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Collective action for safer and healthier supply chains

Note

- ▶ This document provides detailed information on the framework implemented by Vision Zero Fund to develop practical approaches to mobilizing national and international stakeholders to take collective action for safer and healthier supply chains, in particular at the country level.

1. What is Vision Zero Fund?

Vision Zero Fund seeks to eliminate severe and fatal work-related accidents, injuries and diseases in global supply chains. Vision Zero Fund is part of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Safety + Health for All flagship programme and is implemented by the Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health Branch (LABADMIN/OSH).

The framework within which the Fund operates is embedded in international labour standards, particularly the Conventions and Recommendations related to workplace safety and health. International labour standards are essential tools to ensure that today's global economy benefits everyone, and this objective lies at the core of the Fund's ambitious mandate.

Unsafe and unhealthy working conditions often result from a combination of factors, such as systemic governance gaps, an inadequate legislative framework and unsustainable business practices. One actor (such as the State) working alone cannot effectively address all these diverse root causes. All major stakeholders therefore need to work together to address the systemic causes of poor occupational safety and health (OSH) outcomes. That is why a key strategy of the Fund is to mobilize stakeholders to collectively address the root causes of workplace accidents, injuries and diseases to promote safe and healthy supply chains.

In June 2015, the G7 supported the establishment of Vision Zero Fund, acknowledging the need for a multi-stakeholder approach and collective action

to address occupational safety and health in global supply chains. In the Leaders' Declaration, the G7 members recognized the joint responsibility of governments and business to foster sustainable supply chains and encourage best practices.

In 2017, the G20 Ministers of Labour and Employment stressed the importance of involving a wide range of stakeholders in building initiatives to foster sustainable global supply chains, in particular governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society. The G20 welcomed international action to improve occupational safety and health across global supply chains through Vision Zero Fund, and encouraged governments, social partners, local and international companies, and non-governmental organizations to take collective action for the prevention of workplace accidents and commit to implementing appropriate actions within the framework of Vision Zero Fund.

Based on this mandate and the support of world leaders, the Fund made the collective action of a broad range of stakeholders a central component of its 2019–23 global strategy. The strategy recognizes that achieving the Fund's vision requires the strong commitment, collective action, influence and resources of a wide range of stakeholders, including global companies, employers' organizations, national- and transnational-level suppliers, governments in developed and developing countries, international financial institutions, trade unions, civil society, private philanthropy, and development agencies.

2. What constitutes collective action for safer and healthier supply chains?

Vision Zero Fund recognizes that multi-stakeholder partnerships and international cooperation are needed to ensure safer and healthier supply chains. It defines collective action as follows:

Collective action means a multi-stakeholder approach that involves governments, workers and trade unions, national, transnational and global employers and their organizations, multilateral organizations, civil society and development agencies, working together so that each meets its responsibilities, consistent with organizational roles, to implement an agreed plan or set of actions to reduce severe or fatal work accidents, injuries or diseases in global supply chains.

A number of international instruments recognize the importance of mobilizing national and international stakeholders to collectively address complex challenges of supply chains. The most relevant instruments are summarized below. These key instruments provide the framework within which the Fund implements its strategy of collective action for safe and healthy supply chains.

► **Table 1: Key international instruments that guide Vision Zero Fund's work**

MNE Declaration	The ILO's Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) provides guidance to governments, employers' and workers' organizations and multinational enterprises on action to promote decent work, including in global supply chains. The Declaration sets out the roles of the various actors and recommends that the guidelines be used in developing partnerships to address decent work challenges, including challenges that neither governments nor companies can address on their own.
ILO programme of action on global supply chains	The ILO has defined five areas within which it will implement its programme of action to address decent work in global supply chains. The fifth is dedicated to the creation of partnerships for policy coherence. The programme of action recommends the formation of partnerships at the global, regional and national levels and specifies that, at the national level, ILO offices will provide support to the tripartite constituents to engage effectively with key ministries and other national and international actors in the formulation, revision and implementation of coherent supply chain policies.
UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights	The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights contain guidelines for companies and State actors to prevent, address and remedy human rights abuses committed in business operations. They state that both actors must take responsibility, consistent with organizational roles, to address human rights violations in supply chains.
OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has produced due diligence guidance for responsible business conduct. The guidance requires that the due diligence process be based on meaningful engagement with stakeholders. It also recommends that companies should work together and collaborate with other stakeholders in the due diligence process and in the implementation of specific initiatives.
SDG 17	Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 (strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) highlights the importance of establishing partnerships to meet the SDGs, including partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships must mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources at the global, regional, national and local levels, based on shared principles, values and goals that place people and the planet at the centre.

