

Platform News – OSHE releases video on the struggle for decent work at the Bangladeshi shipbreaking yards

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17 November 2015 – The Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) released yesterday a Bengali-language short documentary aimed at raising awareness about the labour rights and environmental problems of shipbreaking in Chittagong, Bangladesh. The realization of the video, which is part of a national campaign launched by the Platform's Bangladesh members OSHE, BELA, BILS and YPSA, was supported by the Platform. The documentary shows that in the last ten years more than 200 accidents occurred at the shipbreaking yards, leading to over 140 deaths. In 2015 alone, 16 deaths and 17 serious injuries caused by the industry based in Chittagong have been recorded. Common accidents include explosions, falls from heights and crushing from falling steel plates. Statistically, accidents at the Bangladeshi ship breaking yards takes at least 20 lives per year. Many more workers die unrecorded due to diseases caused by exposure to toxic fumes and asbestos. Despite strong international criticism of shipbreaking conditions in Bangladesh and also condemnation by the national courts, safety standards for workers, as well as pollution controls, have not undergone necessary improvement. Child labor is still common practice in Bangladeshi ship dismantling facilities. This is clearly not allowed according to both national and international rules meant to protect particularly vulnerable groups. On the one hand, the legal framework is hardly followed by yard owners, who profit on circumvention of the law; on the other hand, poor enforcement by the authorities is another major issue that has to be tackled as a matter of urgency. Due to the increased awareness of this situation, more and more shipping companies avoid selling their end-of-life vessels to the muddy beaches of Chittagong. OSHE, BELA, BILS and YPSA will continue to support the empowerment of workers to defend their rights.

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