

EBMO Actions on COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific

I. How EBMOs Should Respond

EBMOs should exercise leadership in the business community and shape solutions and knowledge in response to COVID-19. They should become the main players in getting on top of the crisis through the power of solidarity and cooperation. A renewed appreciation can be felt for representative business organizations and the role they play in providing timely information and services and shaping relevant policy for business sustainability and continuity. EBMOs also need to explore digital technology and move towards offering online services and e-training. The biggest challenge is how EBMOs should respond to COVID-19, whether through regular updates, guidelines, responses to member queries, and how actively they should engage in social dialogue and policy advocacy. This will determine whether EBMOs continue to be seen as relevant or not and whether they can contribute to enterprise development and attaining sustainable development goals.

II. What EBMOs Should Do

1. Situation/Impact Assessments

- Conduct situation/impact assessments
- Identify employers' needs

CAMFEBA is undertaking the COVID-19 Impact Assessment on Members businesses. Your feedback is critical and will help CAMFEBA to explore direct response from the government to your pressing need.

We would like to ask members and stakeholders in the business community to share with us the impacts and best practices on flexible work arrangements and measurement in your workforce planning. We need these stories to show that companies care for their workers and their best interest in mind during these difficult times and continuing lobby the government on the possible supports.

1. How many employees do you have?
2. What industry are you primarily involved in?

3. Does your company have policies or guidelines for managing the impact of COVID-19 at the workplace? (If Yes, please could you share your policies or best practices to CAMFEBA.)
4. Have you postponed any investment decisions, capital or otherwise?
5. How is the outbreak influenced your workforce planning?
6. Have you implemented any measures in your workplace regarding working time?
7. Can you suggest best practices you are currently undertaking to manage during the COVID outbreak?
8. To ensure your business sustainability during this period, what are the most pressing need that the government would be able to support your employment issue?

2. Services

- Provide information and tools to member companies
 - BCP (Business Continuity Programme), Enterprise Pandemic Plans, SRE tools

Resources that have been produced by ACT/EMP and ILO over the years:

- For business continuity planning and recovery tools that can be easily tailored – the [Sustainable and Resilient Enterprise Platform](#)
- For guidance to SMEs on pandemics – [Guidelines for SME to prevent and prepare for pandemics](#)
- Managing infectious disease in the workplace – [SARS: Working paper on practical and administrative responses](#)
- Protecting health workers and responders – [A manual for occupational safety and health in public health emergencies](#)

- Provide employers' guides

- 1) To protect workers in the workplace:
 - Strengthen OSH measures
 - Access to healthcare for all employees
 - Keep measures inclusive (both genders, those with disabilities, migrant workers, temporary workers)
 - Ensure grievance mechanisms are in place and being used
- 2) Adaptive work arrangement
 - Teleworking, flexitime, paid leaves, unpaid leaves, work sharing, lay-off
- 3) Employers' responsibilities

- Provide adequate protective equipment to workers and adequate information and training
 - Pay minimum wage, put in place/honour social security schemes, pay shutdown allowances, provide severance pay
 - Take steps to protect employment including shorter working hours, paid leave, and other subsidies
- 4) Other measures to be taken
- Set up a crisis management taskforce in EBMOs
 - Strengthen networks with other EBMOs and sectoral/provincial EOs
 - Gather information/data from member companies systematically

3. Active participation in bipartite and tripartite social dialogue

Social dialogue – collaboration and negotiation are essential, both at enterprise level and at sectoral/national level. If responses are to be effective, they have to be built on trust, which is itself built through consultation and collaboration.

Major agenda items for SD: measures to promote employment, including employment services and vocational training, social protection floor

The most effective results have come out of social dialogue in expanding schemes to protect unemployed workers, such as extending unemployment benefits to workers facing a loss of earnings due to partial unemployment or temporary suspension of work.

4. Policy advocacy

EBMOs need to strengthen their policy advocacy to assist the government in shaping relevant policy to protect business sustainability and continuity. They need to provide leadership in the business community on economic, social and environmental issues and participate effectively in social dialogue. Policy proposals need to be prioritized.

- Short-term policy measures required for the immediate crisis
- Medium-term policy measures required to support the survival of enterprises
- Long-term policy that promotes a conducive business environment and contributes to national economic and social development

Agenda items for policy work to stimulate the economy and demand for labour include:

- Active fiscal policy
- Accommodative monetary policy
- Financial/tax relief for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (tax holidays, loans, support with payment of wages)

- Financial support for enterprises to retain workers and to support the newly unemployed
- Indirect government support through banks (flexibility with debt, increased lending), especially for SMEs.