

Worry as Moyo casual workers collect garbage with bare hands

Accused. The labourers accuse the town council authorities of not minding about their health.

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MOYO. Moyo Town Council casual labourers are at risk of contracting diseases due to lack of safety equipment.

Protective equipment is the last line of defence in the prevention of injuries and ill health and is to be provided by the employer to ensure safety of employees.

The employees, however, say the town council leadership has refused to provide them with safety gadgets, raising fears that this exposes their lives to health hazards.

They have as such asked the authorities to heed to their plight as a matter of urgency.

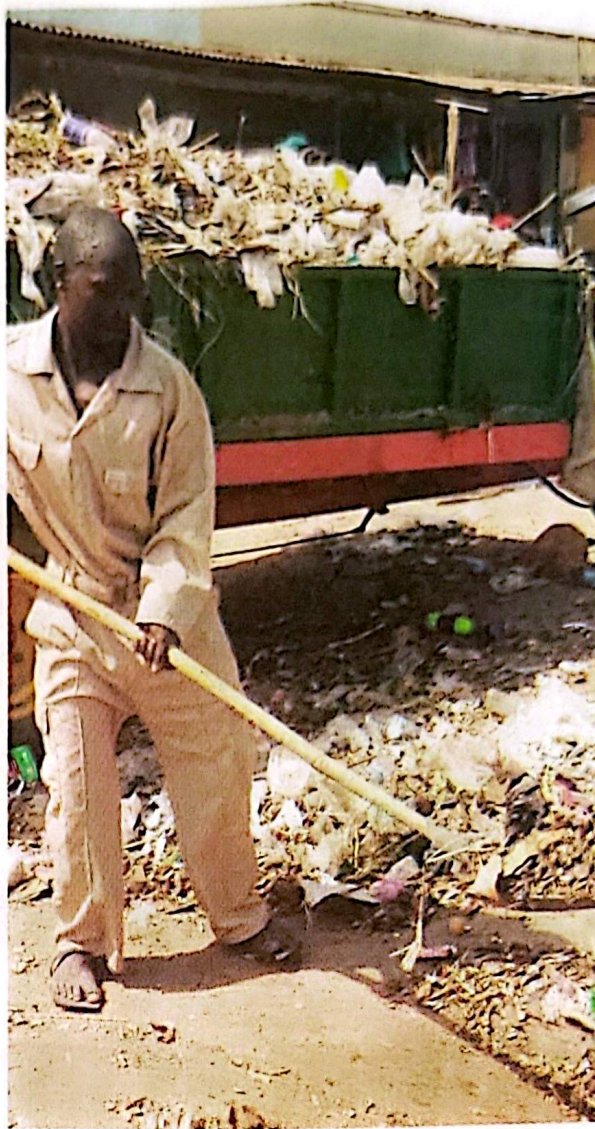
The workers, mainly those collecting garbage in the town council, have no access to protective gears like gloves and gumboots as they continue to suffer from the stench from the garbage.

Meagre pay

According to one of the workers who preferred anonymity for fear of reprisal from the authorities, they are paid Shs80,000 per month, which is not enough for them to purchase personal protective wears.

"We are risking our lives in this job because we cannot afford to get money to look after our families but the conditions we are working in are worse. Sometimes when we complain, they tell us that if we don't want to work, we quit," he said.

The garbage collectors start their work as early as 6am and clean all corners of the town council to maintain hygiene and prevent disease outbreaks such as cholera.



On duty. A man collects garbage in Moyo Town Council recently. PHOTO BY SCOVIN ICETA.

The labourers have not only complained about the poor working conditions, but they have also cited neglect by their employers. They gave an example where a colleague allegedly died and the town council authorities failed or refused to meet burial expenses for the bereaved family.

Ms Juliet Asienzo, a resident

of Moyo Town, said the stench emanating from the garbage in the town is too much.

"It is difficult to eat around here and visitors coming to my home spend less time compared to the past because the stinging smell around here. When the rains come, there is possibility of cholera outbreak that threatens the lives of health of these

workers," Ms Asienzo said.

Mr Juma Ashraf, a chapatti vendor in the town, said the town council leadership should pay more attention to the plight of the garbage collectors.

"We pay daily market dues and the restaurant operators pay licenses every financial year. It is such a big shame to work in a polluted environment," he said.

Mr Gersam Goliga, the town council health inspector, said the council budgets for protective gear for the labourers but

Shs80,000

THE AMOUNT THE LABOURERS EARN AS MONTHLY SALARY.

they are not purchased at local government level.

"When there is money at hand, those items will be purchased and will be handed over to them. They should be conscious of their health needs," Mr Goliga said.

He added: "If they [vendors] think they are paying taxes to cater for health needs alone, then that is a wrong perception. If residents want to know how their money is spent, they should petition their councilors, who approve this budget," he warned.

Mr Kashim Nasur, the deputy mayor, however, said they are operating on a very small budget amid low revenue collection.

Apparently, the annual local revenue collections have dropped from Shs32 million to Shs8 million.

"They should bear with the situation. This money at hand cannot even provide adequate services to the town council as a whole," Mr Nasuru said.