

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING NUCLEAR SECURITY SYSTEMS AND MEASURES IN MAJOR PUBLIC EVENTS IN UGANDA

The nuclear law for regulation of peaceful applications of radioactive sources in Uganda was enacted in 2008. The law established the Atomic Energy Council as the national regulatory body in the nuclear energy subsector. The Act also provided for radiation safety, radiation protection and nuclear security in the applications of radioactive sources in the country.

The increasing use of radioactive materials in the medical, industrial as well as research and education sectors, though, has numerous benefits, it is associated potential risks. The increasing importation of radioactive sources by the different operators in the various sectors of development in Uganda point to the increasing number of radioactive sources in the public domain. Although the Act provides that the responsibility for radiation safety and nuclear security is primarily on the authorised persons, there have been incidences in Uganda where radioactive sources get out of regulatory control. These radioactive sources if not managed safely and securely protected, pose high risk to human health and the environment. The risk posed by these materials is amplified when they end up in the hands of the unauthorised persons who could use them for malicious acts to satisfy their selfish interests.

The potential of the risk would even have worse consequences when used against people gathered in large numbers particularly on major public events. Uganda on annual basis and in some cases, on particular occasions holds such events. One of such events is when the Uganda government hosted the Pope in 2014 which attracted over two million people in one place. Other such events include Uganda Martyrs day, Independence anniversary celebrations, presidential sharing for new president and some presidential election campaign events among others.

During major public events, the national security agencies draw up general security plans for such events. However, times and again, nuclear security had not been given the due consideration and on many occasions not incorporated in the general security plans. Nevertheless, during the preparations for the pope's visit to Uganda, the Atomic Energy Council proposed the inclusion and implementation of nuclear security measures and systems in the general security plan for this major public event. This was adopted by the security agencies during the Pope's visit and many other subsequent major public events.

The IAEA supported nuclear security preparations through training of security personnel (FLO, Bomb squad) and the personnel from the regulatory body (MEST) as well as loaning equipment to be used during the event and to be returned after the event. Although the event went on well without any nuclear incidents or accidents, this was not without challenges that affected the proper implementation of nuclear security measures and systems, such challenges as lack of awareness, concepts of operations, lack of competent and experienced personnel(MEST) and the lack of equipment among others factored themselves in the implementation strategies that were adopted.

This paper will highlight the challenges encountered in the implementation of nuclear security systems and measures as well as the lessons learned in implementing nuclear security measures and systems for major public events in Uganda.

Gender

Male

State

Uganda

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