

"All our efforts to defeat poverty and pursue sustainable development will be in vain if environmental degradation and natural resource depletion continue unabated."
Kofi Annan



Volume 01 Issue 07

July 2018

Dear Friend,

We are glad to share with you the seventh issue of the Atacama Consulting E-Newsletter. In this issue, we inform you about managing plastic pollution, highlight the wheel to Corporate Sustainable Development, and touch on matters to do with Involuntary Resettlement.

For queries and or comments, contact us via our email address: admin@atacama.co.ug

You can also access our website at: www.atacama.co.ug to get an insight into any developments at Atacama Consulting.

Emmanuel Kenneth Mwavula
(Editor)

Managing plastic pollution; one of the world's environmental grave problems

The use of plastic as a packaging and storage material is on the rise due to our lifestyle choices that are over-reliant on plastic use since its handy, durable, and portable. However, the management of single-use and disposal of plastic is a grave problem.

Uganda like many other countries is grappling with plastic waste management due to improper waste disposal. This is worsened by lack of responsibility towards recycling and improper recycling practices that characterise many producers on the market today. To complicate the situation further, unsustainable throw-away habits by waste handlers is another challenge since waste is not sorted and well managed at most disposal sites. As such, plastic waste finds its way into open water bodies and soil thus, polluting the environment. In addition, conditions within disposal sites expose the environment to detrimental chemicals contained within plastics.

While many approaches have been devised to curb plastic pollution, Uganda is yet to come up with one. In the quest to curb plastic pollution, this year's World Environment Day that was celebrated on 6th June focused on beating plastic pollution through making changes in our life styles so as to reduce on plastic waste generation (<http://worldenvironmentday.global/>). The national celebrations were held in Mbale District, Eastern Uganda that once enjoyed the status of the cleanest town in East Africa but not anymore due to population increase and unsustainable waste disposal practices. In line with the worldwide theme, the celebrations focused on exploring alternatives (e.g. recycling, reusable bags) to the usage of single-use polythene carrier bags commonly known as Kaveera, which have become a menace to our environment.

Addressing plastic pollution requires holistic approaches focused on upstream activities particularly through transitioning from a manufacturing linear "use-throw" model to a circular economy, improving designs for recycling, and radical individual behaviour changes. Producers must encompass lifecycle analysis of their products and make use of sustainable procurement strategies. To the policy makers, there is need to establish a framework with manufacturers to implement a take-back scheme to get rid of plastic waste. From our point of view, these approaches are attainable if we all put our minds to it.

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EMS; the wheel to Corporate Sustainable Development

In recent years, there has been significant awareness of global environmental problems and as such, appropriate management and control strategies to address the environmental issues have become a requirement to thrive in a more critical global economy. In that regard, Environmental Management System (EMS) that is ISO 14001 standard is designed to guide entities minimise environmental impacts while improving overall performance through voluntary actions to establish goals and commit to continual improvement in environmental performance.

While implementation of EMS has become a key aspect for certain entities due to the external pressures like international regulations, community participation, and market demand, EMS ought to be undertaken by entities irrespective of their sector, nature or size as it helps to reduce costs of production, improve corporate image, fulfil customers' expectations, and build morale within an entity. Also, some entities have in place a formal but uncertified EMS which over time has minimal impacts as compared to formal ISO 14001 certified EMS that is audited by external parties to assess the competence within the entity to measure and monitor environmental aspects without bias.

For entities that are still struggling with wastage of resources and pollution in their production processes, EMS is the way to go as it helps to promote resource efficiency and minimise waste generation. From our experience with an ISO 14001 certified EMS, management commitment, training, internal monitoring, staff empowerment, and proper identification of environmental aspects are key to corporate sustainable development.


Resettlement Action Planning; key for tackling Project Induced Displacement

World over, development projects have led to an estimated 15 million people being displaced every year (Terminski, 2015). This number is expected to increase due to land intrusion to pave way for infrastructure development and as such, Resettlement Action Planning (RAP) and Implementation remains the ray of hope for project induced displacement and resettlement.

Of late, numerous resettlement projects, ranging from linear projects such as road construction to non-linear projects such as industrial development have been undertaken while others are ongoing in Uganda. While a number of these projects have gone on well, some have been high on thoughts but low on actions regardless of the existing local regulations which is attributed to poor planning, speculation, non-cooperative Project Affected Persons (PAPs), and lack of commitment by the Project Developers to adhere to set out plans.

Notwithstanding, a well undertaken RAP guided by local regulations and (optional) best Practice Standards such as International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standard (PS) 5 and the World Bank (WB) Environmental and Social Standard (ESS) for Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement presents the best option for PAPs since best Practice Standards are reasonably aligned with human rights expectations. In addition, best Practise Standards emphasise public participation, proper identification of project impacts, and description of resettlement packages and assistance for PAPs.

From our experience with projects of this nature, RAPs that are guided by best Practice Standards are the best since they aim at ensuring that livelihoods for PAPs are restored and preferably improved.



Did you know?

There will be no polar ice by 2060!