The aftermath of Employment Injuries

Presented by Bitso Bitso
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Good Morning!
Background

- This is a part of a larger PhD research work which investigates the consequences of seriously disabling workplace injuries using case study of mineworkers in the Eastern Cape and in Lesotho.
- Disability >30%
- Looking at workers beyond the period of their employment
- To this end about twenty (20) former mineworkers were interviewed in these areas on 50:50 proportion
- In addition to the victims two (2) other members of the same households were interviewed.
- Participants were identified from RMA database.
- Participants have been given pseudonyms to conceal their true identity.
Paradox

- The paper argues that whilst financial compensation for injuries sustained on duty is important in maintaining the livelihoods of disabled former mineworkers, the consequences that confront these workers on day to day living are far bigger and have far reaching consequences than just the issue of financial reward.

- This paper probes these consequences in so far as they relate to healthcare and support of victims of mining.
Causes of injuries

- Falling surface or rocks
- Equipment used
- Misfires – leading to loss of sight and other injuries
- Inrushes of water caused by blasting, toxic fumes and gases
- Lack of experience and training – miner vs team leader
- Neglect, fatigue, poor supervision
- Lust to maximise productivity
Nature of Injuries

- Lower and upper limbs amputees
- Head injuries
- Spinal cord injuries
- Loss of sight
- Loss of hearing
- Multiple injuries affecting more than one body
Nature of injuries

• Upper limb Amputee
Nature of injuries

Head Injuries
Nature of Injuries

Spinal Cord
Nature of injuries

Multiple Injuries
Nature of Injuries

Hearing Impairment
Inadequacy of pension

- Benefit s are CPU and not inflation adjusted.
- The 75% replacement rate is inadequate.
- Excessively high expenditure relative to the income.
- When they pass on family does not get anything.
- It excludes other members of the family if member injured before marriage.
Medical expenses - COIDA

- Reasonable hospitalisation, medical treatment including supply and maintenance of artificial limbs and supplies, necessary medication which will be provided by RMA for up to a period of two years. Treatment beyond this period will be as per RMA authorisation and must be directed at reducing the permanent disablement.

- Reimbursements relating to travelling to a place where necessary medical treatment is obtainable.

- In other cases employers would accept responsibility for medical treatment for the first two years after which RMA would then take over. Reimbursements are done using public transport rates.
Tribulations haunt them at home

“If you do not have it then you will not understand our predicament”

“Look here, is this how a human being is supposed to live?”
Injuries caused them a lot of pain, some describe as “beyond pain” Some were assumed to be dead already and taken to mortuary

Victims told very agonising stories e.g. participant who refused to be amputated.

Hospitalised for period ranging from few months to several years
Torment cont....

- The story of Tsebo who received a bad medical treatment at a particular hospital in Lesotho.

- Tsebo was one of my participants and unfortunately he is no more.

- This is part of a report from his medical record from DRs who treated him in SA.

- “it came to our attention that Mr Tsebo was admitted to a hospital in Lesotho after he became sick, I am still unable to trace which hospital. He is very traumatized by the treatment of the nursing and medical staff of this hospital. According to him he was shouted at, left to lay on his own faeces for long periods, insufficient nutrition provided to the point that his family had to travel to come and care for him in the hospital. He also had the same bad experience with his wife going blind and not receiving medical care for TB. He really has no faith in the medical and nursing professions and our team will rally to make sure that we win his trust again”
Torment cont.....

Picture of bedsore on the right hip of Mr. Tsebo taken by SA hospital following referral from Lesotho.
Torment cont.....

Would he have been eaten by the rats if he was able-bodied?
Torment cont....... 

What happens to a one armed man if the other hand can’t function due to non-work related injury or disease?
Environmental barriers prevent expeditious access health care

• Mobility highly compromised.
• Challenge varies depending on degree of disability e.g. Quadriplegics, Paraplegics and then lower limb.
• Public transport a serious challenge for disabled mineworkers. Worse in the EC.
• “Yesterday” Leleti Khumalo, a wife of a migrant worker.

Paradox – Who is better off?

• Access to buildings
• Assistive devices – some complain that they are just “window dressing”
• RMA offices in Mthattha and Maseru are not accessible by wheelchair users.
The plight of women as caregivers

- Inherited Disability – resulting from restricted freedom/movement.

- Opportunistic illnesses relate to stress e.g. Depression, high blood pressure etc.

- What happens when a care-giver falls sick?

- No prior counselling received by care givers
Conclusion

- Money matters
- But not a panacea/magic bullet

- Thank you !!