

Pupils of Gayaza Junior School cleaning outside their school gate. The school put a ban on kaveera

How Gayaza Junior banned 'kaveera'

As part of New Vision's month-long campaign on the dangers of plastic waste, **Agnes Kyotalengerire** explores Gayaza Junior school's policy not allowing plastic bags into their premises.



On her way to visit her niece, as usual, Bonita Abeho passed by the shopping mall and picked snacks and drinks.

With the snacks in plastic bags, Abeho hit the road to Gayaza Junior School.

However, to her shock, mean- looking security guards could not allow her beyond the gate."Sorry ma'am but the new school policy prohibits *kaveera* in the school," one of the guards politely informed her.

Abeho's pleas fell on deaf ears. The guards pointed to a heap of paper bags sold near the gate.

It was after Abeho bought and used a paper bag that she was allowed into the school.

Banning the "kaveera"

According to Robert Kavuma, a Primary Seven teacher, the school decided to implement the ban about eight years ago following the finance act of 2010 that called for a total ban on plastic carrier bags.

Around the same time some pupils, teachers travelled to Rwanda for a study tour. At the Katuna border, the group was thoroughly checked to ensure they did not enter the country with *Kaveera*.

"When we got to Kigali, we could not see any piece of *kaveera* by the roadside," Kavuma testifies.

The ban on *kaveera*, according to Kavuma was something to write home about. It caused the school headteacher at the time, Margaret Kibuka, to implement a ban on *Kaveera* as one of the school policies.

Kavuma attributed the huge amounts of *kaveera* to the huge population. This made the compound and school farm flooded with *buveera* he exclaims. He adds that; as a result the school started losing cows and goats after they ate *buveera*. Later, as a result of plastic bags the soil fertility and the crop yields started dwindling.

Intervention

Sarah Tebugulwa Kizito, the headteacher, said they started by sensitising the pupils about the dangers of *kaveera*.

Then the school decided to officially launch a *kaveera* ban by conducting a sanitation day.

"Everybody including the pupils and teachers combed through the school compound and farm picking every piece of *kaveera*," Kizito recalls.

Later, the pupils in the upper classes of Primary Four to Primary Seven moved to the neighbouring community and cleaned it up and gave an education talk highlighting the dangers of *buveera*.

However, John Obbo the school gateman, said there was a bit of resistance from parents, especially on the visitation, following the implementation of the ban. "However, as the security team, we persisted on enforcing the ban and, gradually they embraced it," he said.

Obbo says he decided to venture into making paper bags after he realised there was demand.

Community speaks out

The local chairman Gayaza zone B1, David Ntege Muwanga, says the pupils together with the teachers conduct routine cleaning of the community especially around Gayaza trading centre.

Ntege says the community is gradually embracing the ban as some people now carry bags made out biodegradable materials to the market.

Kavuma is quick to say that the community is aware about their policy on *kaveera* ban. Whenever pupils and staff go shopping, the traders pack their items in paper bags or boxes.

PARENTS SPEAK OUT

Christine Nakiranda, a parent and resident of Gayaza Kabubbu Zone A says the school ban on *kaveera* has also impacted on her family.

In the start Nakiranda's children would criticise her whenever she walked into the house carrying the plastic bags.

"I stopped using *buveera* and bought shopping bags made out of sisal, palm leaves or dry banana leaves commonly referred to as *(chikapu)*," she explains and adds; this has proved to be a cheaper, healthier and environmental user friendly option.

Samuel Kasato who has been a parent at the school for the last four years says the parents have embraced the policy and it is protecting their environment.

"Parents have gone ahead to make reusable bags from cloth and decomposing materials while others improvise by using boxes," Kasato explains.

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