3. How is collective action shaped at the country level?

The aim of collective action is to ensure that all parties that can contribute to addressing the root causes of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions in global supply chains commit to working collectively on an agreed plan or set of actions to ensure a supply chain free of fatal or severe accidents, injuries and diseases.

Making this a reality is a long-term goal of the Fund, based on four broad, interlinked steps:



Support and promote local leadership for collective action

The involvement and commitment of local leadership is essential to ensure that the agreed actions or interventions will be implemented and to ensure that the results of projects are sustainable. Supporting and building local governance capacity is therefore a key element of all Vision Zero Fund projects that cuts across each of the four steps.

Step 1: Ensuring commitment of stakeholders during the project design phase

The goal of the first step is to ensure that when country projects are designed, they are based on meaningful consultations with constituents and other important stakeholders. The goal of the consultations is to secure endorsement for the project and stakeholders' commitment to participating in a process of collective action to address OSH challenges in the country and in the supply chain. During this phase, the capacity of local leadership to follow through on commitments is assessed.

A precondition for the Fund to begin a project in a country is the joint public and private commitment of businesses, government, the social partners and other relevant stakeholders to the project. In all countries, consultations shape the project strategy and identify areas of intervention, activities and targets.

The scoping and design phase includes a broad mapping of roles and the various stakeholders' formal and informal responsibilities and capacities on occupational safety and health. It also determines

the extent to which the stakeholders have the capacity to commit to a leadership role in a process of collective action for safer and healthier supply chains.

Step 2: Building a transparent knowledge base on OSH drivers and challenges

The goals of the second step are twofold. The first is to ensure that all constituents and other key stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of the most salient OSH risks in global supply chains and of the opportunities for OSH improvements. This knowledge base informs the design and development of policies and activities to address the risks, while taking advantage of identified opportunities. In this way, Vision Zero Fund's research can create a common knowledge base and understanding of the issues, ensuring that project activities are evidence-led and not based on assumptions about constituents' needs. The second goal of this step is to use the research process to secure the commitment of constituents and stakeholders to play an active role in addressing the OSH risks.

The initial research for Vision Zero Fund projects is conducted using the ILO's methodology to assess drivers and constraints for the prevention of occupational injuries and diseases.¹ Creating a common understanding of the most pertinent OSH issues in a sector is particularly important for sectors that receive less scrutiny from international buyers or government actors, and where there may be a lack of understanding of OSH risks. This research

¹ ILO, 2018. Occupational Safety and Health in Global Value Chains Starterkit: Assessment of drivers and constraints for OSH improvement in global value chains and intervention design.

and knowledge are essential elements in shaping the actions, interventions and the role of the constituents and other stakeholders, including the Fund's project teams.

Step 2 is also useful for building and supporting local leadership. By involving constituents in the research process, the projects can strengthen relationships, build trust and gain a fuller understanding of leadership qualities. In countries with strong institutional capacity, projects conduct the research in collaboration with the governmental entity responsible for OSH, or with a sectoral body that could lead the implementation of the interventions. Projects engaging in joint research are sensitive to formal roles and responsibilities.

Step 3: Shaping collective action through processes of social dialogue

The ultimate goal of the third step is to have an agreed set of actions or interventions in which all relevant stakeholders play an active role and act collectively to ensure that the root causes of OSH risks are addressed. The process through which these interventions are developed is essential for achieving the ultimate goal. It is during this step that the project acts as facilitator and stimulates social dialogue between the tripartite constituents and other stakeholders to build the necessary trust, commitment and ownership.

Based on the experience of Vision Zero Fund, a useful time to initiate this step is as the last element of finalizing the research on or assessment of OSH drivers and constraints in the selected value chain. Where appropriate, the project supports constituents and stakeholders in formulating a vision for the supply chain in which safe and healthy working conditions are a central component. This helps to establish a shared direction and facilitate coordinated actions.

The Fund's work is based on a thorough consultation process with stakeholders and thus reflects shared priorities, commitments and actions. To streamline this process and make it more concrete, projects identify broad categories of likely actions, including:

- direct intervention at the factory/production enterprise level;
- research and knowledge generation;
- legal and policy support and development;
- knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising;
- capacity-building; and
- institutional development.

Each dialogue process is adapted to the country context.

The time frame between validating research results and having stakeholders commit to an intervention is not predetermined. Some projects require more time than others, depending on the capacity of constituents, the complexity of the issues and the levels of communication and trust. The role of the project is to maintain momentum and to follow up on the stakeholders' planning, to ensure their commitment.

