Waste management in Uganda and covid-19

1. Has waste management been classed as an essential service in your country?
   Yes, In the President’s speech of 30th March 2020 to the country on additional measures to prevent COVID-19, measure number nine on essential services, cleaning and garbage collection were allowed to continue in operation.

2. How many workers are affected by the current situation / are you operating with a reduced workforce?
   It should be noted that many workers are affected by the current situation (especially with the stopping of the public means of transport including the bodabodas) and the 14 days lockdown. Like any other institution, (Municipalities, towns and other waste management firms) had to only keep, the senior staff and even majority casual workers are getting challenges of connecting to and from their work places.

   a. What special measures have you taken to enable operations to continue with a reduced workforce?
      I have so far not heard or seen any special arrangement regarding the operations of the waste management industry from the leadership and or even individual institutions.

   b. What extra health and safety precautions have you taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your waste workforce?
      To date, majority waste management (garbage collectors) are seen putting on masks and hand gloves in abide to follow-up the SOP’s put up by the Ministry of Health-Uganda and as emphasized directives by the President-Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. Have not however carried out an intensive work on the overall safety and wellbeing of the waste workforce at the country level.

   c. Have you / will you, scale back your waste collection frequency?
      Waste Management collection frequency in and around Kampala Metropolitan has indeed been reduced and as usual there is still too much littering and irresponsible handling of all waste streams.
3. How is your system coping with the increase in facemasks and other PPE in household waste?
   a. Do facemasks continue to go into residual waste, or have you introduced any special measures for the separate collection of face masks?
      No special measures in place so far, face masks are being comingled with residual waste and others do litter or dispose them anywhere including along roadsides.
   b. Have you made any special communications to the general public, for example, do you ask them to make fewer trips to the recycling stations, or to avoid trips to the tips/drop-off centres to get rid of bulky waste items?
      No special Communications done so far!
   c. Are people being given special instructions on how to deal with possibly contaminated waste?
      No Special instructions are being given yet!

4. Do recycling centres remain open to the public?
   Not all recycling centres are open to the public, most are seen under key and lock especially those that could not coup up with the SOP’s by the Ministry of Health and the directives by the head of state.

5. Have the international travel restrictions caused any interruptions with sending waste for processing overseas, importing/exporting waste? How are you managing the waste you cannot ship overseas?
   Cargo transport as per the President’s speech on 30th March 2020 both within and outside Uganda was left to operate while following the SOP’s. However, it’s key to note that there are interruptions due to challenges faced by people to move from work and back home including the waste scavengers who are key regarding the collection of some waste streams like plastics.

6. Are you incinerating (if capacity exists) more MSW than previously?
   Companies licenced to manage hazardous waste, otherwise there is too much comingling of all waste streams that end up in dumpsites, do incineration to a very low capacity.
I do wish on my behalf and on behalf of my fellow Ugandans extend love and comfort to every one affected greatly by the COVID-19, my hope is that as people we keep calm, focused to learn and get more positives and live to recover from the negatives by COVID-19.

For God and My Country.
Taremwa Sam Rwabwehare
Founder/Executive Director UWMAC
ISWA Scholarship Programme Coordinator- Uganda.
+256 782 254789
rwabwehare@gmail.com