



The Perception of Safety from a Global Standpoint (T)

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Abstract

Do you consider safety a value or a need? At a recent Health and Safety (H&S) briefing I was posed with this question.

My first response was safety is a need, justified by being a daily necessity that each individual is entitled to have. However, as the briefing progressed my decision changed and I was reminded of my voluntary experience in Rwanda.

How would this question be answered in different countries? Is construction safety perceived to have the same importance as delivering a project to time and budget?

In the UK we take it for granted that safety is paramount. In countries like Rwanda safety can and is jeopardised by lack of equipment, negligent mentality and poverty.

The objective of this paper is to promote awareness and actions that need to be taken to ensure the effective implementation of systems such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administrations (OSHA), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) boards or Safety Management Systems in Rwanda and similar countries.

Keywords: Rwanda, UK, Health and Safety; HSE; OSHA; Risk Perception, corporations, leading by example.

1 Introduction

Risk perception is “the subjective assessment of the probability of a specified type of accident happening and how concerned we are with the consequences” [1].

As this is a subjective assessment how does one quantify it? There are many variables that influence someone’s perception of safety and risk; age, gender, social environment and background. In such a way that Bouyer et al. (2001) [2] carried out a study on the “Personality Correlates of Risk Perception” and found that men are more risk adverse than women.

Similarly, in my view the structural safety and risk assessment systems incorporated into engineering projects are not consistent throughout the globe. My time in Rwanda is evidence of this.

In Rwanda safety and risk mitigation are not the main priority; they are a nicety subject to budget and the provision of competent resource and expertise. An underdeveloped infrastructure to transport goods, safe equipment and/or materials to sites and local corruption contribute to the challenges faced by the country to implement robust Safety Management Systems (SMS). This statement is not just limited to work sites but is reflected through the Community’s daily activities.

Global corporations who invest in these projects can be subject to succumbing to a lower tolerance of Health and Safety incentivised by the perceived cost and time savings.