During this process, it may become clear who could take on local leadership for coordinating the implementation of the various interventions and how the project could support this process.

In addition, each country project of Vision Zero Fund has a project advisory committee, which serves as the forum to discuss progress on implementation and any problems or concerns.

All Vision Zero Fund projects:

- are results-driven;
- include smart indicators of progress and clear milestones/outputs to measure the success of the results;
- seek to assign clear responsibilities for each of the stakeholders and Vision Zero Fund project team;
- include timelines for activities, outputs and results;
- have a well-grounded monitoring and evaluation or project management plan and reporting mechanism.

Projects organize a launch event to increase visibility, encourage commitment and promote accountability.

Step 4: Supporting the implementation of interventions

The ultimate goal of implementing interventions is to ensure, through collective action, that the supply chain is free of serious and fatal workplace accidents and diseases. Here, building trust is a key consideration, and the integrity of the project depends on it.

In this step, the role of the country projects is to:

- 1.** implement specific interventions that fall under the responsibility of the project, such as capacity-building activities, technical assistance for policy and legal reform, and research;
- 2.** provide information on and promote the application of OSH Conventions and other relevant international standards;
- 3.** facilitate dialogue on the implementation of the interventions among the stakeholders involved in and affected by the interventions;

4. as necessary, mobilize technical and financial resources from donors, the private sector, global buyers and national actors to support the implementation of the interventions;

5. communicate and share knowledge of results, successes and lessons learned.

In addition, the project plays an important role in supporting local leadership in connection with the implementation of the interventions. The exact scope

of these tasks will differ between countries, but they should include at a minimum:

- a. collecting data on progress, indicators and activities;
- b. reporting on progress to all stakeholders;
- c. organizing multi-stakeholder meetings to discuss progress; and
- d. supporting additional research.

Projects may also consider supporting local leadership with training on leadership, management or OSH.

4. Gender and collective action for safer supply chains

Each global supply chain and country has its own gender-specific OSH challenges. These could include physically heavy or dangerous work for men (such as carrying heavy loads, operating dangerous machinery or inspecting pressure vessels), OSH risks specific to pregnant women (such as working with hazardous chemicals or a lack of social protection) and workplace harassment.

Women play an important role in producing goods in global supply chains, but they are often under-represented in trade unions and other workers' organizations, employers' organizations and government structures. Among the consequences are the reduced likelihood of OSH risks specific to women workers being acknowledged and addressed, a lack of understanding of the severity of sexual harassment in the sector, a deficient legal framework on maternity protection and problems with child care.

For fatal or severe OSH incidents to be eliminated from global supply chains, it is therefore essential that

the challenges that women and men face are reflected in the results-based framework of projects and that women are sufficiently represented in the research and in the design of interventions. This means that project research should include a specific gender analysis related to the OSH drivers and constraints and that women should be sufficiently represented in the stakeholder engagement leading to the formulation of the set of project interventions. If women are under-represented in traditional tripartite structures, projects should raise this concern with constituents and explore alternatives, for instance, by ensuring that trainings and consultations are gender-balanced and by incorporating gender concerns when planning actions. Where feasible, projects could consider providing additional support (such as training) to women representatives to help strengthen their voices in the process.

5. Collective action in country-specific contexts

While the collective approach described in this document provides an overall framework for action, the manner in which this approach is implemented at the country level will depend on the specific context. Important variables that influence the feasibility and process for developing interventions and that could be used as potential leverage in the process include:

- **The existence of trade agreements:** Trade agreements often include labour or human rights provisions that can drive increased commitment of national constituents and international buyers and trading partners to collectively ensure that workplaces are safe and healthy. Country projects can assess what types of trade agreements are available and the extent to which they can be used to drive changes in behaviour and commitment.
- **Relative significance of the sector:** Industries that are important for current or future trade are more likely to attract resources, attention and commitment from national constituents and international buyers. This variable is also often connected with the existence of national development or sectoral strategies.
- **Income level and stage of development:** A country's level of income or stage of development can have an important impact on the availability of resources to support the collective action approach and should be taken into account when technical, financial and human resources are allocated to the implementation of interventions.
- **Institutional capacity:** The institutional capacity of the government (at both national and local levels) will not only determine what type of

capacity-building is necessary, but also which national partners can lead the implementation of the interventions, which in turn will affect the sustainability of the project results. It will also affect the role that the Fund's project team will play in facilitating the process of dialogue and the extent to which the project will provide technical and leadership support.

