

APPROACHES TO CULTIVATING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH) PREVENTION CULTURE IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

The word culture means a habit or behaviour and hence Prevention Culture is that habit of stopping things to continue happening and thereby containing the effects of the occurrences. In this context, the paper is targeting evolving approaches of containing occupational hazards at workplaces. Note that the transformation of natural resources into goods and services especially in Developing Countries is seen to attract the occurrence of occupational hazards as prevention culture is uncommon. Most occupational hazards are man-made. Falling from height, for example, demonstrates that some workers at height are sometimes careless in securing their position. Most work-related accidents and illnesses are therefore preventable.

This paper aims at highlighting approaches which would influence the adoption of prevention measures against occurrences of occupational accidents and diseases.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) at workplaces is a crossing-cutting issue that affects all spheres of life that includes industry, agriculture etc. Cultivating a culture of observing Occupational Safety and Health assurance at workplaces is very important and essential. When God created the universe, he entrusted it with plenty of natural resources which when subjected to engineering processes, produce goods and services to sustain human life. In this regard, ILO confirms that the production of goods and services is associated with occupational accidents and diseases. ILO says out of 2.34 million annual work-related deaths, 2.02 million deaths are caused by work-related diseases and 0.32 million are through accidents and injuries. Occupational accidents and diseases are unwanted adverse events at workplaces affecting not only the individuals but also the society. Occupational accidents and diseases have negative impact on health and as well on success, image, recruitment and labour turnover of a company.

2.0 INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO) AND BUILDING OSH PREVENTION CULTURE.

In ILO terms Preventive Safety and Health Culture both at national and firm level is fundamental for improving Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) at workplaces.

Continuous improvement of national OSH performance calls for the introduction of a national legal framework, OSH inspections, training network and availing technical supporting framework. With the national OSH framework system in place, prevention measures have to be carried out at firms level by the management and by the workers and be considered as an integral part of the business operations. Management and workers have to share common values to instill preventive Safety and Health Culture.

The whole game starts with interpreting Convention No. 187 ILO Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention 2006, "**a National Preventive Safety and Health Culture**". This is a culture which the right to safe and health working

environment is respected at all levels, where government, employers and workers participate actively to have a safe and health working environment. The convention besides recognizing that workers have the right to a safe and healthy environment, advocates formulating OSH Policy and action plans.

In order to build a national/firm preventive safety and health culture, improvement of in OSH knowledge and awareness at all levels (stakeholders) is necessary.

Two steps taken by ILO are worth noting as being responsible for promoting preventive culture :

- (i) ILO promoting the building and monitoring of National Preventive Safety and Health Culture through observing the World Day for Safety and Health at Work places on 28th April of each year.
- (ii) Adopting the Seoul Declaration on Safety and Health at Work passed at Safety and Health Summit in 2008 in Seoul. Seoul Declaration recognises that promoting high level Safety and Health at workplaces is the responsibility of the society and calls for building and maintaining a national preventive Safety and Health Culture and should consider OSH at workplaces as a national priority.

3.0 ZERO ACCIDENT CONCEPT

Zero Accident Concept is the ideal Occupational Safety and Health Preventive Culture initiative. This concept requires to eliminate occupational accidents and diseases at workplaces basing on the principle that all accidents are preventable. The concept is both an intellectual and practical challenge to provide safe work. Success in achieving Zero Accident Concept would mean overcoming occurrence of fatal accidents.

Normally managers at workplaces aim at lowering accidents but in practice that is not easy; and whenever achieved, it is very difficult to maintain. Safety is a value as such,

accident free workplace is a human right for each worker.

Among pioneers of Zero Accident concept is the Finnish Government with its famous Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Interested in promoting Zero Accident concept, the Finnish have managed to establish a Zero Accident Forum which is a Voluntary Network responsible for promoting accident prevention. The Forum propagates successful stories of Zero Accident concept. The Forum also organises seminars and provides tools and materials to promote Zero Accident concept. Membership commitment to the Zero Accident concept is the key concern of the Forum. The Forum urges workplaces to be committed to providing safe working environment.

4.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF PREVENTIVE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (POSH) IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

Significant strides have been made in the push for economic development in most of the Developing Countries. These economical developments which involve human activities are propellants of industrialisation and are associated with occurrences of occupational accidents and diseases. Human activities poorly supervised contribute to collapsing of structures, unsecured plant and equipment, fires that contribute also to stampage, inhalation of dust and fumes, communicable diseases, fatality and injuries. There are also cases of accidents caused by lack of training, inexperience and weak law enforcement.

As for occupational diseases, both Communicable Diseases (CD) – HIV AIDS, STD, TB, malaria, diarrhea and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) – Cardiovascular Cancer, respiratory, disorder diabetes have equally penetrated into workplaces thus causing deaths and disabilities. Consequences of the occupational accidents and diseases would be manageable if governments on undeveloping

countries had invested in the promotion of Prevention Culture to achieve better working environment. Inspection agencies like OSHA are not well equipped, lack adequate human resources to carry out monitoring inspections, lack inspection equipment and lack professional skills.

It is important for both industrialised and developing countries to be party to the 2008 ILO Seoul Declaration on Safety and Health at work. The Declaration proclaims that "*A National Preventive Safety and Health Culture is one in which the Right to safe and healthy work environment is expected at all levels*" where governments, employers and workers jointly cooperate to have a safe and healthy work environment by defining the **Rights, responsibilities and duties** to accord **Prevention Culture** the highest priority.

