

Ideas into ACTION Global Health Solutions

Leadership • Innovation • Alliances & Partnership

SALTRA Program– Central America

The pioneering SALTRA initiative (Program on Work and Health in Central America) was launched in 2003 as a university-based development program with a long-term vision: to develop capacity in countries and at the regional level to prevent occupational hazards in Central America, with an emphasis on public health and sustainable production.

SALTRA was originally based at two universities in Costa Rica and Nicaragua but has since expanded to national coordinating centers at universities in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Many other governmental and civil society organizations have also joined SALTRA, carrying out different projects and creating national and regional networking structures.

SALTRA's regional and international team has made significant progress in promoting health for Central American workers, both men and women, through research and training as well as analysis of occupational and environmental health problems. Between 2003 and 2009, SALTRA implemented over 20 projects, each in multiple countries. These include:

- Action projects to reduce risks and promote health in construction, sugar cane, hospitals, and informal work;
- Capacity building for monitoring of occupational health indicators, including seven pilot projects for surveillance of exposures and effects, with a focus on pesticides, carcinogenic agents, and fatal injuries;
- Advancement of a participatory model for training in risk monitoring by workers in three different agricultural settings;
- Establishment of an interdisciplinary network of 450 occupational safety and health professionals;
- Nine outbreak and hazard assessment studies;
- Over 100 published technical reports, scientific articles, newsletters, brochures and conference abstracts;
- The establishment of an organizational structure.

SALTRA has placed the issue of workers' health on the political, institutional, business, and academic agendas throughout the region. Its structure of alliances, actions, information, and proposals has enhanced Central American efforts to improve occupational health and has laid the foundation for achieving substantial future changes in health conditions for all workers in this part of the world. Because workers who become sick or disabled cannot generate an income for their families, SALTRA also prevents and reduces poverty, SALTRA serves as an excellent example of South-South collaboration between countries.



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