# New and Emerging WSH Risks in Asia

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# Objective

With rapid changes in Asia brought about by shifts in demographics, working patterns, technology, and lifestyle, the need to focus on new and emerging WSH risks in the region is greater than ever. Using the format of an interactive workshop, the Observatory for WSH Landscape (OWL) sought to identify and communicate such risks to our stakeholders.

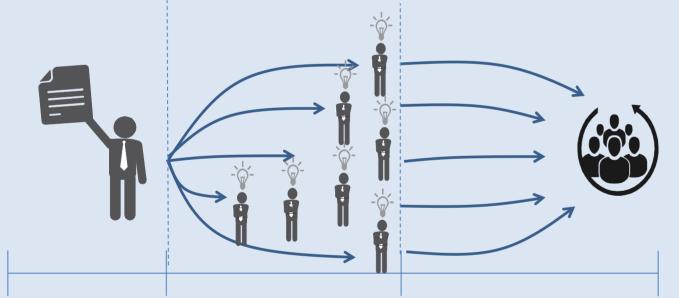
### Method

2 groups of participants were invited to participate in Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to identify new and emerging WSH risks in Asia. Chosen to solicit views from both the industry and the WSH research community, the participants consisted of:

- Senior HSE Executives from Multi-National Companies (MNCs) operating in Asia
- Heads and representatives from OSH Research Institutes in Asia

The discussions were facilitated using the World Café style with facilitators hosting focal areas organised around STEEP, i.e. Societal, Technology, Economic, Environmental, and Political, with focus on the first 4.

The sessions were coordinated in 3 phases:



#### Intro Phase

- Present social & economic outlook on Asia
- Introduce STEEP

# Divergence Phase

- Participants provide opinions on new and emerging
- WSH risksExchange of ideas

# Convergence Phase

- Facilitator-led sharing
- Group voting on WSH risks deemed most important





Participants engaging in active discussion during the sessions

## Results

While common themes came up during the sessions, both groups of participants also had distinct views regarding new and emerging WSH risks. Word clouds generated for each session clearly show some differences on their concerns:





**Heads of Asian OSH Research Institutes** 

**Senior HSE Executives** 

#### Major areas of concern identified

#### **Ageing Workforce**

Longer working life due to slower population growth and longer life expectancy. Implications on safer and healthier workplace design.





#### **Globalisation and Migrant Workforce**

Different cultural backgrounds and practices leading to varying perception of risks. Communication challenges at the workplace. Effects of latent occupational diseases on transient migrant workforce. Employment in the informal economy with lower WSH protection

#### **Technology Changes**

Fatigue due to overuse of electronic devices. New WSH risks from use of robotics, 3D printing, biotechnology and nanomaterials, as well as risks from handling of electronic wastes.



#### **Environmental Risks**

Heightened risks for outdoor workers due to global warming, air pollution and severe weather conditions in Asia.



#### **Economic Considerations**

Prioritising business profitability over safety, coupled with outsourcing and subcontracting of work increased WSH risks.

#### **Work Stress**

Increasing job demands, shift work, workplace harassment and lack of role clarity leading to stress, thus affecting safety.

## Conclusion

Regular sensing of WSH risks is important as they are influenced by social, political, economic, environmental, technological and workplace changes.

Establishing strong networks among the research institutes within Asia and across the globe allow partners to pool resources, tap on collective domain expertise and jointly develop solutions that can address new and emerging WSH risks.



