

Safety, health assurance at workplace works for the common good of all

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SAFETY is a fundamental human right, and in this context it gravitates between the right to work as well as the right to social security.

In function this entails all efforts invested towards promoting health and preventing of occupational-related injuries and or diseases at workplace. The work environment ought to be safe, and appropriate care and benefits, as the case may be, should be availed to workers who suffer injuries or diseases at work.

The globally improved workplace safety standards as we have them today are traced back to the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the 1800s, the famous labour exploitation era. Since then civil laws have undergone reforms to ensure workers are safeguarded from occupational injuries and diseases. World Day for Safety and Health at Workplace has been celebrated thematically on April 28th since 2003.

United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) pre-Covid-19 study shows that at least 2.78 million workers died annually from work-related causes. Of those 2.4 million deaths were caused by work-related diseases (Cardiovascular, cancer and infectious diseases) and 380,000 deaths by occupational accidents. UNGC reported that incidences of work-related deaths were higher in Asia (5 times) and Africa (4 times) compared to Europe; majorly due to absence/suboptimal safety operators, weak/inadequate legislative and regulatory muscles, inadequate/sub-optimal and incompetent risk management and absence of safety operational measures. Following direct and indirect effects of these, ILO conference in 2022 made safety and health at workplace a fundamental principle and right.

Globally, affected workers suffer dis-



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abilities, recession, dependency, miserable lives, and death, regardless of sociodemographic characteristics. The causal incidences could be significantly reduced with effective and continuous risk assessment at workplaces.

In Tanzania, safety and health at workplace is regulated under the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Development guided by the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act 2003, National Occupational Health and Safety Policy, 2010 and other OSH rules/supplementary rules such as OSH Building and Construction Industry Rules 2015, OSH First Aid and Welfare Facilities 2015, amended

OSH General Administrative Rules 2018 and 2021, OSH Vessels Under Pressure Rules 2015, OSH Notification of Occupational Diseases, Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences 2016, and Work place Safety Law Regulations 2023.

The domestic Occupational Safety and Health Authority (OSHA) oversees safety and health at workplaces by regular inspection and workplace drawings scrutiny, accident investigation, and guiding occupiers to meet compliance requirements. Ideally, as per Section 24 of the OHS Act, 2003, which applies to all factories and workplaces in the country, employees are required to be medi-

cally examined: before they start working (Pre-employment), when at work (Periodic/Continuous) and at termination of employment for whatever reason (Exit).

A breach of the safety and health obligation by the employer is a serious and complex issue with legal consequences. It occurs when an employer fails to execute all necessary measures for safety and protection of the physical and mental health of the employees. Though the actuality of practice is not as impressive as it should be there are many active cases of injustices for victims of OSH hazards.

Notwithstanding all policies and laws in place, nothing is achieved

if workers do not speak out. Workers and the public should note actual and potential hazards in their workplaces and advise that they are worked upon. A legal cover to protect whistleblowing workers is paramount. Safety and health policies also need frequent reviews owing to unavoidable situational changes, such as climate.

Locally, there are risk factors that increase workers' susceptibility to these hazards. Age, sex, level of education: which makes most people work in informal jobs hosting majority of people with minimal or non-procedural training for the responsibilities they undertake—operating indus-

trial machineries, mixing chemicals, lifestyles—like smoking, over drinking, drug use, poor physical fitness, cardiovascular and chronic conditions, mental health issues, and pregnancy. Workplace hazards are also caused by industrial chemicals, temperature, pressure, explosives, movement, vibrations, light and flames, and loud noise.

It is timely to have climatic concerns coupled with the theme of this year, as both biological and material workplace hazards, such as bacteria, fungi, and toxins can be aggravated by climatic conditions. Chemical hazards of neurotoxins, carcinogens, systemic toxins, explosions and sensitizers, and physical hazards like hearing loss, and sight impairment can be accelerated by climatic challenges.

Research establishes that climate change negatively impacts mental health and disproportionately affects vulnerable worker population in developing countries like Tanzania. Individual, environmental, and organizational risk factors come together to increase workers' susceptibility.

Developing countries constitute a large informal sector workforce with highly physical jobs frequently carried out under hot temperatures and other adverse climate change conditions with inadequate safety regulation. This exposes workers to severe effects of climate change.

More education is needed to raise awareness of workplace safety and health among the people, and this knowledge should be imparted in school and informally. There is a threatening level of negligence of safety and health in construction, welding, cosmetics, beverages, agriculture, and mining industries.

By Special Correspondent

WHEN Ademola Adesina founded a startup to provide solar and battery-based power subscription packages to individuals and businesses in Nigeria in 2015, it was a lot harder to raise money than it is today.

Climate tech was new in Africa, the continent was a fledgling destination for venture capital money, there were few funders to approach and less money was available, he said.

It took him a year of "running around and scouring" his networks to raise his first amount – just under \$1 million – from VC firms and other sources. "Everything was a learning experience," he said.