- **Capacity of the social partners:** Strong employers' organizations and trade unions with good representation in the sector can demonstrate leadership and drive collective action. Where there are no such organizations, the country project will need to consider various means of meaningfully involving the social partners in the project (from the scoping/inception phase through to research, dialogue and implementation). Such an effort can create opportunities for the social partners to increase their capacity and the relevance of their work in the supply chain.
- **Type of product/value chain:** Each supply chain is different in terms of product, structure, level of formality and linkages to global markets. This has a significant impact on shaping the collective action approach, including the OSH challenges, the type of stakeholders to involve, the intervention models, access to resources and the types of market drivers.
- **Presence or power of international business:** The involvement of international business in the Vision Zero Fund is a unique feature of the programme. The type of actors, their visibility and power as well as what drives their behaviour differs from one supply chain to the next, and should be considered when involving international business in the collective action process.
- **Presence of industrial parks:** Industrial parks can be instrumental in facilitating access to workplaces

and in involving stakeholders in shaping interventions. Where such parks exist, country projects can assess the extent to which they can be mobilized to contribute to the formulation and implementation of projects. Projects must also be sensitive to the ways in which industrial parks often create their own local supply chains with embedded OSH issues.

- **Priorities of the host country:** Governments with national development plans that include important objectives on working conditions, industrialization and socio-economic development goals to which the Fund can contribute may be more committed to engaging with the Fund and supporting project interventions.
- **OSH policy and legal framework:** The success of a project's interventions will often depend on the robustness of the OSH policy and legal framework in a country, whether international labour standards have been ratified, and the extent to which compliance with this framework is enforced.

In addition, utilizing relevant ILO expertise is essential in shaping collective action and project interventions. Close collaboration with ILO headquarters and field staff throughout the establishment and implementation of Vision Zero Fund country projects is key to the success of the projects. This includes the provision of technical expertise on OSH and broader social protection issues and the involvement of specialists from the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), who support the mobilization of the social partners and provide technical input. Where appropriate, the ILO country office or subregional office can facilitate higher-level political support for the collective action approach.

6. Risk management

There are numerous risks that can affect the success of the formulation and implementation of the targeted interventions of projects. It is important for all risks to be well mapped and considered during the project design and scoping phase and for the projects to develop and maintain the ILO's risk matrix for the entire strategy, including the development and implementation of the interventions.

Risks may include:

- OSH not being a priority for constituents and stakeholders;
- the global supply chain not being in a priority sector in the country;
- activities not being implemented;
- persistent lack of capacity;
- ineffective local leadership;
- absence of public OSH awareness or workplace prevention culture;
- international buyers not actively participating in the plan;
- insufficient resources to finance the plan;
- a shift in political will;
- major national or international disruptions that impact the global supply chain, for example: a sudden drop in demand for the product, a reduction in orders, climate disasters (such as droughts or diseases) or economic shocks;
- corruption, lack of accountability.

7. Role of the Fund at the global level

The secretariat of Vision Zero Fund supports the development of project interventions in many ways, including:

- facilitating contacts with the global social partners to help mobilize their membership in support of country projects;
- mobilizing research expertise or technical support, both within the ILO and externally;
- supporting engagement with the private sector, particularly at the headquarters/corporate level;
- facilitating knowledge-sharing between country projects and, where relevant, supporting

exchanges among stakeholders of different country projects;

- undertaking global research related to the relevant global supply chains to inform country projects of trends and developments.

In addition, the secretariat of Vision Zero Fund can explore opportunities to use the experience, lessons learned and good practices of country projects to mobilize global stakeholders in support of collective action for safe and healthy supply chains. It can provide support in the form of campaigns, research or symposiums, among others, to promote the objective of collective action for safe and healthy supply chains, working in close collaboration with country projects.

8. Measuring progress and success

One of the challenges in shaping interventions in which multiple stakeholders are involved is the tracking of progress and measurement of results. For some partners, this can be sensitive, particularly in countries where transparency or results-based policy frameworks are not commonly used. Therefore, an important role for Vision Zero Fund projects is to promote an appropriate tool that measures and reports on progress and results. Vision Zero Fund as a programme has a common results framework under

which all country projects report. The framework is flexible enough to account for the diversity of the results that projects seek to achieve, and sufficiently specific to allow the Fund's results to be aggregated at the global level. Ideally, indicators of success and milestones on which stakeholders should regularly report to measure progress and results should be identified during the design of interventions. The local leader (or the project advisory committee) plays a central role in this process.

Past and current donors



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Vision Zero Fund is part of Safety & Health for All, an ILO flagship programme building a culture of safe, healthy work.

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