

Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement and Trust in the Safe and Secure Transport of Nuclear and Radioactive Material. A Ugandan perspective.

The safe and secure transport of nuclear and radioactive material is a critical aspect of nuclear security, as it directly protects people, the environment, and infrastructure. Transport operations take place in the public domain, often involving multiple transfers, different transport modes, and interactions with diverse actors. This complexity introduces unique vulnerabilities that require not only technical safeguards but also strong stakeholder engagement to ensure effective risk management. In Uganda, regulatory and technical frameworks have been established in alignment with international standards to govern the transport of these sensitive materials. While these measures form the foundation of safety and security, their success ultimately depends on stakeholder confidence and trust in the system.

Building this trust requires deliberate strategies that strike a balance between transparency and the protection of sensitive information. On one hand, stakeholders must be assured that adequate security measures are in place; on the other hand, excessive disclosure of operational details could increase the risk of malicious exploitation. Achieving this balance depends on cultivating a shared understanding of the potential threats, as well as the roles and responsibilities of different actors within the transport security framework. Trust is not a by product of regulation alone but must be intentionally fostered through inclusive engagement, communication, and collaboration.

Uganda's experience demonstrates that effective engagement involves a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including regulators, operators, law enforcement agencies, emergency responders, local government authorities, and communities. Each plays a complementary role: regulators set and enforce standards; operators implement security measures; law enforcement provides physical protection and intelligence; emergency responders prepare for and mitigate incidents; and communities contribute by remaining informed, vigilant, and cooperative. This multi-actor aspects requires deliberate coordination mechanisms to facilitate information exchange, harmonize security practices, and ensure rapid, collective response when incidents occur.

Key approaches to strengthening engagement include structured risk communication, targeted awareness programs, collaborative planning exercises, and multi-agency coordination platforms. Risk communication builds understanding and reduces uncertainty by ensuring that stakeholders have accurate and accessible information about both potential threats and protective measures. Awareness programs, particularly at the community and local authority levels, empower stakeholders with knowledge to recognize and appropriately respond to risks without causing undue alarm. Collaborative planning fosters trust between agencies by creating shared ownership of security strategies, while multi-agency coordination ensures that institutional silos do not undermine collective security efforts.

Integrating technical safeguards with trust building initiatives provides a more resilient security posture. While compliance with regulations ensures baseline protection, the addition of trust and engagement mechanisms enhances adaptive capacity, facilitates early detection of emerging threats, and strengthens preparedness for deliberate attacks such as theft or sabotage. The Ugandan perspective underscores that without public trust, even the most advanced technical systems may be perceived as inadequate, thereby weakening overall security. Conversely, when stakeholders are engaged, informed, and confident, they contribute actively to the success of the nuclear security regime.

This paper therefore argues that the safe and secure transport of nuclear and radioactive material cannot be achieved through technical measures alone. A holistic approach anchored in stakeholder engagement, transparency, cooperation, and trust is essential for reinforcing compliance, enhancing resilience, and strengthening Uganda's nuclear security regime against threats with potentially severe radiological consequences.

Country or International Organization

Instructions

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