

# REPOA Brief



## Assessing Labour Conditions in Solid Waste Management: A Tanzanian Case Study

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### Key Messages

Most workers in solid waste management have insecure job arrangements.

Workers neither have paid annual leave nor overtime pay even for shifts on weekends or public holidays.

There are limited provisions of pensions and statutory welfare compensation for workers despite the presence of multiple hazards associated with solid waste operations.

### Introduction

Decent work<sup>1</sup> is one of the key objectives of the Sustainable Development agenda (ILO, 2017; URT-SDG, 2019). The right to decent work is enshrined in Tanzania's employment and labour relations legislations. Despite having one of the highest labour participation rates in the world (83%), an equally large proportion of Tanzanians 83% are in vulnerable employment (URT, 2022) and are thus at high risk to the effects of economic cycles because of the absence of formal employment arrangements, access to benefits or social protection programmes. The incidence of non-decent work is more prevalent in the rural and informal sectors that collectively employ three times as many people as the formal sector. Solid waste is among the areas involving small or medium enterprises, which mostly fall under the informal sector, whereby its work practices and labour conditions are less regulated and mostly overlooked (Pereira et al., 2019). Further, solid waste management is highly susceptible to negative impacts such as occupational health risks, injuries and work-related stress confronting waste workers (Lissah et al. 2022; Marahatta et al., 2018). Understanding solid waste workers' conditions in the labour industry is crucial for better management.

This policy brief presents findings from the study that examined labour conditions across the solid waste management practices in Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, and Dodoma. The brief uses survey data from 431 solid waste workers and employers conducted in March 2022.

### Findings

The section covers the solid waste employment outlook, contract arrangement, working time, remuneration and compensation, and old age pensions.

#### Solid waste employment outlook

Findings show that about half of respondents (51%) engaged in solid waste management are self-employed, while 42% and 7% are employed by private companies and government/municipals, respectively. About 94% of the employed and self-employed work full-time, compared to 6% who work part-time.

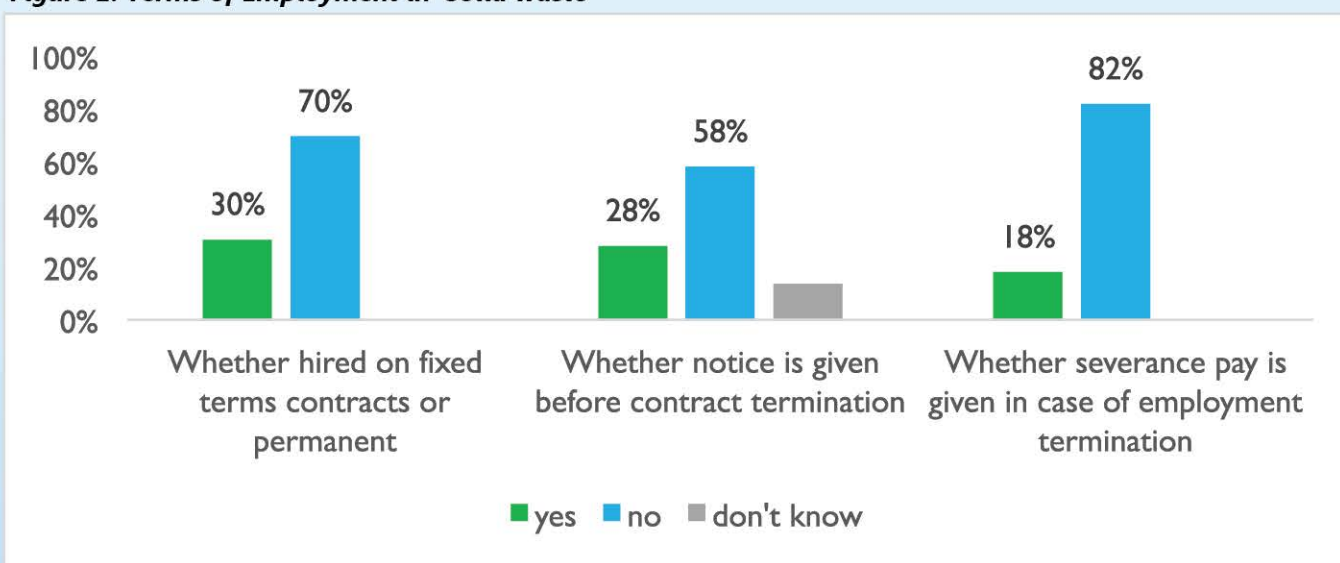
<sup>1</sup> Relates to opportunities for work that are productive and deliver a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.