It is being observed that Occupational Safety and Healthy non-compliance in developing countries is pathetic. Non-compliance has revealed the following phenomena at workplaces:

- (i) Collapse of walls/structures in the construction
- (ii) Negligence and lack of patience (psychostress)
- (iii) Unprotected plant and equipment
- (iv) Stampede in the case of riots/fires
- (v) Inexperience in operating plant
- (vi) Suffocation due to lack of air
- (vii) Absenteeism
- (viii) Weak regulatory authority

Adoption of Preventive Safety and Health Culture to attain zero accidents will contain compensation, healthcare, rehabilitation and disability as cost of containing OSH incidences is so demanding and as such there is a need of adopting OSH Preventive measures.

5.0 WAYS OF PROMOTING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PREVENTION CULTURE

Occupational Safety and Health Prevention Culture is defined as "*an organisational atmosphere where safety and health are understood and accepted as Number one priority*.. Accidents are caused, hence cultivating preventive culture to protect workers from occupational hazards is vital.

Financial burden to meet compensations, healthcares, rehabilitation and disability is enormous. WHO says, in some developing countries cost can be as high as 1% of the GDP of the country. Economic consequences would be manageable if governments had promoted prevention culture to achieve a better work environment. Inspection agencies in developing countries like OSHA are generally poorly equipped, coupled up with lack of adequate and competent human resources to carry out monitoring inspections, plant and equipment inspection and testing. Under such circumstances, the following issues must be taken on board in adopting prevention culture:

- (i) Developing Occupational Safety and Health Policies both at national and firm level.
- (ii) Incorporating occupational Safety and Health agenda in strategic plans.
- (iii) Producing performance measurement reports
- (iv) Training workers at various levels to influence attitude change.
- (v) Carrying out Risk Assessment to identify risks and their mitigation.
- (vi) Monitoring, recording and reporting incidences.
- (vii) Availing a clear communication plan for effective transfer of information.
- (viii) Self-regulating through regular internal OSH audits with management taking appropriate measures.
- (ix) Involving workers and OSH communities at workplaces to realize Prevention Culture.

(x) Recognizing successful performers by rewarding them.

60 BENEFITS

Study on costs and benefits resulting from investing in Occupational Safety and Health endeavours as verified by the International Social Security Association (ISSA) has proved that there is an appreciable Return on Prevention. Prevention measures at the individual level in support of workers well-being are essential for a healthy and active life.

Investing in prevention culture based on legal and moral obligation, has the following benefits.

- (i) Provides opportunity employ competent operators, designers and contractors.
- (ii) Enhances observing standards and codes
- (iii) Promotes corporate image
- (iv) Increases productivity and business success
- (v) Provides stable income
- (vi) Provides an environment for competitiveness
- (vii) Ensures well-being of the individual
- (viii) Provides a conducive environment for training
- (ix) Provides an environment that will allow the use of modern technologies in:
 - Warning Systems
 - Communication
 - Use of safer machines
 - Use of better controls.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Though Occupational Safety and Health Prevention Culture in Tanzania is still new,

OSHA, however, has made some initiatives. The initiatives need to be programmed to attain the objective. The initiatives include the recruitment of inspectors who, besides inspecting for compliance have also the duty to educate the employers about the benefits of adapting occupational Safety and Health compliance. The other initiative is conducting a number of courses whose aim is to get the participants understanding the OSH Act No. 5/2003. OSHA also interprets ILO Conventions on Occupational Safety and Health and communicates the same to all stakeholders.

Incidentally, Occupational Safety and Health issues in Tanzania are shared also among other regulatory authorities like Contractors Registration Board (CRB), Engineers Registration Board (ERB), Architects, Quantity Surveyors Registration Board (AQRB) and Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA). The challenge here then is the synchronization of OSH issues for the benefit of all of the key players which include those regulatory authorities.

It is being recommended that OSHA pioneers the adoption of the Prevention Culture concept and have implementation programmes put in place.

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Occupational Health and Safety African Newsletter March 2015

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Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

***UWP Tanzania one***

UWP Consulting (Tanzania) opened its doors as a partnership between Tanzanian professionals and South African engineering consulting practice UWP Consulting a decade ago.

The Tanzanian business has successfully completed roads and water projects valued at more than 10 million USD, with structures and capacity building assignments further expanding its portfolio in the last few years.

UWP Consulting (Tanzania) was registered as a local engineering consulting firm in May 2005, with five local professionals holding 51% of the shares and UWP Holdings 49%.

The company was started after Henry Catma, an engineer based in Dar es Salaam, responded to UWP's search for an individual or small company to form a joint venture in Tanzania. The timing was particularly good as Catma and four other Tanzanian professionals were in the initial stages of establishing a local company called Tangroup Professionals Ltd. or TANPROL.

"It was easy to integrate TANPROL with UWP SA to form UWP Consulting (Tanzania) since both were targeting the same markets," says Catma, who has served as managing director of the company from its inception.

The other founding shareholders in the company are not involved in the day-to-day operations.

For several months Catma was the only full time employee in the fledgling Tanzanian business, but the first major breakthrough came in 2006 when three municipal road upgrading projects were awarded in succession and two more engineers joined the firm. Today UWP Consulting (Tanzania) has a staff complement of 20, including six professional engineers, and has successfully completed numerous projects alone and in joint venture with UWP SA.

UWP Tanzania two

Notable awards include the design of the 65km Tanga-Horohoroand 78km Peramihoh-Mbingaroads, and supervision of the high profile Lower Ruvu Water Treatment Plant providing potable water to Dar es Salaam.

The company is looking to increase its client base by exploring opportunities in the private sector, in mining and through joint ventures with other professional firms in airport, railway and harbour projects.

"We are also hoping to implement a strong succession plan by employing young professionals, providing training and giving them the opportunity to acquire shares. This is a continuous process which began in 2014 when our first young professionals acquired a shareholding in UWP Consulting (Tanzania)."

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