Title: History of Occupational Health and Safety Laws in Ghana

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Abstract

The development of occupational health and safety (OHS) laws in Ghana has been driven mainly by developmental and historical antecedents in the mining industry. Health and safety concerns first gained prominence following agitations among the indigenous labourers from the northern territory in the then Gold Coast. The labourers complained of high rates of morbidities and mortalities from tuberculosis and injuries as a result of poor sanitation, housing and workplace air quality in the mines. The series of protests and worker agitations led to the first occupational mortality audit in the mines and the subsequent passage of several mining health legislations including the Mining Health Ordinance to address mining area sanitation, housing and worker health issues. Since 1925, when the first mining health ordinance was passed, several other laws have been promulgated. In fact, health and safety is a right guaranteed to all according to the 1992 constitution of Ghana.

The three main statutes that have informed implementation of OHS in Ghana post-independence are the Labour, Act 651, (2003), the Factories, Offices and Shops Act, Act 328, (1970) and the Workman's Compensation Law PNDC Law 187, (1987) . Others include: International Labour Organization (ILO) Radiation Protection, 1960 (No.115), ratified in 1961, Mining Regulations (LI 665, 1970), EPA Act 490 (1994), Ghana Health Service and Teaching Hospital Act 525,(1996) , Atomic Energy Commission Act, 588, 2000, the Public health Act, Act 851, 2012 and the Petroleum Commission Oil and Gas OHS policy; LI 2258, (2015).

Although, there are legal instruments regulating most of the work places, these laws are fragmented. Moreover the absence of a national policy on OHS in Ghana prevents the proper regulation of the occupational health space in Ghana. A draft bill of the OHS national policy is yet to be enacted into law.