



MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK (APRIL 28TH, 2019)

Sunday 28th April is the World Day for Safety and Health at Work. World Day for Safety and Health at Work is an awareness-raising campaign intended to focus international and national attention on emerging trends in the field of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) on the magnitude of work-related injuries, diseases and fatalities and on how to make our workplaces safe and healthy. This year, inspired by the ILO centenary anniversary and discussions on the future of work, Uganda once again will be joining the rest of the world in marking this Day under the National theme **“Safety, health and the future of work: Combating vulnerability of the Youth”**.

The 2019 commemoration campaign highlights the critical importance of addressing the challenges the young workers face and aims at laying strategies for improving their safety and health at work, through promotion of decent youth employment and building a culture of prevention on OSH.

Decent work offers opportunities for work that are productive and deliver a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

The campaign is also aimed at accelerating action to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG target No. 8.8 of safe and secure working environments for all workers by 2030).

Facts : Statistics worldwide show that 541 million young workers of 15 to 24 years old account for more than 15 per cent of the world's labour force and suffer up to a 40 per cent higher rate of non-fatal occupational injuries than adult workers older than 25 years.

Whereas in contexts, a youth is defined as a person aged between 15 and 24 years (United Nations) or between 15 and 35 years (African Union), in Uganda, a youth is considered as a person aged 18 to 30 years (Labour Market Transition of Young People in Uganda - LMTY, 2016).

Uganda National Housing Survey 2016/17 put Uganda's population at about 37 million people with the youth taking up about 21% (about 7.77 million). The National Labour Force Survey report (NLFS) 2016/17 estimates that about 50 percent of the youth were employed with more males at 60% than females at 45% in employment. The same report estimates a total labour force of 9.9 million people with youth accounting for 57.3% (about 5.7 million) and as such the youth make up the largest part of the Uganda's labour force. Statistics of occupational safety and health performance among working youth are not yet available for Uganda but ILO records show that out of the working youth in the world (more than 15% of the world's labour force), youth suffer up to a 40% higher rate of non-fatal occupational injuries than adult workers older than 25 years.

According to UBOS' NLFS 2016/17, working youth are spread across several sectors of the economy including: Agriculture (57.2%), Trade (14.4%), Manufacturing (5.6%), Transport and storage (4.7%), Construction (3.8%), Education (3.4%), Other services activities (2.9%), activities of household employers (2.6%), Hotel, restaurant, eating places (1.5%), Others (4.2%). A significant percentage are engaged in hazardous sectors like manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. The Annual Labor reports of 2016/17 and 2017/2018 indicate that among the 106 accidents referred to the Medical Arbitration Board, 48 were from agricultural sector, 26 from manufacturing, 19 services, 10 construction and 3 mining. In other words, the most cases are from agricultural sector which is also the largest employing sector for youth in Uganda.

The recent Labour Force Survey report by UBOS, June, 2018 indicates that the greatest effect on health was extreme fatigue which was experienced by nearly 22 percent of the employed population followed by superficial injuries or open wounds (15%) which were suffered mostly by workers in urban areas. Injury to young workers not only leads to loss of productive time, investment in education and training but a lifetime of lost or compromised career opportunities, earnings potential and general well-being for him or herself, their dependents and the community at large. However, it is reassuring to note that most of the world's work-related deaths, injuries and illnesses are preventable.



Hon. Jannat B. Mukwaya (Hajati)
Minister for Gender, Labour & Social Development



Pius Bigirimana
P.S. Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development

Risk factors for youth

Modern labour markets are a tough place for young jobseekers. Many feel pressure to accept the first job offer they get, often without considering the terms and conditions, even when the working conditions put their health and safety at risk. As such, young workers suffer from injury and illness on the job at far higher rates than their adult counterparts, who are often more experienced or skilled than the youth and tend to have more say in regard to their working conditions.

There are numerous reasons for the OSH vulnerability of youth in Uganda. The leading factors include:

i) Unstable jobs

The high levels of youth unemployment have led to high concentration of young people in informal and nonstandard employment where there is lack of supervision, representation and awareness of their rights at work. In 2015, among the 40% of the young people who were employed as skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, only 4% transitioned to stable employment. The highest proportion of young people who transitioned to stable employment was those with elementary occupation (25%) and service workers (22%). It is of concern that only 20% of young persons with technical or associate professional occupations transition to stable employment. This means that only about one in every five youth with associate professional jobs and above is likely to complete their labour market transition to more secure jobs that are stress free (LMTY, 2016).

