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**Business in Emerging Markets and Human Rights- the
example of worker safety in the construction sector,
especially since the recovery from the world-wide
economic crisis**

Stephanie Jones ¹

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¹ Maastricht School of Management

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Abstract

High rates of accidents and deaths among construction workers have marred our excitement about elegant new buildings gracing the skylines of cities in many emerging markets – but is this now a thing of the past? Will economic recovery and growth provide a new opportunity to rid the world of a modern form of slavery, or is it set to continue as before?

Is there a new attitude now to the right of workers to safe working conditions, here seen through the example of the booming construction industry? This has been one of the first industries to recover from the world-wide economic malaise of the first decade of the 21st century. Workers in construction are primarily workers from emerging market countries, looking to escape poverty through gaining well-paid jobs in one of the most active, lucrative and labor-intensive areas of business. Are the health and safety standards espoused in the West accepted by the new breed of multinationals emerging in developing and fast-growing nations around the world?

In the call for papers for this conference, *Global Business, Emerging Markets and Human Rights: old concerns or fresh hopes?* the Dean of MSM asks about the possibility of an economic recovery leading to a re-think about business ethics, improved CSR and the arrival of a new opportunity to rid the world of poverty. This prompts questions about the nature of the businesses now coming to the fore since the doom and gloom of depression, such as the construction industry, now flourishing again. Will there be a new concern with worker safety, or a continuation of the old ways?

Paper

Worker safety in the construction sector can be seen as a test-case of human rights in emerging markets, and we are particularly concerned with the possibility that improvements might be taking place in this area in recent times, or is this not the case?

Clearly, work-related accidents, or even just the possibility of a lack of interest in worker safety, can cause losses to many. This is not just the contractor – the company carrying-out the construction work – and the employees executing the project. It might also be suggested that the project clients, such as property developers, might also suffer as a project can gain a bad image if it was the scene of injuries and especially of fatalities. Do construction companies, contractors and project clients care? At least in order to prevent bad publicity?

One way of identifying evidence of concern with worker safety is the existence or not in a project of an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS). The need for such a system was recognised many years ago by many developed countries, and one of the first was the United Kingdom. With the setting-up of the Accident Prevention Advisory Unit of the Health and Safety Executive in the UK, the world's first Occupational Health and Safety Act was passed. The research associated with this requirement surveyed the costs of work-related accidents in 1989. The results of the UK study indicated that the loss suffered by construction companies from work-related accidents was 5–10% of the profit for all industries and 8.5% of the tender price for the construction industry. The ratio of the direct cost to the indirect cost of work-related accidents was seen as 1:11, seen as especially high. The indirect costs included product and material damage, loss of production time, legal costs, overtime and the need to hire temporary labour, investigation time, supervisor's time, fines, loss of expertise and experience, loss of morale, and bad publicity (quoted by Yoon et. al., 2013).

As a result, the occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS) was first prepared in the UK in 1991 as a practical guide for directors, managers, health and safety professionals, and employee representatives who wanted to improve health and safety in their organization. The OHSMS can be seen as part of an overall management system that facilitates the management of the occupational health and safety (OHS) risks associated with the business of the organization. This includes the organizational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes, and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing, and maintaining an organization's OHS policy. A variety of OHSMS-based standards, guidelines, and audits since then have been developed within public, private, and not-for-profit sectors across the world. Increasingly, OHSMS has been recognized as an approach to improve the transparency, productivity, and competitiveness of business, not just as a moral issue (quoted by Yoon et. al., 2013).

In looking at the OHSMS framework, we need to test certain assumptions. First, is reducing the accident rate one of the most important purposes of developing and implementing such a framework? It then might be expected that construction companies with a well-established OHSMS will have a lower accident rate than those without. Secondly, in the case of many countries (both developed and emerging) with a construction industry, the large companies are generally aware of the need for OHSMS, but most small and medium [SME] construction

companies are at an early stage in terms of their investment in health and safety. Health and safety as well as quality and productivity can play an important role in the success and development of a construction business, so providing an OHSMS can add value, but this might be overlooked in smaller companies. It might depend on the status of the OHS manager in the company – or such a role might not exist in many SMEs. It may be difficult for many OHS managers to be able to directly influence senior business managers, such as in the devising of strategies, evaluations, organization operations, planning, and audits – OHS might be seen as a cost, an add-on, and not the most fundamental part of the organization. Decision-making is generally determined at the directors' meeting by the CEO, and is notified to front-line managers such as the OHS person. There may not be many opportunities for an OHS manager to participate in the strategic development of the business, unless this role is seen as value-added. As a result, it is probably true that awareness of health and safety for the site general manager and the OHS manager are very different. Thirdly, the point should be made that unlike other industries (such as manufacturing and services), the construction industry is not involved in continuous production activity at a single location but is usually project-based. Each aspect of the project has its own characteristics and working procedures. Consequently, the OHSMS for the construction industry may have to differ from project to project (Yoon et. al., 2013). This inconsistency is an additional issue in the health and safety controversy.

