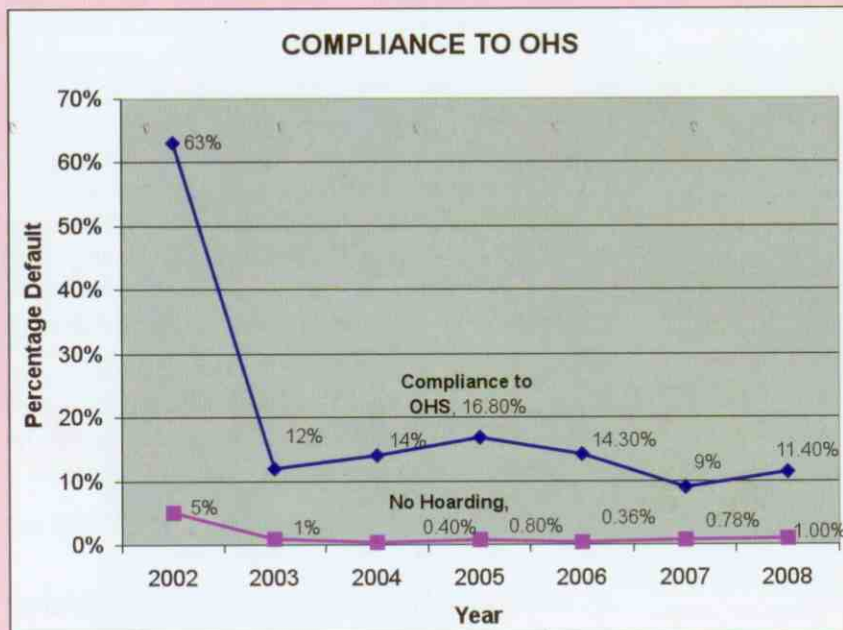


# STATUS OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE TANZANIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The Contractor has compiled an update on the Status of Occupational Health and Safety in the Tanzanian Construction Industry. The Status Update is based upon various Internal Reports and Study Findings from CRB.

An analysis of compliance to Occupational Health and Safety requirements indicates that there has been some improvement in occupational health and safety compliance compared to seven years ago, though there has been a slight upsurge in the last year as shown in Figure 1 below.



Apart from the above short falls it was noted during site inspection that many local contractors do not provide and /or keep the following: - Safety Policy & Organization Structure, Accident registers, Safe drinking water, Washing places and Toilets, Proper eating place , General site cleanliness and Shed in case of bad weather

There is lack of seriousness among local contractors in adherence to safety requirements due to a culture, which has existed for a long time. Common excuses given by these contractors include: - Workers are reluctant to use safety gear due to hostile climate, Theft of safety gear, by workers and low productivity due to use of safety gear eg. gloves.

What is interesting is that during visits to construction sites being executed by many foreign contractors under similar environmental conditions such excuses do not exist, though there are a small number of foreign firms, which also default.

Two major studies were undertaken in the country to evaluate compliance. The first one, a **Baseline Study**

on Safety & Health Conditions in Construction Sites in Tanzania, which was commissioned by CRB and conducted on 63 construction sites in Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Arusha and Mbeya in the Year 2001, revealed the following facts, among others:

- 98.4% of the visited sites did not notify their operations to the Chief Inspector of Factories upon seven days of commencement of works in accordance with Rule 5 of Factories (Building Operations & Works of Engineering Construction) Rules, 1985.
- Only 15.9% of the visited sites were found to have knowledge of safety requirements.
- On provision of safety & health in the Bills of Quantities, only 36.4% made provision for safety and health issues during preparation of their bids.
- Provision of other PPE's was seriously lacking.
- The industry is responsible for about 10.1% of total occupational accidents, 9.6% of fatalities, 12.2% of partial disabilities and about 7.4% of temporary disability. It is among the risky occupational settings with an injury rate of 9.9 per 1,000 workers; this is second from mining/quarrying, with an injury rate of 17 per 1,000 workers.

- The results of the survey showed that cuts by sharp edges, nail punctures, hits by hammer, bruises and other small accidents have the highest rate, which was 22% of all accidents. Falls of objects, tools, and pieces of work was 18% of all accidents.
  - Hoarding was not observed by the majority contractors
  - Most sites did not have adequate welfare facilities, including sanitary convenience, washing facilities and potable drinking water.
  - That most workers ignore use of safety gears and give flimsy excuses for this
  - That only 25.4% of the sites had First Aid kits.
- The other such study was one that was commissioned by ILO in late 2003 and coordinated by the National Construction Council (NCC). It found that

- Projects exhibited a very wide range in the standard of OHS most of which were unfavourable.
- There was a high degree of casualisation of the

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workforce, with casual (daily paid) workers ranging from 70% to 97% of the workforce.

