

Botswana landfills a serious time bomb

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Botswana landfills are a serious time bomb as at construction stage, methane gas collection systems were omitted in all the landfills and as a result, methane has built up in all the 12 landfills in the country. According to climate change experts, methane gas is a green house gas that is 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide. The gas according to experts also contributes to smog, worsening health problems like asthma.

Defense magazine recently carried out its investigations on one such landfill which accepts millions of tons of waste as it receives all waste from the Southern part landfill called Gamodubu Regional Landfill.

The landfill is in Gakuto village only 30 kilometres from Gaborone the capital city of Botswana and accepts waste from areas adjacent to it mainly, Gaborone, Molepolole, Thamaga, Moshupa, Gakgatla, Gakutlo just to name a few of such villages.

Every 20 minutes more than ten trucks and private vehicles offload their waste at the landfill. And this waste includes among others food and yard wastes, boxes, papers, which decomposes and release methane a green house gas. The waste has now decomposed and is releasing very lethal odors and you can tell it is only a matter of time and the methane gas explodes and starts burning due to its buildup in the landfill. And if the landfill starts burning Gamodubu village will also burn as methane is a very explosive gas said one landfill employee of the landfill name withheld to this magazine.

Speaking to this publication on condition of anonymity he said the Gamodubu Regional landfill was built 11 years ago without methane gas collection facilities. adding it is now very expensive to try and build the systems as methane is buried deep underground and will require drilling big holes in the landfill to release the gas. "And for that to happen you will need millions and millions pulas and I don't see that happening as the council does not have such," he said.

He said at present they try to manage the problem by compacting their waste on a daily basis. He said employees of the landfill live in so much fear as explosion of the landfill could lead to their death.

The Botswana's biennial update report to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) submitted in 2019 points out that methane capture is another innovative feasible and highly viable mitigation measure that Botswana could put in place. The report revealed that all landfills constructed in the country require construction of gas capture systems to avoid landfill gas build-up and potential explosion of the landfills.