Yoon and his co-authors also make the point that “in most industrialized countries, the construction industry is one of the most significant in terms of contribution to GDP. It also has a significant impact on the health and safety of the workers. The construction industry is both economically and socially important. In South Korea, the construction industry contributed approximately 7% to its GDP in 2007. As of late 2012, after the financial crisis, it contributed approximately 5% of the GDP (US\$116.35 billion) and ranked 15th among the construction industries in the world. The construction industry presents a substantial portion of South Korea's economy.” South Korea adopted OHSMS soon after it was launched in UK – but is this also true of construction companies in emerging markets, less developed than South Korea?

There are **many debates here to consider**, especially as the construction industry would seem to be particularly dangerous, with higher than average injury rates (as in the case of South Korea, the USA, and many other countries – see below).

- What is the impact of the construction company's budgeting process in cutting-out provision for health and safety costs in order to win deals by offering the lowest price – here, are the construction companies to blame, or is it their customers who drive down their costs and margins? We discuss this in a case about Ghana; is this especially the case for SMEs?
- In the case of each project – we can have a client, a main construction company, and several smaller contractors. Is this third-named group mostly responsible for the lack of worker safety – especially in the case of China?
- How about the behavior of the workers themselves? Do they increase the possibility of injury through their own unsafe practices? In the case of Qatar, discussed below, most workers were not wearing safety helmets or other forms of protective clothing when they were injured. Was this their decision, or were these not supplied? Qatar's poor safety

record (seen as typical of the Gulf) might be improved with the award of the 2022 World Cup – but this obviously remains to be seen.

- Do national cultural differences affect worker safety? In so far that some national cultures might have a higher awareness of risk than others (examined in the case of Pakistan)?
- But Hispanic workers in the USA suffer from more occupational injuries than any other ethnic group; Indians in Malaysia are the same; and workers in Vietnam who alternate between agricultural and construction work suffer higher injury levels – so there is a need to interpret the patterns here.
- One of the challenges in health and safety might be that many workers don't understand the instructions they receive. How can language problems between migrant laborers and their employers be overcome? Should migrant workers be encouraged to learn the language of the country in which they have settled (such as workers from the new EU member countries into the UK)? Or is overcoming language barriers the job of employers? Might more positive employment practices of emerging market construction workers in the UK be a model for developing countries?
- The presence of construction workers from emerging markets can be seen to have a negative impact on a society (as perceived in the case of Malaysia) but whose fault is this? Is it inevitable, or what can be done about it? Are there alternatives?
- Can it be argued that workers in the construction industry (in this case in Dubai) are no better than slaves, kept in bonded servitude by employers exploiting their need to work to feed their families in poorer countries where standards of living are below the poverty line and jobs are hard to come by? Efforts are being made to improve the situation, but it is unclear if the theory is being put into practice.
- A small country which seems to have cracked the problem of worker safety in its large and growing construction sector is Taiwan – where project owners, construction companies and smaller contractors share joint responsibility for OHS – could this be a way forward?

Certainly, the construction industry is the **most dangerous to its workers**. According to Yoon and his fellow authors (2013) “the construction industry accident rate (work-related victims/100 workers) in Korea was almost similar to the all-industry accident rate. The construction industry had the accident rate of 0.64–0.95, compared with all-industry accident rate of 0.65–0.90 per hundred during this period. However, the construction industry fatal accident rate (fatal accident/10,000 workers) in Korea (1.89–3.97/10,000 workers) was higher than the all-industry fatal accident rate (1.47–2.76/10,000 workers) during the same period.”

As Yoon and his colleagues point out, “more workers were killed or injured each year in the construction industry than in any other sector. In the United States, the industry employs 5–6% of the labour force, but has 15% of the fatal injuries and well over 9% of all workdays are lost due to injuries. Construction workers who are disabled or killed each year by work-related injuries are believed to number in the tens of thousands.”

