

## Talking point

### Health, Safety, Environmental and Social (HSES) - The Azura-Edo case



**Ben Ogonji, PIDG HSES  
Manager, Africa**

**Ben Ogonji visited the Azura-Edo project team in Nigeria in the aftermath of a tragic road accident and recounts how they have put the PIDG HSES life-saving rules into action.**

On a Friday evening in February around 6:30pm, Edu Okeke the Managing Director of Azura-Edo Power, a PIDG and EAIF funded project in Nigeria, received the phone call that any project manager dreads. One of his vehicles, while on a return journey from dropping a visitor to the airport in Benin City, was involved in a road crash. The car had been involved in a serious road accident and, the driver, two army personnel and a third party were in hospital. One person was pronounced dead on arrival and another died in hospital a few weeks later as a result of injuries sustained in the crash.

*“This was especially tough on us because, as a young operation, we had done quite well so far, in avoiding*

*accidents on-site. We had lost zero time during the construction phase”* he recounted, having taken up the post after previously serving on the project as Deputy and Chief Operations Officer. With 25 years of international experience delivering the highest standards on infrastructure projects, he was deeply affected by this fatal accident.

The Azura-Edo plant became operational in May of 2018. It is the first large-scale, project financed, independent power plant in the country – it runs a 461MW open cycle gas turbine power station in Benin City in Edo State, Nigeria, enough to power over 75,000 homes. The project will eventually expand to 1,500MW. The project was set up in partnership, with financial support from the World Bank Group and other investors including PIDG company, the Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF).

No business or project is ever safe from external events or rapidly changing conditions. However, when the investigation team looked into the incident, they discovered flaws in the project’s driving operations manual. As a leader, Edu realised that it would not be enough to identify the challenges, they would need to put their learning into action and success would only be measured by results.



**Azura Power**

The team, began a review of driving safety by applying principles of ‘Safer Management, Safer vehicles, Safer Journeys and Safer Drivers’. Management interventions included improving the audit and governance aspects of the process, installing speed limiting devices in all vehicles and implementing a system to monitor and record vehicle operations and driving characteristics on journeys, to include speed, location and driving behaviour. Improving driving performance has involved the re-training of all drivers in defensive driving skills.

Six months on from the accident, vehicles have been made safer by including Vehicle Safety Standards, administrative procedures have been implemented to address shortcomings, including making changes to army escort procedures to ensure they use a dedicated escort vehicle rather than military weapons being in the host vehicle where they could attract potential attacks, enforcing speed limits in designated areas, and drug and alcohol policies.

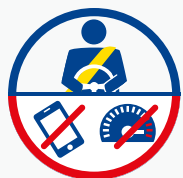
To make journeys safer, journey management procedures have been put in place to improve compliance monitoring and control, to promote safer driving and enforcing seat-belt use, because from all the data evidence including from the fateful accident itself where the passengers wearing seatbelts survived, it is clear that seatbelts save lives.

Safer operations on the roads in Africa is achievable. Unfortunately, the issue does not receive anywhere near the attention it deserves – and greater focus on this across infrastructure projects is an opportunity to save lives and make a positive impact.

As the team at Azura-Edo Power have shown, the next steps can be taken confidently, when the links between our goals and interventions are accompanied by action. Much more can still be learned from Azura’s challenges as well as their successes.

The most fundamental ingredients for eliminating incidents and protecting the traveller are the PIDG three Life-Saving Rules dedicated to road safety.

### PIDG HSES life-saving rules for road safety



**While driving wear seatbelts, do not use your phone and do not exceed speed limits**



**No alcohol or drugs while working or driving**



**Follow journey management plan**

**These Life-Saving Rules reinforce what travellers must know and do to prevent serious injury or fatality.**

**They are mandatory for anyone - employees and contractors - driving on company business.**

**Our Life-Saving Rules will save many lives and all staff and contractors are encouraged to continue following them in their personal time.**

**Remember, travellers must still comply with all other safety rules. If any national law requires an even higher level of compliance, that national requirement must be met.**

### Four opportunities to address 90% of incidents

- 9 out of 10 deaths on the road globally occur in a low to middle income country, despite these countries accounting for only 54% of vehicle ownership worldwide
- A person in Africa and Asia is nearly 4 times more likely to die in a road crash than a person in a high-income country such as the UK even when they travel less distance in vehicles
- The estimated cost of road traffic deaths is more than the total annual value of development assistance that these countries receive

Managing these simple behavioural elements will significantly increase the probability of people arriving safely at their destination:

- No distracted driving
- Prevent driver fatigue
- Follow journey management planning
- Use defensive driver training

The PIDG HSES centre plans to establish a Road Safety Champion 2020 to implement a PIDG group road safety programme.

The centre will develop road safety manuals with guidance from existing World Bank standards and the new EBRD safety best practice guidelines due to be published later this year.

These will form part of the PIDG HSES Framework, with the aim to set minimum simplified road safety standards for PIDG and its projects worldwide and will act as the one ‘go to shop’ for road safety guidance in PIDG.

We have made excellent progress on our internal Health, Safety, Environmental and Social Management System roadmap. In 2019 we are launching a Safety Culture and Leadership Strategy to ensure we save lives as we are changing them. This strategy dovetails with the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. We have introduced the 12 PIDG Life-Saving Rules. Together the Life-Saving Rules and the PIDG HSES framework will help us to build a culture in PIDG where people know and follow the rules that keep us safe.

**If you have questions or need advice, contact the HSES Expertise Centre:** Cameron Bain, PIDG Director of Health, Safety, Environment and Social at Cameron. [Bain@PIDG.org](mailto:Bain@PIDG.org)