

After the ToT, I joined a resource team to conduct BCM training and awareness programs for SME holders in Rathnapura and Kaluthara districts in Sri Lanka. As a trainer, I worked with my team to make the training programs interactive, and in the end, the participants expressed interest in establishing a BCM plan for their businesses. In my opinion, this is an important step because a BCM plan helps businesses quickly identify safety priorities and come up with fast solutions to respond.

MOVING FORWARD

The biggest lesson that I learned throughout this process was that **customizing training content** to suit the needs of the different audiences was very important. We also worked hard to ensure the content we delivered was presented in a clear format in **local languages**. Even after the trainings we plan to provide **continued support** to the participants to respond to unexpected challenges if they arise.

...my advice for other risk managers is to also look at the practical side of disasters, listen to people at the grassroots level, and include them in decision making.”

Compliance and Risk Managers are focused on theoretical examples and prefer to do everything “by the book.” While this is a good skill, my advice for other risk managers is to also look at the practical side of disasters, listen to people at the grassroots level, and include them in decision making.



Awareness on Occupational Risk among employees in apparel sector



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The interviewee has explicitly given consent to have their responses recorded and the content, including photographs, published digitally or in print for APP communication purposes.

Supporting Sri Lanka Businesses to Bounce Back in Crises

The Sri Lanka Preparedness Partnership (SLPP) implements disaster preparedness trainings on business resilience for small and medium sized enterprises





NAME **Thilina Hiripitiya**

TITLE **Manager of Compliance and Risk, MAS Intimates (Pvt) Ltd**

YEARS WORKING IN DISASTER RESPONSE **14**

WORKING AREA **Colombo, Sri Lanka**



COLOMBO

A view of Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka



CONTEXT

As a Compliance and Risk Manager for MAS Intimates, an internationally recognized garments producer, I work to ensure that all factories adhere to social and occupational health and safety regulations, especially fire and chemical safety. I take an employee-first approach, making sure that all personnel are safe, and then focus on business assets and operations. My goal is to keep our personnel and business protected from risks, both natural and man-made.

When it comes to disaster risk management for the garment industry in Sri Lanka, it is important to consider that several factories are located near the beach, putting them at risk of **tsunamis**. Other factories in North and West Sri Lanka are at risk of **floods** during the monsoon season. Some are also located in areas of **political unrest**. Given these risks, it is important for each factory to have an individual emergency response plan.

During my experience working in risk management for the garment industry, I have faced many challenges. Some workers take part in unsafe acts (e.g. not using safety equipment or acting negligently), so we are conducting skills training for employees. Additionally, factories are at high risk of chemical fires, so we practice quarterly fire drills and have a team of safety volunteers always on standby to help in case of an emergency. From September to December, the roads that connect our factories in the North become flooded and difficult to access. This may lead some employees and trucks to get delayed or stranded, and hence we plan ahead and have rations of products on standby.



Conducting OSH risk assessment in plantation sector

My passion for risk management has grown. Now I am involved in many preparedness activities, and travel often to other factories to better understand the range of risks that our personnel and factories face. ”

While my career began in Human Resources, early on my supervisor recognized an opportunity for me to get more involved in technical issues such as risk-management given my instinct to respond to challenges effectively. My passion for risk management has grown. Now I am involved in many preparedness activities, and travel often to other factories to better understand the range of risks that our personnel and factories face.

SAFETY IN THE WORK PLACE

In 2018, I was nominated by MAS Intimates to participate in a Training of Trainer (ToT) program on Business Continuity Management (BCM), organized under the Sri Lanka Preparedness Partnership (SLPP) of the Asian Preparedness Partnership. The three-day training program focused on **building business resilience** by promoting awareness and developing a business continuity plan (BCP). The training was also successful in teaching us how to deliver future BCM training sessions to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Overall, the ToT helped to build upon my practical experience, filled my knowledge gaps in BCM, and allowed the trainers to share our experiences with each other. During the training, I shared about my experience working in Bangladesh, where I led a program for mitigating risk due to earthquake for more than 7,000 employees. One of the greatest moments from that experience was being recognized by the Bangladesh Board of Investment and Development Authority for my contributions.