Useful insights into the **attitude to workers by companies** in the construction industry in emerging markets before the world-wide economic slow-down is clearly explained in a case on

Ghana in West Africa by Kheni, Dainty and Gibb (2008). This case is about SMEs, not multinationals – and this may be the sector where we might expect to see the least progress.

This study forms a valuable introduction and sets the scene for this enquiry into human rights and workers in construction. According to Kheni, Dainty and Gibb (2008), “the construction industry plays a significant role in the economy of developing countries. The sector is, however, also one of the most hazardous with frequent accidents and health-related problems.” In their study, the health and safety practices seen in these SMEs operating in Ghana in the construction sector are examined in detail by the authors “with a view to improving the health and safety performance of the sector”.

The results of the authors’ survey questionnaire, administered to owner/managers of a comprehensive range of SMEs in this sector in Ghana were probably not unexpected – “few of the SMEs adopted proactive health and safety practices”. However, the authors did find various health and safety practices which were identified by them in the context of specific SMEs they studied, such as “accident investigation procedures; accident reporting procedures; use of health and safety posters; documentation of method statements; and health and safety inductions”. The range of health and safety practices were found to be related to different size categories of SMEs: the larger firms had developed improved systems.

The barriers and constraints to improving health and safety in this emerging market context might be changed in an era of stronger economic growth. The authors conclude that “a positive change is needed in the attitudes of owner/managers” especially when taking on bigger and more ambitious projects, to factor-in health and safety concerns – especially in the budgeting process. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many SMEs in emerging markets, when bidding for work, cut back their budgets to win contracts, and health and safety related costs can be among the first ‘expenses’ to go. The authors here see the task of improving the health and safety performance of Ghanaian SMEs as considerable, and it may be argued that their study can be generalizable to many emerging markets, especially as SMEs are the more common private sector company size in the developing world.

By contrast, there are larger construction companies and many sizeable contracting businesses in China – a very much bigger context than Ghana, even more than the whole of Africa – but it would seem that they also have poor safety levels. Tam, Zeng and Deng (2004) also see this as one of the most hazardous industries due to its unique nature. Measured by international standards, construction site safety records in China are poor. Tam, Zeng and Deng, examining the status of safety management in the Chinese construction industry, explore the risk-prone activities on construction sites, and identify factors affecting construction site safety. Their findings reveal that the **behaviour of contractors on safety management** is of especially grave concern, including the lack of provision of personal protection equipment, regular safety meetings, and safety training. The main factors affecting safety performance identified by these authors include ‘poor safety awareness of top management’, ‘lack of training’, ‘poor safety awareness of project managers’, ‘reluctance to input resources to safety’ and ‘reckless operations’. The study proposes that the government should play a more critical role in stricter legal enforcement and organizing safety training programs.

How about the behaviour of the workers themselves? Thani et. al. (2014) discusses the incidence of **traumatic workplace-related injuries** (WRIs) in Qatar, a rapidly-developing Gulf state with hundreds of construction projects in place at any one time. The authors feel that bad injury records “carry a substantial negative impact on the public health worldwide”. They conducted an occupational injury surveillance study for all WRI patients between the years 2010 and 2012, looking at a total of 5,152 patients, who were admitted to the level one trauma unit in Qatar. Of these, 1,496 (29%) had sustained WRI. With a mean age of 34.3, these were fairly young workers. The majority suffered injuries as a result of ‘fall from height’ (51%), followed by being struck by heavy objects (18%) and motor vehicle crashes (17%). The WRI patients were mainly laborers involved in industrial work (43%), transportation (18%), installation/repair (12%), carpentry (9%), and housekeeping (3%). The workers in this study who were working in the construction sector, excluding transportation and housekeeping, comprise 64% of the sample. Most significant, according to Thani and his co-authors, was the fact that **the use of protective devices was not observed in fully 64% of the WRI cases**. The average total hospital stay was six days (fairly long) and the overall fatality rate was 3.7% (fairly low). The authors consider that “the incidence of WRI in Qatar is quite substantial...[and] prolonged hospital stay and treatment exert a significant socio-economic burden on the nation’s and families’ resources. Focused and efficient injury prevention strategies are mandatory to prevent future WRI”. These would seem to include the need to wear protective devices, including harnesses when working from a height, and helmets and stout boots for protection from falling heavy objects. The question here may be, is the main issue the failure of workers to wear these items (perhaps because of the heat in places like Qatar in the summer) or the failure of employers such as contractors to provide them?

