

Setting up fire safety training programmes in Vietnam

David Magee of OSH Literacy.org (a FIRE AID Affiliate Member) gives a personal account of the fire safety training courses he has started in Vietnam to help NGOs assist young people to get jobs within the international hospitality catering and tourism sector, supported by the IFE

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for day, teach him how to catch a fish and you feed him for a lifetime", such is the mantra for many charities in their long-term assistance planning. As a result, in many developing countries there are a number of good vocational training colleges being set-up and run to help disadvantaged and vulnerable children become independent instead of falling into lives of crime, prostitution or other forms of exploitation. Many of the vocational training programmes are aimed at giving these young people the skills needed to work within the international hospitality catering and tourism sector. This is a vastly growing area in South East Asian countries and many international chains are investing heavily to get a slice of that lucrative market.

However, very often, these colleges and the NGOs which support them, neither have the financial nor expert resources they need to give their trainees internationally recognised and accredited occupational safety and health (OSH) and fire safety training programmes. This can cause the hotel chains to have reservations (excuse the pun) about hiring these students.

As a former chef and hotel manager, who retrained as an English teacher and OSH instructor, for a number of years I have worked voluntarily, during school holidays, in such vocational training colleges throughout South East Asia. I run my own small NGO called OSHliteracy.org, which aims to raise awareness about the language, literacy and learning issues that can act as barriers and prevent people from accessing health and safety training and communications. English is the international language; it is the official language of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and also the



lingua-franca of international health and fire safety. Therefore many of these international chains want trainees to have internationally accredited courses which have been delivered and assessed in English. On previous visits, I have set-up programmes in general health and safety, food safety and first aid. I have also managed to train trainers so that they can cascade the learning down to the trainees, but also deliver courses to the local communities which can help the NGOs become self-sustaining.

As fire safety is so important in hospitality and catering, the chains were always asking about delivering fire safety training courses. However, due to financial and time constraints this has not been possible... until now.

Thanks to a very generous grant of £3,000 from the Institution of Fire Engineers, I have been able to register as a training provider for the suite of CIEH Fire Safety courses levels 1, 2 and 3. And at the start of November 2016 we ran our first Level 1 fire safety courses at the KOTO Training Centre, Hanoi, Vietnam. KOTO is an acronym which stands for Know One, Teach One. At level 1 the training lasts for three hours. I pre-sent vocabulary lists and a course outline. The staff at KOTO pre-taught and prepared the learners. When I arrived we taught classes in the morning and afternoon. Approximately 100 trainees had the training and we hope they will have all



OSH Literacy ran its first Level 1 fire safety courses at the KOTO Training Centre, Hanoi, Vietnam

gained the level 1 certification, depending on the results.

The fire safety training will equip the learners with essential fire safety awareness, increase their economic and social mobility by making them more employable and satisfy the needs of the international hotel chains. In addition to the CIEH Level 1 course content, a large part of my training focuses on fire safety communication skills in English, such as fire evacuations to a multi-national clientele and reading fire safety instructions. The trainees are given an OSH Literacy certificate in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Fire Safety, which employers seem to like.

I was surprised to see just how little young people from this part of the world knew about fire safety. It is not taught in any schools nor in any other sphere, including the workplace. The trainees thought that seeing a trainer showing them Stop, Drop and Roll was the funniest thing they had ever seen... until they saw the relevance of it to their own personal safety.

Next year, we will continue this project and hopefully be able to expand it to other OSH Literacy projects. It is our intention to train trainers so that they can deliver courses and cascade the learning down to other trainees and into the wider community. I am also working on a bespoke Level 1 & 2 course on Fire Safety for the International Hospitality and Tourism sector.

Should any readers want any further information or think that the courses might be suitable for projects they are involved in, please do not hesitate to contact me: davidmagee@oshliteracy.org