- The Government and its agencies had been been weak in monitoring OHS on construction sites and enforcing the laws and regulations designed to protect the workers.
- Workers were generally not aware of their right to a safe working environment and/or are unable to exercise their rights due to conditions in the labour market.

The two studies cited above provide us with irrefutable evidence of the challenges faced in compliance of OHS on Tanzanian construction sites. It should be noted that both studies focused on large projects and class one contractors, an overwhelming majority of them foreign. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the situation on smaller construction sites, where local contractors predominate, may be even worse. However, we note that there have been changes in the years, and it would be interesting to note what similar studies would reveal today. ■

## INTERVENTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY PRACTICE IN TANZANIA

For Occupational Health and Safety to be adopted and enhanced in the construction industry, there still remain a significant number of challenges which requires various interventions and involvement of stakeholders. *The Contractor* puts forward some of the interventions for the attention of stakeholders and readers.

### Workers:

- Workers should take it upon themselves to know the relevant regulations and their associated rights.
- The responsibility of using safety gear such as helmets, gloves, boots, overalls, masks etc lies on the shoulders of workers. The workers should be sensitized develop habits of putting on safety gear

for their own protection. Also the workers should report with confidence the occurrence of accidents to relevant authorities.

### Contractors:

- Contractors should embrace a Safety Culture, which is not only complying to personal protective equipment, but rather adoption of Safety Policies and Organization among others which will lead to the development and maintenance of Occupational Health and Safety Management Programs which include:
  - Training of workers on preventive measures and proper site housekeeping
  - Regular planned inspections of plant and equipment.
  - Enforcement on use of personal protection equipment.
  - Recording in proper registers all accidents and occupational diseases that happen on site.
  - Provision on site of all the basic amenities.
  - Provision of insurance
  - Contractors need to take up the challenge of ignorance of relevant legislations by themselves and their workers and non-provision of the basic necessities. For example during site inspections by CRB it was noted that many local contractors do not provide and / or keep the following:

• Accident Registers	• Safe drinking water
• Washing places and toilets	• Proper eating places
• General site cleanliness	• Sheds for shelter in case of bad weather

- Planning for accidents prevention and occupation health should be in a way to fit needs of the concerned construction site or particular on-going works.
- Contractors should make provision for safety and health when preparing bids. The provision for safety



and health must be made competitive with the aim to compete with other bidders and to avoid a monetary loss.

- Workers should be trained and indoctrinated in Safety & Health requirements before being assigned any works on site.
- Site supervisors should be conversant with OHS and should share that knowledge with co-workers.
- Contractors should ensure that work environment is improved and work places should be kept well for employee's comfort and convenience. Accommodation in case of bad weather, safe drinking water, washing facilities including toilets and accommodation for meals should be provided and properly maintained.

#### *Legislation:*

- There is need to update the regulations to ensure multi-stakeholder involvement and set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.
- Clients should be ultimately responsible for OHS at construction work sites
- OHS Policies, plans and committees at workplaces should be mandatory
- Regulations should ensure OSHA gets regular returns on safety and health from clients, contractors, consultants and workplace committees
- Regulations should be written in simple language and widely disseminated
- Tanzania should consider ratification of key ILO conventions on OHS

#### ***Contracts and Procurement:***

A common bottleneck is failure to consider safety measures for the construction project right from planning stage. In Tanzania, the majority of key players in the construction projects ignore inclusion of such important aspect during tendering procedures, where by all elements connected to occupation health and safety measures are disregarded by clients, consultant and contractors in attempts to cut down costs. Interventions needed to address this should include:

- Prequalification criteria for consultants and contractors should consider OHS awareness
- Bid documents should include proper Bills of Quantities with OHS items listed
- Construction contracts should include clauses on OHS
- A code of ethics should be prepared for project managers to ensure OHS is taken on board in projects
- Specific action is required at the project level. Safe working practices need to be included as criteria in the evaluation of tenders, properly costed in the bill of quantities and set out in detail in the contract documents

#### ***Monitoring and Enforcement***

- Statutory bodies dealing with Occupational Health and Safety issues should fulfil their statutory obligations and make construction sites much safer places to work.



- Monitoring of implementation and compliance should be decentralized to district level authorities
- Consultants need to be more active in enforcing OHS clauses at work places
- Regulators should be enabled to improve performance
- Incentives for compliance with OHS regulations are needed as well as penalties for non compliant contractors

#### **General**

Work in the Construction Industry can be made safe through collaboration of major stakeholders. All parties

must be involved in finding solutions to work related accidents.