Might the situation in Qatar be improved with the controversial awarding to Qatar of the 2022 FIFA World Cup? According to Dorsey (2014) “the world’s most important sporting event alongside the Olympic Games has emerged as a potential monkey wrench for social and political change”. He argues that the tournament may give leverage to trade unions, human rights groups and the governing world soccer body FIFA to radically reform Qatar’s much-criticised labour system. In response, the Qatar government “has pledged significant reform”, according to Dorsey. This small Gulf state wants to secure its own institutions “and fend off demands that would fundamentally alter its political and social structures”. This will be challenging, as Qatar needs to satisfy its ruling elite, investors and other stakeholders but avoid “the mounting threat of losing the right to host the World Cup with maintaining a socially and politically restrictive system whose long-term viability is being called into question”. Although reforming the way migrant workers in the construction industry are treated might seem a simple task, this would open up a ‘can of worms’ in states such as Qatar, already nervous after the ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings than affected Tunisia, Egypt and nearby Bahrain.

Still looking at the workers themselves, researchers enquiring into the construction sector in Pakistan (Mohamed, Ali and Tam, 2009) consider the issue of **the national culture of workers** – does this explain awareness of risk and perception of the importance of safety practices? According to these authors, it is widely accepted that unsafe behaviour is intrinsically linked to workplace accidents. A positive relationship exists between workers’ safe behaviour and the creation of a safety climate on construction sites. Construction workers’ attitude towards safety

is influenced by their perception of risk, the role of management, and the existence of safety rules and procedures. According to these authors, “Pakistan, a developing country, is currently experiencing a strong growth in its construction activities. Unfortunately, the enforcement of safety regulations in Pakistan is not widespread. Indeed, some regulations are both out-dated and irrelevant to daily construction operations.” Investigating local construction workers’ behaviour, perception and attitude toward safety, the authors look at the influence of national culture, finding that the majority of workers have a high degree of risk awareness and self-rated competence. The authors suggest that “workers’ intentional behaviour was empirically explained by their attitudes towards their own and management’s safety responsibilities, as well as their perception of the risk they are generally exposed to in their workplace... workers operating in a more collective society, and in atmosphere of higher uncertainty avoidance, are more likely to have safety awareness and beliefs, which can exhibit safer on-site behaviour.”

Thus, the national culture of workers can go some way to explaining safety trends, but how can we explain why **Hispanic workers in the USA** (with all the occupational health and safety [OSH] rules in the USA), suffer from more occupational injuries than any other ethnic group? (Brunette, 2004); **Indians in Malaysia** are the same, subject to more injuries than workers of other ethnicities (Abas et. al. 2013); and **workers in Vietnam who alternate between agricultural and construction** work suffer higher injury levels (Marucci-Wellman et. al. 2011) – so there is a need to interpret the patterns here. Blaming different ethnic groups of workers is an easy option for major organizations in the construction industry, and for governments. There is some support for this in the literature, but there must be many other explanations.

Certainly migrant workers who then find themselves living as foreigners may experience particular difficulties and misunderstandings (and hence more injuries) because of a failure to understand instructions. How can **language problems** be overcome? Should migrant workers be encouraged to learn the language of the country in which they have settled (such as workers from the new EU member countries into the UK)? Or is overcoming language barriers the job of employers? Might more positive OHS practices designed for emerging market construction workers in the UK be a model for developing countries?

As described by Bust, Gibb and Pink (2008), ‘the economic prosperity of individual countries around the world has fuelled the transportation of migrant workers for centuries. The phenomenon of globalisation and with it cheaper and quicker forms of international travel has transformed the nature of migrant worker involvement in construction projects’. The authors discuss “the expansion of the European Union and the resulting influx of Polish, Lithuanian and other A8 ascension countries’ nationals” into the UK construction industry, which “over a relatively short period of time, less than 10 years, has put pressure on the management of health and safety” in the UK, even though the UK construction industry is widely seen as successful in tackling safety issues and ensuring the health of construction workers. Previously used to English-speaking migrant workers – such as from Ireland and India, for example, the UK now faces “the challenge of converting the health and safety systems to accommodate a multinational/cultural workforce”. OHS initiatives such as translating health and safety materials, using interpreters, more visual methods for communicating health and safety messages, have not yet been seen as effective, but could be a model for the future.