But the ecosystem has since changed, and Adesina's Rensource Energy has raised about \$30 million over the years, mostly from VC firms.

Funding for climate tech startups in Africa from the private sector is growing, with businesses raising more than \$3.4 billion since 2019. But there's still a long way to go, with the continent requiring \$277 billion annually to meet its climate goals for 2030.

Experts say to unlock financing and fill this gap, African countries need to address risks like currency instability that they say reduce investor appetite, while investors need to expand their scope of interest to more climate sectors like flood protection, disaster management and heat management, and to use diverse funding methods.

Still, the investment numbers for the climate tech sector – which includes businesses in renewable energy, carbon removal, land restoration and water and waste management – are compelling. Last year, climate tech startups on the continent raised \$1.04 billion, a 9% increase from the previous year and triple what they raised in 2019, according to the funding database Africa: The Big Deal. That was despite a decline in the amount of money raised by all startups in total on the continent last year.

That matters because climate tech requires experimentation, and VC firms that provide money to nascent businesses are playing an essential role by giving climate tech startups risk capital, said Adesina. "In the climate space, a lot of things are uncertain," he said.

The money raised by climate tech startups last year was more than a third of all funds raised by startups in Africa in 2023, placing climate tech second to fintech, a more mature sector.

More money is going to African climate startups, but huge funding gap remains



Oladapo Adekunle, an engineer with Rensource Energy, installs solar panels on a roof of a house in Lagos, Nigeria.

Venture capital is typically given to businesses with substantial risk but great long-term growth potential. Startups use it to expand into new markets and to get products and services on the market.

Venture capitalists "can take risks that other people cannot take, because our business model is designed to have failures," said Brian Odhiambo, a Lagos-based partner at Novastar Ventures, an Africa-focused investor. "Not everything has to succeed. But some will, and those that do will succeed in a massive way."

That was the case for Adetayo Bamiduro, co-founder of Metro Africa Xpress, which makes electric two- and three-wheelers and electric vehicle infrastructure in Nigeria and has raised just under \$100 million since it was founded in 2015.

Adetayo said venture capitalists "are playing a catalytic role that is extremely essential."

"We all know that in order to really de-

carbonize our economies, investments have to be made. And it's not trivial investment," he said.

The funds can also bridge the gap between traditional and non-traditional sectors, said Kidus Asfaw, co-founder and CEO of Kubik, a startup that turns difficult-to-recycle plastic waste into durable, low-carbon building material. His company, which operates in Kenya and Ethiopia, has raised around \$5.2 million since it was launched in 2021.

He cites waste management and construction as examples of traditional sectors that can connect with startups like his.

"There's so much innovation in these spaces that can transform them over time," he said. "VCs are accelerating that pathway to transforming them."

Besides venture capital, other investments by private equity firms, syndicates, venture builders, grant providers and other financial institutions are ac-

tively financing climate initiatives on the continent.

But private sector financing in general lags far behind that of public financing, which includes funds from governments, multilaterals and development finance institutions.

From 2019 to 2020, private sector financing represented only 14 percent of all of Africa's climate finance, according to a report by the Climate Policy Initiative, much lower than in regions such as East Asia and Pacific at 39 percent, and Latin America and the Caribbean at 49 percent.

The low contribution in Africa is attributed to the investors putting money in areas they're more familiar with, like renewable energy technology, with less funding coming in for more diverse initiatives, said Sandy Okoth, a capital market specialist for green finance at FSD Africa, one of the commissioners of the CPI study.

"The private sector feels this (renewable energy technology) is a more mature space," he said. "They understand the funding models."

Technology for adapting to climate change, on the other hand, is "more complex", he said.

One startup working in renewable energy is the Johannesburg-based Wetility, which last year secured funding of \$48 million – mostly from private equity – to expand its operations.

The startup provides solar panels for homes and businesses and a digital management system that allows users to remotely manage power usage, as it tries to solve the problems of energy access and reliability in southern Africa.

"Private sector financing in African climate is still rather low," said founder and CEO Vincent Maposa. "But there's visible growth. And I believe that over the next decade or so, you'll start to see those shifts."

Investors are also starting to understand the economic benefits of adapting to climate change and solutions as they have returns on investment, said Hetal Patel, Nairobi-based director of investments at Mercy Corps Ventures, an early-stage VC fund focused on startups building solutions for climate adaptation and financial resilience.

"We're starting to build a very strong business case for adaptation investors and make sure that private capital flows start coming in," he said.

Maëlis Carraro, managing partner at Catalyst Fund, a Nairobi-based VC fund and accelerator that funds climate adaptation solutions, urged more diverse funding, such as that which blends private and public sector funding. The role of public financing, she said, should be to de-risk the private sector and attract more private sector capital into financing climate initiatives.

"We're not going to go far enough with just the public funding," she said. "We need the private sector and the public sector to work together to unlock more financing. And in particular looking beyond just a few industries where the innovation is writ large."