‘new normal’. We have to adopt because that is what is called for at this time,” she said.

She also highlighted that the pandemic has no cure nor vaccine but the Philippine government has ways of approaching the problem. One of which is through coordinated approach of all stakeholders in trying to flatten the curve and eventually eliminating the pandemic in the best way we can. “We can always do our part to reduce exposure to the [disease] and that is safety and health prevention,” she added.

Two (2) social amelioration programs of the labor department, namely, the COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program and Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers Program, were likewise briefly discussed as among the efforts of the national government specific for micro and small enterprises and those who belong in the informal sector.

The challenge on how we can best protect ourselves against the disease requires societal approach, Dr. Cucueco continued, “it’s looking at everyone doing its work [stay at home] and for government to provide. They need food and money for medicine. All of that has to be considered so that it will be provided as we are in a period of what we call quarantine or lockdown.” At this time of crisis, Dr. Cucueco concluded that safety and health is looking at preventive measures to a disease which has no cure nor vaccine.

Esteemed panellists of the webinar are: Silvana Cappuccio, ILO Workers' Group member from Italy; Kris De Meester, Senior Adviser at the Federation of Enterprises, Belgium; Richard Jones, Head of Policy and Regulatory Engagement, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health; Lode Godderis, Leuven Centre for Environment and Health, Department of Public Health and Primary Care; Chris Laszcz-Davis, Founder and President of The Environmental Quality Organization and Co-Chair, Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA); Michelle M. Robertson, Executive Committee, International Ergonomics Association; Barry Kistnasamy, Head of Occupational Health, Department of Health, South Africa; and representing the Philippines, Dr. Ma. Teresia Cucueco, OIC-Assistant Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and concurrent Director IV, DOLE-Bureau of Working Conditions.

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