- Dissemination and actual enforcement of information and regulations on H&S is a big challenge. It cannot be left to the regulators alone. All stakeholders in the construction industry need to play their part.

#### **Other Industry Developments**

Other industry developments that impact on OHS include the development of Regulations for the OSHA 2003 Act, which is hoped will provide a framework for the effective implementation of the Act.

It is to be noted that the OSHA Act 2003 also allows OSHA to sub- contract private inspectors, and that OSHA will effect this provision in ensuring the effective enforcement of its Act..

Another positive industry intervention is the formation of the ILO Construction Action Programme which seeks at raising the compliance of OHS through training and awareness for stakeholders through a multi- stakeholder approach. Already a number of interventions have been proposed and are being followed up through the Programme.

#### ***Safety is no accident***

Poor safety hurts not only the worker, but also the company, the workers family, the community at large, and the country that may have one less taxpayer.

Ensure safety at work, accidents cost money. ■

# Health and safety standards in construction industry pathetic, says workers rights coordinator

**A** Contractors Registration Board's TV advert on safety at construction sites shows a man at work accidentally stepping on a nail which hurts his foot. He was not wearing feet protecting gear.

This is the scenario at many construction sites in Tanzania. It's common to see people at construction sites without Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) - helmets, shoes, overalls and the like. It is also common to get excuses for this lapse.

On a recent Saturday afternoon, about six men were busy clearing some rubble at a construction site in Dar es Salaam. Some of them were bare-chested, some were wearing slippers and others had gumboots and neither had a helmet. A young man was busy welding but without eye-protecting goggles. Jaffer, the supervisor tries to offer some excuses in defence of those who were not using protective gear saying; "if you come here on weekdays, you will find these people wearing protective gear. But on weekend like today, people tend to ignore some of the regulations. You see, some are bare-chested because it's hot," he said.

Jaffer says their employer provides all his workers with all the necessary protective gear and that some workers just decide to not use them for various reasons. "There was a time our employer used to give us proper boots but people would think they were too good to be spoilt at the construction site. They would therefore keep them at home and wear just any shoes. This made our boss stop buying boots. That's why some are wearing gumboots instead," Jaffer explained.

And the welder who was neither wearing a welder's helmet nor goggles? "There's nothing wrong with this," he simply said as he continued doing his job.

The construction industry in Tanzania is said to have in the last two decades witnessed considerable growth in construction and the number of workers employed. However, this growth is said not to be hand in hand with safety measures to ensure the safety and health of the workers as well as the general public.

A 1996 report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) shows that Tanzania's construction industry is one of the worst occupational safety and health performers in terms of frequency of injuries and occupational illnesses. The industry ranks third worst in terms of frequency of fatal accidents after agriculture and mining industries.

"The construction industry is hazardous yet it employs a majority of workers. Some workers did not get the right training for their jobs but they get into the construction industry. Employing people who are untrained to work in a hazardous environment makes it doubly hazardous," says Victor Kassian, assistant project coordinator of Strengthening Workers Rights in the Construction Industry in Tanzania, which is undertaken by the UK's Engineers Against Poverty in collaboration with the Institution of Engineers of Tanzania.

Kassian says few people are actually aware of the hazards associated with the activities in the construction industry. "Some people are unaware that they could easily acquire deadly diseases at the workplace," Kassian said, pointing to diseases such as lung cancer which could be caused by very fine dust from crushing stone at quarries. Another hazard is HIV/Aids since construction of roads involves workers moving to new places as road construction progresses, a chance to get new sex partners. And when it comes to buildings, he says, one of the hazards is workers falling

from heights or tools and equipment dropping on people below.

In construction you can't avoid height and Kassian says people must know how to work with height safely by using ladders, scaffolds and cranes correctly. "Fall is one of the leading hazards in the construction industry. It is attributed with things such as poor scaffolding, ladders. Unfortunately in Tanzania, we don't have people specialized in the field of erecting scaffolds. Scaffolds must be erected by trained, specialized experts... but we see them being erected haphazardly in many buildings," Kassian noted.

Kassian mentioned demolition of buildings as another area of concern. He said a lot of demolition is going on in Dar es Salaam city centre today but it is not being undertaken by specialist demolition companies. Instead, buildings are pulled down manually by casual labourers, which is very dangerous. When demolishing a building, someone could fall down, or something could fall on a person and injure or even kill them. Someone could be electrocuted if there are electric wires around and they if they do not take the necessary precautions.

