

## **Assessing the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Risks Using AHP in Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSE) in Oman**

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### **Abstract**

The Micro and Smaller Enterprises (MSEs), worldwide has become a growing source of employment for large numbers of youth, and also for older workers pursuing entrepreneurial goals. Most of the MSEs are informal in structure, and their activities are flexible, insecure, hazardous, and take place in unhealthy and unsafe environment. Similar scenario prevails in Oman, when statistics indicates that the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) represent 99% of the total number of active private businesses, which is near 31% of GDP (Emirate 24/7 Business, 2011; CPI Financial, Bankers, Middle East, 2011). Besides that, the figures released by the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) shows that the numbers of occupational disability and deaths of Omani nationals working in the private sector are increased by 70% and 60% respectively in the past two years, in 2010 and 2011. Overall, occupational death and injuries cost around 4% of total GDP in Oman.

The study therefore seeks to examine the key health and safety risks associated with the Micro and Smaller Enterprises (MSEs) in Oman. It also seeks to come up with a framework of linking the risk factors and the risks and their impacts associated with MSEs in Oman.

The study revealed that the workers were exposed to a range of mechanical, ergonomic, electrical, people behavioral, and physical ambience and other nuisance hazards. Despite these adverse effects and level of exposure to hazards, 60.86% of the respondents had no health insurance for workplace accidents and injuries. Concerning Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the survey revealed that a collaborative effort between employers and employees will be effectively necessary. It was also realized that Oman has no Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) policy separately for small enterprises, and the activities of OHS regulations were limited to the formal government and some semi-government large and medium enterprises only.

It is therefore recommended that an OHS policy formulation, intensive education through media and training for the workers on their work environment and the level of risk exposure as well as the need to register under the national health insurance scheme. There is also the need for an effective collaboration between all OHS institutions to ensure workers use the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to prevent injuries.