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Closing the representational gap of workers in micro and small
enterprises (MSEs).

Summary:

The aim of this paper is to identify the obstacles and positive experiences in achieving better protection for workers in micro and small enterprises (MSEs). The paper is based on a survey of working conditions in MSEs in the following nine countries: Albania, Brazil, Colombia, Japan, Nigeria, Philippines, South Korea, Turkey and the Ukraine. Our findings suggest that the existence of unions in MSEs leads to greater workplace security. Through the implementation of a questionnaire, we have been able to establish that unions create greater employment security – protection against arbitrary dismissals, opportunities to gain and retains skills and income security – regular minimum income and comprehensive non-wage benefits. However there is no positive correlation between unionisation and work security – protection against accidents, illness at work and limits to working time. Through in-depth interviews with employers, unions and government departments, we conclude that this variation is shaped by the regulatory framework in each country and the strength and commitment of trade unions to creating decent work in MSEs. The paper concludes by identifying the obstacles and makes a number of recommendations of how to overcome the representational gap.