ii) Lack of skills and training

The transition of many young workers directly from education to employment with limited skills and training and no work experience increases their risk to injury four times greater than older workers in the first 12 months. Due to their lack of job experience, young workers are often less able to safely handle hazardous substances and job tasks. They often underestimate or overlook the safety and health risks associated with their job. According to the LMTY 2016, youth workers who transition or enter into satisfactory work are distributed at 85.6% Direct entry, 7.3% from unemployment, 2.1% from inactivity, 2% from non-satisfactory employment, 1.4% from self-employed (not-satisfactory), 0.4% from internship, 0.1% from temporary employment (Not satisfactory). This indicates that the largest percentage (about 95%) of youth join employment without prior exposure to the world of work and may only have education which in Uganda doesn't have OSH integrated fully into the curriculum.

iii) Educational levels

Awareness of workplace safety is influenced by education. Young people with higher education have better understanding of safety and are more compliant with safety procedures than their counterparts with less education. Good-quality education, complemented by relevant vocational training and skills development opportunities, prepare future generations for their productive lives, endowing them with the core skills that enable them to meaningfully participate in production or to access decent work. Unfortunately, Statistics from Uganda's NLFS 2016/17 indicate that only 13% of the persons in employment had education attainment of above secondary level with a higher percentage of labour force in urban areas (23%) than in rural areas (8%). About 10 percent of the employed population did not possess any formal education while 67 percent of them did not have any trade/technical skills or any area of specialisation. This therefore leaves many youthful workers vulnerable to poor working conditions.

iv) Migration

With few opportunities at home, many young Ugandans seek work abroad. But there are risks associated with this: such as the potential of human rights abuse during recruitment and employment, few guarantees of on-the-job safety and health, and respect of the rights of migrant workers.

Campaign Strategy:

The campaign strategy for combating youth vulnerability includes five main components:

- Collection and effective use of timely and relevant OSH data;
- Mainstreaming occupational safety and health in formal education so that young people get it as an integral part of their education, before entering the workforce;
- Expanding legal frameworks to cover workers in the informal economy;

- Strengthening the capacity of tripartite partners to address workplace hazards and risks;
- Increasing knowledge dissemination and awareness of the hazards and risks faced by young workers. News and social media platforms are essential in this area.

The benefits of this campaign will be to demonstrate that investing in OSH:

- Helps maximize the productivity of young workers;
- Builds a more competent, healthier young workforce;
- Reduces business costs and disruption;
- Enhances young employees' commitment to the business;
- Helps demonstrate that a business is socially responsible;
- Protects and enhances brand image and brand value;
- Enables enterprises to meet customers' OSH expectations; and
- Encourages the young workforce to stay longer in active life.

Role of Different Actors in Combating OSH Vulnerability of the Youth

Combating OSH vulnerability of youth at the workplace requires joint campaign and coordinated action by several players, namely;

a) Government;

Government through the Ministry has a mandate to empower citizens to maximize their individual and collective potential by developing skills, increasing labor productivity and cultural enrichment to achieve sustainable and gender sensitive development. The Ministry through its technical arm promotes safety and health in all workplaces. This is done through;

- safety and health inspection of all workplaces.
- offering Technical advice to duty holders -(workers and employers) on how best they can comply with the law.
- undertaking accident investigation for accidents at workplaces.
- training and sensitization on Safety and Health.
- registration of all workplaces.
- reviewing workplace plans and architectural drawings to ensure safe and health workplaces-promoting safe designs
- working with other Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) like NEMA especially on Environment and Social Impact Assessment Consultations and Audits

b) Organisations/ Enterprises;

Employers need to appreciate that poor health and safety create costs for organisations. Companies and enterprises are mandated to comply with the regulatory framework, labour laws, especially the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2006 which provides basics on how best to set up a safe work environment. Their role therefore, is to create suitable working environments through safe work practices with designated leadership roles to ensure compliance with the law. Employers have the responsibility to ensure that all parties (contractors, suppliers) at the work environment address safety and health risks. Every enterprise can enjoy significant benefits by investing in OSH. Simple improvements in safe work mechanisms can increase protection, competitiveness, profitability and the motivation of employees especially young workers.

c) Workers' Organizations

The workers, through their umbrella organisations (NOTU and COFTU) as well as through independently organized groups representing various workplaces, have a duty of care to comply with the requirements of the OSH Act, by both maximizing the measures put in place by their employers and removing themselves from dangerous situations within the workplace. Young workers are particularly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the law, so that they can advocate for their rights at work, whether as employees or self-employed persons

CONCLUSION

Considering the demography bonus where more than half of our population are people below 30 years old, we need to continue strengthening OSH awareness and capacity of all stakeholders with the overall intent of reducing the vulnerability of the youth by creating a safe future for the workforce. Improving national safe work practices, by all stakeholders will go a long way in, linking the identified efforts of combating OSH vulnerability of the youth and charting of the future of work we want. We must continue promoting safe work practices culture as part of our daily culture.