

Regional News

Residents are now calling for investment in modern waste processing infrastructure.

BY DENIS EDEMA

Jinja City is facing a deepening waste management crisis after its main landfill in Masese exceeded capacity, leaving garbage uncollected in several parts of the city for close to three weeks now.

The situation has exposed structural weaknesses in the city's waste management system, with officials now calling for urgent relocation of the landfill and investment in modern waste processing infrastructure.

City Mayor Peter Okocha Kasolo said the Masese site was never designed to function as a proper landfill but has instead operated as a dumping ground without adequate planning or management.

"This is not a landfill in the true sense. It is simply a dumping site that has now reached its limit," Mr Kasolo said in an interview at the weekend.

He was responding to complaints from residents about growing heaps of garbage in markets and residential areas.

The crisis is most visible in busy trading centres, where uncollected waste has accumulated for weeks, raising public health concerns.

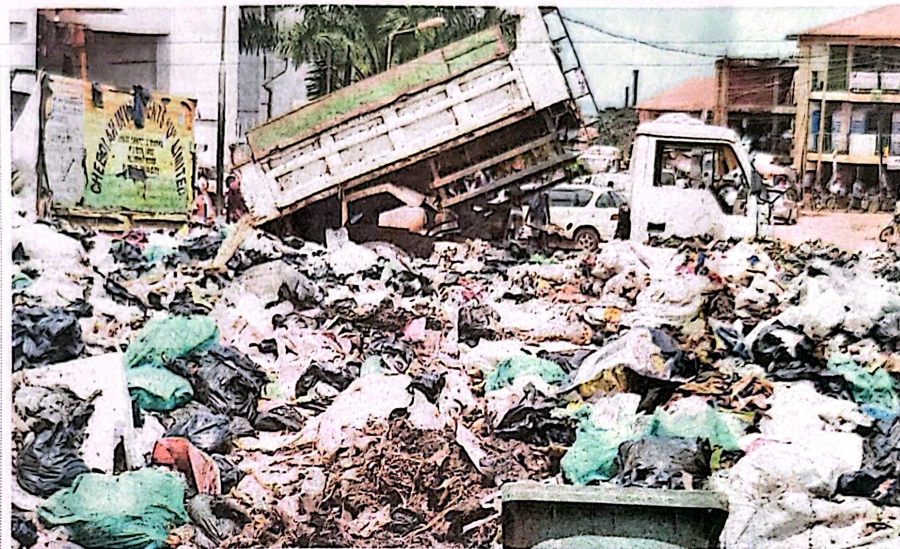
Mr Kasolo faulted the city's technical departments, particularly environment, planning, and natural resources, for failing to implement a structured waste management system that could sustainably handle rising volumes of garbage.

He argued that Jinja no longer needs a landfill within its boundaries, proposing the acquisition of land outside the city to establish a modern facility capable of sorting waste and recycling it.

"We cannot have a landfill in the middle of a city that lacks the infrastructure to manage waste properly, including sorting it into useful products like fertiliser and briquettes," he said.

The mayor noted that in countries

Jinja in waste crisis as main dump site fills up



Heaps of uncollected garbage at Jinja Central Market in Jinja City early this week. PHOTO/DENIS EDEMA

he has visited, waste is treated as an economic resource rather than a burden, with systems that convert garbage into products for agriculture and domestic use.

However, plans to repurpose the Masese site have stalled due to a court dispute, with some individuals contesting ownership of the land.

A visit to the landfill shows a site overwhelmed by waste. Huge piles of garbage have blocked the main entry point, making it difficult for collection trucks to offload.

Previously, trucks accessed the landfill through the Walukuba-Masese

route, but the road has since become impassable due to accumulated waste. An alternative route branching off the Jinja-Iganga Highway near Kampala University was created, but it is equally unreliable.

Deep potholes, mud, and stagnant water now dominate the access road, particularly during the rainy season, forcing trucks to turn back or get stuck before reaching the dumping area.

Cattle roam freely across the site, while informal waste pickers sift through hazardous waste in search of recyclables.

182
TONNES OF DAILY
WASTE

THE EXTENT OF CRISIS

According to data from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, Jinja generates approximately 182.6 tonnes of solid waste daily—a figure that continues to grow with urban expansion. Jinja, which attained city status in 2020, is now grappling with the pressures of rapid urbanisation without matching investment in infrastructure.

suggested deploying a grader to redistribute waste within the site as a temporary measure, warning that the situation is deteriorating daily.

Meanwhile, some residents have turned the crisis into an informal economic activity. Organic waste such as fruits and food remains is being sorted and sold to farmers as manure, while others use it as feed for livestock and fish.

However, these activities are taking place in unsafe conditions. Ms Patricia Akello, one of the locals sorting garbage for other use at the site, said access is dangerous and poorly managed. She added that wastewater from decomposing garbage is flowing into nearby residential areas, posing a health risk.

Jinja City Council spokesperson Rajab Kito attributed the disruption partly to heavy rains, which have worsened road conditions and limited access to the landfill.

He also cited a shortage of critical equipment, including graders, bulldozers, and forklifts needed to manage the site and repair access roads.

"As a city, we lack the machinery required to level the landfill and maintain the roads. Hiring this equipment is very expensive," Mr Kito said.

A waste-sorting machine that was intended to convert garbage into fertiliser lies abandoned in a dilapidated structure, symbolising the collapse of planned waste processing efforts.

Without urgent intervention, officials warn, the situation could escalate into a full-blown public health emergency.

Mr Vin Lawrence Semaganda, whose firm, Cheedlah Investment U Ltd, holds the garbage collection contract, said access to the landfill has become nearly impossible.

"The landfill is completely filled up. You can hardly drive through it. Even the alternative route is in a worse condition, and the new dumping space is also filling up fast," he said. Mr Semaganda