It could be that around the world there is less than active sympathy for the plight of migrant workers, despite the efforts in some quarters. The presence of construction workers from emerging markets can have **a negative impact on a society** (as perceived in the case of Malaysia) but whose fault is this? Is it inevitable, or what can be done about it? As discussed by Abdul-Rahman et. al. (2012), it would seem that although foreign workers have helped to overcome the labour shortage in the Malaysian construction sector, an over-dependence on foreign workers and their apparent negative impact on society which they seem to have induced have become a serious social problem in Malaysia. According to the authors, who interviewed professionals in construction projects who have direct contact with foreign workers, three principal factors attracting foreign workers to the Malaysian construction market were identified. “Preference of the Malaysian employers” for cheaper foreign labour, the “lifestyle and working conditions” in Malaysia, and the “unattractiveness of the career pathway” in construction for locals and hence leaving the way open for foreign workers – these were the main pull factors. According to the authors, the main negative aspects of employing foreign workers were the “over-dependence on foreign workers” in Malaysia, an “increase in criminal activities or social problems”, and the “existence of illegal workers”. It might well be that being over-dependent on migrant labour and tolerating illegal operations is a problem for Malaysia more than the foreign workers, who are just cashing-in on opportunities. The visitors are often blamed for increased crime even if they are not the culprits. This research goes on to propose that Malaysia should “attract local workers into the construction industry”, mechanise and “industrialize the building systems”, “eliminate illegal migration”, and “improve governance structures” to minimizing the negative effect of using foreign workers. In many countries, such as Dubai (below), using locals to work on building sites is not an option, and the governance reforms needed to protect foreign workers are too problematic for many ruling elites to take on board.

So, perhaps it can be suggested that in many situations, workers from emerging markets employed in the construction sector are, in extreme cases, **no more than slaves**? According to Cooper (2013), “in the past two decades, the city of Dubai has experienced exponential growth, made possible by vigorous foreign investment and its robust tourism industry. However, beneath the glossy visage of the city lies a foundation of pervasive human rights violations; primarily slavery. Slavery presents itself primarily in the construction industry, enabled by the exploitation of immigrant construction workers.”

The forms of slavery in Dubai discussed by Cooper “are enabled not only by international criminal organizations and corrupt businesses, but by the corruption and/or ineffectual malaise of the local and state governments in the region”. He suggests that “reforms would include increased enforcement of human trafficking offenses, prosecution of traffickers and recruitment agents, institution of clearer formal procedures for law enforcement and Ministry of Labor officials to identify victims of trafficking... and the institution of education initiatives about human trafficking and forced labor.”

Additionally, Cooper sees that responsibility would have to be taken by investors and businesses in Dubai, ensuring that their business practices are lawful and not exploitative. “It would be the responsibility of the United Arab Emirates government and local administration to

implement these reforms, but other states and international investors would also have to pressure administration and Dubai businesses in order for any of these reforms to be created.”

As Cooper explains, “Dubai’s enormous skyscrapers and human-engineered islands are built by the efforts of hundreds of thousands of foreign laborers, and it is only through this influx that the city’s expansion is possible. According to the Government of Dubai Statistics Center, a staggering 96% of its employed population is made up of immigrant workers; Dubai is unquestionably dependent on this population. Migrant workers are recruited from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, China, Thailand, Korea, Afghanistan, Iran, and the Philippines.”

These workers are subject to a lack of employee protection, especially in terms of getting paid and gaining security of employment. Migrant workers employed in the private sector are sponsored by UAE citizens for one to three years, subject to renewal (otherwise they must leave). Workers are hired by local recruitment agencies at home on behalf of UAE-based businesses and are charged a fee by their prospective employer (normally over US \$1000) for their visa and airline ticket to the UAE, even though recruitment charges are expressly forbidden under UAE law. When workers arrive in Dubai, their passports are confiscated to prevent employees from leaving (also illegal) and are often denied their wages for at least the first few months, also to prevent them from leaving. Some employers hold back paying wages to their workers for many months and then flee the country. When wages are paid, they are generally much less than those promised originally, which creates even more problems between workers and collection agencies in their home countries.

Working conditions are another issue: 14-hour days in the dangerous desert heat without sufficient breaks, and lack of OHS provisions, also contrary to UAE law. The international body Human Rights Watch, quoted by Cooper, describes a “cover-up” of injuries and fatalities of migrant workers in Dubai; out of nearly six thousand construction companies in Dubai, only six reported any kind of injuries to the Ministry of Labor. In 2005, the government of Dubai reported only 39 deaths by workers by all nationalities in the entire country. The Indian consulate alone recorded 971 death cases in 2005, of which 61 were registered accidents.