"When doing demolition, you need to have people who know what they are doing like having and reading a water plan to know where water pipes or sewer pipes are, otherwise you could end up creating havoc. These activities should be done by professionals who have knowledge the right demolishing equipment, Kassian says. According to him, systematic demolition involves disconnection of water, power and sewage systems. "If, for example, there is an underground power system, one needs to know where the cable is so as to protect it. But today they cut and sell them in Kariakoo," he says.

Kassian says demolition work should

also take into consideration public safety and environmental protection. For this reason, buildings should be pulled down in a way that does not affect neighbours and the environment, ensuring a proper way of disposing rubble. "Some people throw it on the road, which is not proper," he says.

Although there is not a single company registered with the Contractors Registration Board (CRB) for the purpose of carrying out demolition work, Eng. Magesa Bairi, CRB's Assistant Registrar in the Registration Services Department, says demolition can be done by registered building contractors or demolition specialists. He says CRB has the criteria for demolition in place. "Unfortunately, what happens is that you sometimes wake up in the morning to find a building has already been pulled down. It happens very fast. It can happen in a day," Eng. Bairi says. He says enforcement of who does demolition is difficult because people hire casual labourers who do the job overnight

and often so hazardously with hammers. Sometimes they cause vibration to neighbouring buildings, they disturb neighbours and pose a danger to passers-by because they rarely put protection when demolishing. He insists on disposal of debris that does not pose danger to anyone.

One engineer thinks it will take time and a lot of educational campaigns to change people's minds as far as observing health and safety measures at workplaces is concerned. He says, for example, that a good number of contractors don't have a safety policy in place despite the fact that the Occupational and Safety Act of 2003 requires that a work place with more than four workers needs to have a safety policy.

The Act requires the policy to be developed by both the employer and his employees and that it must be posted on the notice board. Every employee is also supposed to have a copy of the policy. The truth is, none of these applies in many construction sites in Tanzania.

Many contractors are ignorant of the existence of the law and its requirements. "What is happening in the field does not reflect what is in the legal books," commented the anonymous engineer.

IET's Executive Secretary, Eng. Swalehe Kassera did not want to apportion blame, preferring instead to call the problem "situational". "I call it situational. We are not ready...these are challenges of development. With globalization arise development needs. Simple structures of yester-years are now being replaced by concrete structures," says Eng. Kassera.

He says in developed countries you could pull down PPF Tower without disturbing other buildings in the area and says this is where we also want to go although it is still a long way to go.

Kassian says this is a challenge to all the stakeholders in the industry. He says there is a need for raising awareness, which is one of the things their project, Strengthening Workers

Rights in the Construction Industry is addressing.

Kassian says health and safety standards in many companies are pathetic and says they need a lot of improvement. He says employers need to train their employees on the matter. When it comes to health and safety budgets, Kassian says; "You will be shocked if you ask many." He says when reducing a company's operational costs, people are ready to reduce the workers rights as far as health and safety are concerned. They value structures more than people. "We must value people more," he says.

He calls upon stakeholders involved such as the municipal councils, the city engineer, the Engineers Registration Board, the Contractors Registration Board, the Architects and Quantity Surveyors Registration Board, the Association of Consulting Engineers Tanzania and others to look into the importance of safety and health at work places.

He also advised health and safety

to be institutionalized into the tendering system where he says the element of health and safety is not given priority.

"Those observing health and safety should be the ones given the tenders. These should be included in the construction cost," Kassian says adding that people don't calculate these in their budgets when tendering and therefore see it costly to educate their workers on health and safety at work places.

Kassian says health and safety is an item that is considered when tendering for a job in the developed world. They look at how many hours you have worked accident free, something he says is coming to Tanzania too. He says this will make people understand the importance of safety and health if this is included as a criterion in the evaluation of tenders.

But whether people will tell the truth on the hours they have worked without accidents is questionable. For people only have accident register

books at construction sites simply because it's mandatory to have one. But most of the register books are clean despite the fact that workers do get accidents. This is because workers don't know their rights and therefore don't push their employers to register the accidents when they happen. And obviously, the employers don't see the importance of doing so.

Eng. Evod Lyamuya, CRB's East Zonal Manager says most people have register books at the sites just to avoid penalty. People start work at a construction site and finish without recording any accident. Lyamuya says it's because people don't know the importance of doing so.

"It's impossible to finish work at a site with a clean register. Some people think an accident is called an accident only when it is fatal," Lyamuya points out saying CRB's aim of wanting people to record accidents is to have data and control. "We want to know the trend but we can't if the books are not filled. Knowing the trend of accidents would help us formulate policies," he says. ■