

Construction sector tops with injuries

By Jeff Andrew Lule

The construction sector contributes about 75% of the injuries at workplaces in different parts of the country, a senior official from the Ministry of Gender and Labour has revealed.

Eva Katusabe Muzira, a specialised safety inspector at the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) department, says many of the injuries and death cases reported are mainly from the construction sector.

"The few inspections we have done at various workplaces; we realised that many construction sites register more cases of injuries. This was evident at hydro power construction site and road constructions among others," she notes.

She disclosed this at the national conference on OSH at work places under the theme; "Optimise the collection and use of occupational safety and health data" at National Theatre in Kampala on Wednesday.

Celebrations

The event is part of the activities in preparation to the main celebration to scheduled to take place at CHOGM Memorial park in Kampala today.

Katusabe said the Government through the ministry has put in place an OSH Management Information System (OSHMIS) to



Workers at construction sites are expected to wear helmets and boots to avoid being hit by debris

easily record data of all injuries and sectors for proper measures.

She says they have already registered 2,200 workplaces which are part of the system.

She explains that much of the injuries are as a result of falling objects, falls and caught in between objects among others. The most common injuries include hand injury, head injury, leg and foot injuries among others.

Over 30 people get injured at various constructions sites in the country due to lack safety measures annually.

Katusabe stresses that many of the injuries and death at construction sites are preventable but this can

only be achieved if they are listed by the employers to take the necessary prevention measures in future.

"That is why we want to have OSH data in place in all workplaces. It helps a company to know how to deal with this problem. You can only deal with a problem if you know the cause," she explains.

Eng. Mukasa Senyonjo, a global OSH consultant says all workplaces need to have these OSH data systems in place to help them tackle the problem and save human resource.

"There is need to record these injuries to avoid them in future.

You need to record these injuries per sector, category, department,

age, group, shift and time of day. If you have proper records, it helps employers to prioritise their strategies to prevent these occurrences," he notes.

He adds some employers or contractors do not provide adequate protective gears for their workers on various sites.

Workers at construction sites are expected to put on helmets, boots and gloves to avoid being hit directly by various objects.

The principal general safety inspector at the labour ministry, Douglas Nkonge said most sites lack the required gears thus exposing workers to all sorts of calamities.

"We want all employers to

consider the OSH Act in all their plans. The designers of these plans also need to point out these risks and what can be done to prevent them," he says.

He noted that they want to sensitise both employees and employers on the OSH Act to know their rights and what should be done.

Nkonge adds that due to ignorance of the law, many workers do not report these injuries and go without compensation, stressing that even employers do not know what is required of them.

"If employers work as per law and avoid these accidents, it helps them to avoid incurring extra costs through compensations and repairs from time to time," he adds.

The assistant commissioner Occupational Health, Eng. Francis Odong Gimoro says the indicators of safety and health at work provide a framework for assessing the extent at which workers are protected from work related hazards and risks.

"These indicators can be used by enterprises and government to come up with policies and programmes for the prevention of occupational injuries, diseases and deaths as well as to monitor the implementation of the various programmes and signal particular areas of increasing risk such as a particular occupation, industry or location," he noted.

Odong said the ministry intends to strengthen inspection at work places to make sure workers are safe and workers comply with the law.

How I lost my fingers at work - Byekwaso

I am Solomon Byekwaso and I am 54 years old. Currently, I am a maintenance supervisor at Vision Group. In October 2009, I had an accident in which I lost some of my fingers. I was working as a printing technician on the evening shift. It was between 7:00pm and 8:00pm. It was a rainy evening, so there were only a handful of us. My colleague asked me to give him a hand as we waited for his team to arrive to work.

As we printed, I noticed that one of the units on the print was not clear. I reached into the machine to figure out the problem. Suddenly, my left hand was stuck in the machine, and the machine was still running. I used my right hand to press the stop button and called out for help but my colleagues didn't know what to do. I had the most expertise then so it was up to me to save my hand.

I used my right hand to unlock the four bolts locking the roller which was seated on my hand, opened it up, removed it and handed it over to a colleague nearby. Then, I instructed them on how to reverse the machine such that I could remove my hand. Because it was shattered, it took 25 minutes for us to finally set my hand free.

It was not bleeding but really shattered, like a banana that had been stepped on. The fingers were still on but badly damaged. Bits of my hand remained in the machine and was found the next day when they were cleaning up the machine. I thought my whole hand would have to be amputated due to the excessive damage. I kept thinking how I would fend for my children without a hand. I was rushed to a hospital in Kololo, bleeding excessively. I thought I might collapse. There



was heavy traffic jam. I was given first aid and referred to International Hospital Kampala in Namuwongo where I was immediately rushed to the theatre. The doctor said I was lucky I still had the three strongest fingers on my hand, which meant I could still hold things with them. And after all, I still had my right hand intact.

I was discharged after a week in hospital. Right now, although my hand feels numb, I am still working without any difficulty, although one of the fingers is stiff because it had a broken ligament. It took about a year and a half for me to heal. I resumed work after about five months. This is because no one on the team then had the expertise that I had and the company had gotten a new machine to install. I can even drive.

When it's cold, my hand grows so cold I feel like it's in a freezer. That is why I move around with a glove.

As told to Vicky Wandawa



MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

LOGO DESIGNING COMPETITION FOR THE 9CYMM

The Government of Uganda in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat will host the **9th Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting (9CYMM)** due to take place in Kampala, Uganda from **31st July – 4th August 2017** at **Munyonyo Commonwealth Resort**. The meeting will bring together Youth Ministers, Senior Government Officials, Youth Representatives, Youth Workers and other Youth Development Stakeholders from across 53 Countries of the Commonwealth.

The 9CYMM will be organized under the theme **"Resourcing and Financing Youth Development; Empowering Youth"**. The meeting will create opportunities for the participants to reflect on the theme from their perspectives.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is organising a logo designing competition in line with the theme and therefore seeks applications from youth as a means of engaging them to participate and contribute ideas for the meeting.

Who can participate?

Any Ugandan youth (male and female) between 15 to 30 years of age

How to participate:

Submit electronic and/ or hard copies of the proposed logo to:

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, P.O Box 7136, Kampala, Plot 2, George Street, Simbanyo Building, Kampala
Email: nationalyouthtalent@mglsd.go.ug
WhatsApp No.: 0774490479

Submissions should include;

- Personal information: full names, age, sex and contact
- Brief description of the logo

Prizes:

1st	1,000,000/=
2nd	800,000/=
3rd	500,000/=

DEADLINE: FRIDAY 5TH MAY 2017

For more details please call 0774490479 (Sylvia)

Pius Bigirimana

PERMANENT SECRETARY