Workers live in company-run shanty towns, such Sonapur or “City of Gold” with a population of over 300,000 foreign workers. Without sewage systems or clean drinking water, camps of 7,500 laborers share 1,248 rooms. Unionizing is forbidden, suicides are common (84 Indian nationals committing suicide in Dubai are recorded), not taking into account any of the other nationalities. In 2011 a worker jumped to his death off of the tallest building in the world, Burj Khalifa, after his employer denied granting him leave to go home (Cooper, 2013).

Is anyone doing anything about the situation in the UAE? Loney, Cooling and Aw (2012), authors based in the UAE, explain that “mass recruitment of low skilled or unskilled laborers from less-developed countries has been utilized to satisfy the manpower demands of these fast-paced industrial developments. Such workforce recruitment has created an unusual populace demographic, with the total UAE population estimated at 8.3 million, composed of 950,000

Emiratis, with the remainder being multinational expatriate workers, with varying educational qualifications, work experience, religious beliefs, cultural practices, and native languages. These unique characteristics pose a challenge for health and safety professionals tasked with ensuring the UAE workforce adheres to specific occupational health and safety procedures.” The authors consider two case studies – one an initiative in gaining heat awareness amongst workers and the other in teaching them about the implications of working at a height. Using a multimedia approach to raise health and safety awareness among a multinational workforce, the authors see this as a possible solution. Obviously Cooper (2013) sees the problem as running far deeper than merely worker awareness of safety issues, but requiring widespread governance reform.

If governance reform at country-level is not forthcoming, legal changes affecting company operations might be one way forward. A relatively small economy which seems to have cracked the problem of worker safety in its large and growing construction sector is **Taiwan – where owners and contractors are assigned to share joint responsibility** for OHS-related claims resulting from occupational-related accidents. This has led to the implementation of a basic safety control system, emphasizing the establishment of safety committees and self-inspection. Organizations in the construction sector effectively police themselves, or pay fines and health costs. Authors of a study of Taiwan’s better-than-most safety systems – Koehn, Kathari and Pan, as long ago as 1995 – suggest that this approach might be applicable to developing regions of the world. South Korea’s adoption of UK-type systems, seen at the start of this paper, might also be recommended. Taiwan and South Korea are no longer emerging markets, but arguably their developmental experiences are sufficiently recent to pave the way for progress elsewhere.

Concluding remarks

A final reflection may be provided by Murie (2007) in a study of international health and safety standards to protect construction workers. Health, Safety and Environment Director for the Building and Woodworkers International (BWI), a Geneva-based global union federation bringing together 350 trade unions representing around 12 million members in 135 countries, Murie discusses standards which are already in effect, but often ignored by management.. “Conforming to these standards ... could substantially reduce the high incidences of injuries, illnesses, and fatalities arising from work in this industry”, Murie explains. “The construction industry worldwide is a USD 3 trillion giant, accounting for around 10% of the world’s GDP and employing 180 million people, or 7% of global employment. It is also responsible for far more than its share of occupational accidents and work-related ill health”.

The union directed by Murie emphasizes that “construction is a hazardous occupation. For almost all key risks – chemicals, dusts, manual handling, physical hazards, and psychosocial hazards – exposures are routine and excessive. Poor welfare facilities compound the hazards.” Around 98% of world population growth will occur in developing countries, including 60% of the world’s fastest-growing larger cities. Informal, forced and child labor, and an absence of decent laws effectively enforced, means that health and safety has low or nonexistent priority. “All those who work should have an expectation of decent work”, suggests Murie, explaining that “the

concept of 'decent work', as used by the International Labor Organization (ILO), applies to all workers, including those on daily wages and in very temporary, informal employment. Decent work is work that is carried out in a safe physical environment under conditions that respect the rights of workers as defined in national law and international conventions. In practice, however, decency can be a rare commodity. Worldwide, construction principally offers low-status, low-paid, short-term, unregistered, informal, and hazardous jobs in a highly fragmented industry. Many workers, in particular rural-urban migrants, are faced with exploitative employment practices, hardship, and hazards."

According to Murie, "the construction industry is notorious for its reputation as dirty, difficult and dangerous – the three Ds. According to the ILO, it accounts for around 7% of the world's employment but 30-40% of the world's fatal injuries. Over a hundred thousand workers are killed on construction sites every year – one person killed every five minutes because of bad, and illegal, working conditions. Falls from heights due to inadequate scaffolding and lack of basic edge protection, being buried in un-shored excavations, or being crushed by vehicles and plant are the most common causes of fatal injuries. All are entirely predictable and all are entirely preventable." So why are we still not doing much about it?

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