



## Dignifying Well-being of Women: Labour Conditions in Solid Waste Management in Tanzania Cities

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### Key Messages



1. A large majority of women in solid waste management are in low pay and insecure work.



2. Women in waste management lack official recognition as employees and contracts, denying them basic labour rights, including paid maternity leave and nursing breaks.



3. Pregnant women are seldom exempted from night shifts and hazardous work.

### Introduction

Globally, women face greater challenges in securing employment compared to men, often finding themselves in low-quality and precarious positions with limited prospects for improvement. Post-COVID-19 recovery has been predominantly characterised by informal employment, with four out of five jobs created for women in 2022 being informal, compared to two out of three for men (ILO, 2023). While vulnerable employment is prevalent for both sexes, women tend to be disproportionately represented in specific types of vulnerable jobs. Data indicates that approximately 83% of individuals in the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) are in jobs with higher economic risk and vulnerability. Women face a higher exposure than men, with 89% of all employed women in vulnerable jobs compared to 78% for men. Further, women are disproportionately underrepresented at managerial levels, accounting for only 28% of senior and middle managers (URT-NBS, 2022).

Conventional gender roles and stereotypes continue to shape various sectors in Tanzania, including waste management. Social and cultural stereotypes contribute to unconscious gender bias in formal waste management operations. Greater considerations for gender in waste management have gained increasing attention, highlighting the sensitivity of gender relations in waste production and management (UNEP-IETC & GRID-Arendal, 2019). Existing gender inequalities and roles significantly influence how waste is integrated into social and economic systems. This brief specifically explores the position and treatment of women in the solid waste management industry in Tanzania, acknowledging their unique roles in raising families.

Analysis draws on insights from a mixed methods study on labour conditions in solid waste management operations in Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, and Dodoma. Fieldwork was conducted in March 2022 involving a sample of 431 waste workers and employers involved in solid waste management.

## Findings

### Type of segment waste workers engaged in solid waste management chain

Notwithstanding the representativeness of the sample, there are generally fewer women than men in solid waste management in Tanzania (see Table 1). However, there is an equal proportion (28%) of women and men in the overall solid

waste collection. About one-third of both women and men are involved in selling solid waste to recyclers. More men (17%) compared to women (3%) are engaged in loading solid waste into the trucks, while more women (21%) than men (1%) worked at very low and menial levels of street sweeping, cleaning hospitals and markets. No woman stood alone as a buyer of solid waste.

**Table 1. Segments of solid waste activities**

	<b>Male (N=344)</b>	<b>Female (N=87)</b>	<b>Total (N=431)</b>
Driving	7%	0%	6%
Overall collector	28%	28%	28%
Loading in the truck	17%	3%	14%
Selling to recyclers	32%	33%	32%
Cleaner (road, hospital, market)	1%	21%	5%
Managerial level	13%	15%	13%
Buyer of the solid waste	2%	0%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork data, 2022

### Women and employment contracts

According to Tanzanian labour law, all employees, except those who work less than six days a month for an employer, must be provided with a written employment contract at the beginning of their employment. This contract can be for a definite or indefinite period or a specific task.<sup>1</sup> A contract outlines an employer's and employee's rights, responsibilities, and obligations during employment. This fosters a conducive environment for safeguarding the interests of all involved parties. Despite the difficulties and risks associated with working in the solid waste sub-sector, many employees work without a legal agreement. Nearly 75% of the women interviewed lack legal employment contracts with their employers, and about 68% of their male counterparts also do not possess

employment contracts. Overall, there is minimal disparity between males and females in this regard.

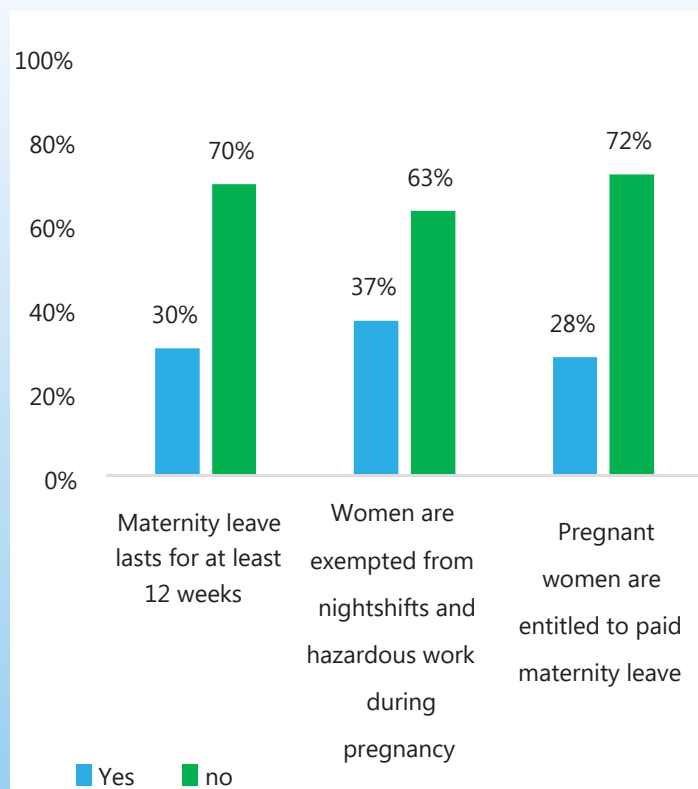
### Women and their basic rights during pregnancy

Antenatal care includes the support that a woman gets from health professionals during her pregnancy. A pregnant woman is required to have regular check-ups by a midwife or doctor who specialises in pregnancy and birth (an obstetrician) to observe the child's development and the woman's health (Raymond et al., 2023). The Tanzanian Employment and Labour Relations Act 2004 requires employers to provide pregnant employees with paid time off for antenatal care. The Act also requires an employer to grant 84 days of paid maternity leave or 100

<sup>1</sup>The United Republic of Tanzania, Employment and Labour Relations Act 2004.

days of paid maternity leave if the employee gives birth to more than one child at the same time. Again, employers are required to prevent a pregnant employee from working at night or performing work that is hazardous to her health or that of her child. Despite these stipulations, as figure 1 below shows, about 70% of women involved in this study said maternity leave does not last for 12 weeks, and about seven women in ten (72%) were not given a paid maternity leave, while about 63% of pregnant women were not exempted from night shifts and hazardous work.

**Figure 1. Provision of pregnancy protection and reproductive rights**

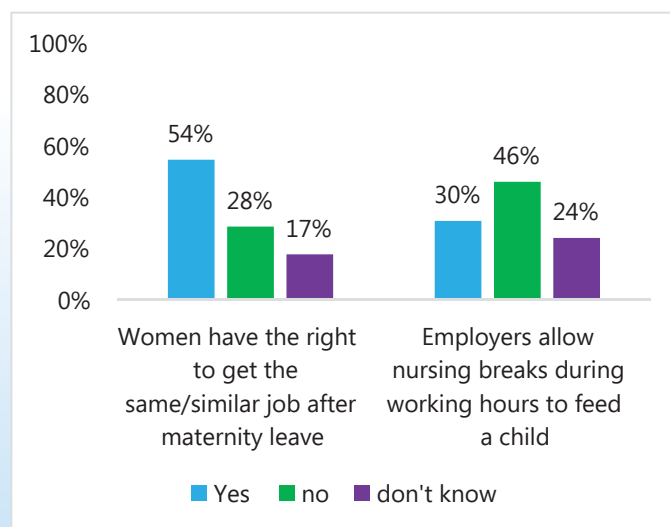


### Women and their basic rights after childbirth

Recognising that most maternal and infant deaths occur in the first month after birth, the 2004 Employment and Labour Relations Act stipulates that women have the right to get a similar job after maternity leave. Where an employee is breastfeeding a child, the employer shall allow her to feed the child during working hours up to a maximum of two hours per day. More than half of the respondents (54%) indicated women have had the right to get the same or similar job after

waste collection. About one-third of both women and men are involved in selling solid waste to recyclers. More men (17%) compared to women (3%) are engaged in loading solid waste into the tracks, while more women (21%) than men (1%) worked at very low and menial levels of street sweeping, cleaning hospitals and markets. No woman stood alone as a buyer of solid waste.

**Figure 2. Provision of maternity rights to women after childbirth.**



### Conclusions and recommendations

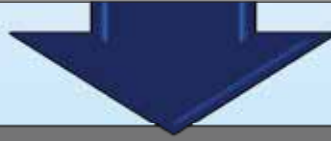
Gender disparities readily appear across the waste management value chain, reflecting prevalent imbalances in the socioeconomic structures. Women are predominantly situated in low-pay, insecure roles, and insufficient attention is directed toward addressing their needs during the maternity period. There is an urgent necessity to integrate a gender perspective into decision-making and policy formulation within the waste management sub sector. The growing importance of the sector as a source and recourse for employment underscores the importance of crafting policies that are a gender-responsive, and their implementation should involve vigilant monitoring for adherence to policies and laws. Such policies need to enhance opportunities for women at all levels, encompassing the allocation of contracts and promoting women into leadership roles. Therefore, this policy brief recommends:

## 1. Designing of workable policies to promote more inclusive and gender supportive participation in all sectors that:

Facilitate maternity leave policies that provide adequate time off for pregnant employees and new mothers.

Ensure policies comply with legal standards through provisions for paid maternal leave.

Promote training and skill development on leadership training, technical skills development, and mentorship programmes to support career growth.



## 2. Ensure universal adoption of affirmative action policies to:

Protect women working in solid waste management from discrimination in the workplace.

Promote women to managerial roles.

Enforce mandatory provision of employment contracts.



## 3. Promote community awareness of attitudes constraining women's rights and welfare in the workplace

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