## Employment and contract arrangement

Majority of employed waste workers (70%) are not hired under fixed-term contracts for tasks of a permanent nature. They do not have employment contracts. This signals that there might be limited understanding of legal rights and responsibilities between employers and employees. It is likely that employees cannot defend their rights as compared to those with employment contracts. Moreover, employees are not provided with termination notices when required to end their employment contracts. The findings revealed that closer to six in ten (58%) of the respondents reported that their employers do not provide due notice before termination of employment contracts. In addition, 82% do not receive severance pay in the event of employment termination in comparison to 18% who said the employer offers severance pay in case of termination of employment.

**Figure 1: Terms of Employment in Solid waste**

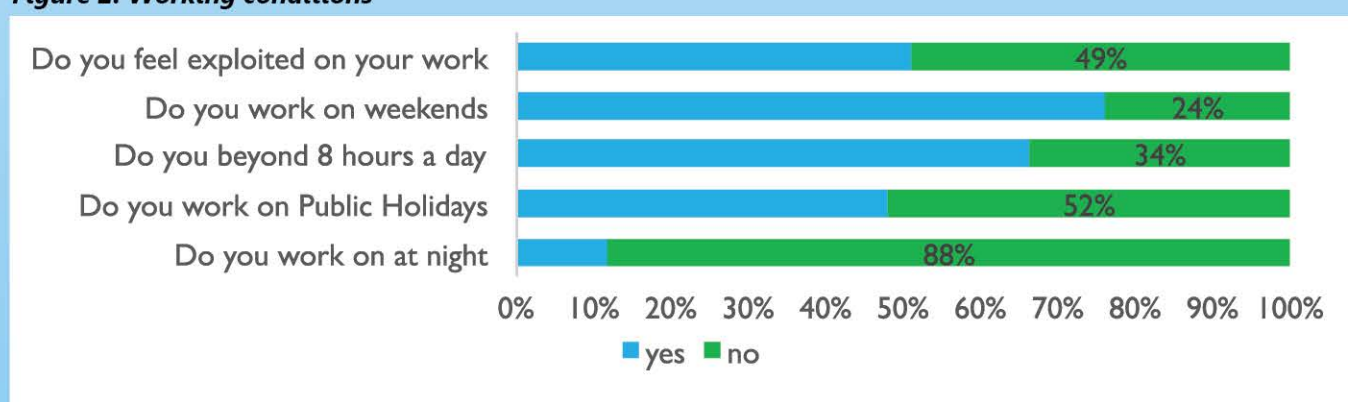


## Working time

The ILO emphasizes "decent working time", with important criteria, that working time arrangements should promote health and safety; being family friendly; promoting gender equality; promoting the productivity and competitiveness of business enterprises; and facilitating employee choice and influence over their working hours. Therefore, inappropriate working hours should not be a way to improve the profitability of companies. The protection of workers' health through restrictions on working hours is also derived from the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1) and the Hours of Work (Trade and Office) Convention, 1930 (No. 30), both of which prescribe limits of 8 hours of work per day and 48 hours of work per week.<sup>2</sup>

Slightly more than half of all respondents (51%) perceive to be exploited with respect to working conditions. For respondents claimed to be required to work on weekends, while some 66% worked longer than 8 hours a day and nearly half (48%) of respondents worked on public holidays. However, working at night is not a common practice; only fewer (12%) claimed to work at night.

**Figure 2: Working conditions**



<sup>2</sup>Decent Working Time: Balancing the Needs of Workers and the Needs of Business ILO 2007.



To the contrary, most solid waste workers are not adequately compensated when working beyond normal hours. Almost all of those who work at night (99%) said they are not compensated whenever they work at night. Similarly, 90% of those who work on public holidays and weekends do not get a compensatory package. In addition, more than half (53%) of respondents who qualified for annual leave said they were not granted paid annual leave by their employers.

## Remuneration and compensation

Over half of the employed respondents (52%) are paid monthly, and nearly three in ten (29%) are remunerated daily. About two in ten (19%) get their remuneration weekly. The average daily pay is equivalent to 8,120 TZS. That is, the average reported monthly pay is computed at 220,264 TZS. The amount falls below the national average (TZS 390,992) and median (TZS 300,000) earnings of paid employees. Additionally, the average monthly salary of solid waste workers is lower than that of self-employed individuals (TZS 327,057) but surpasses those employed in agriculture (TZS 169,377) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Mean and Median Monthly Incomes of Persons Aged 15+ by types of Employment and Area**

Area	Type of Employment	Male		Female		Total	
		Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
URT	Paid Employees	396,885	300,000	378,469	280,000	390,992	300,000
	Self Employed	420,288	169,500	233,918	120,000	327,057	150,000
	Agriculture	195,617	100,000	124,479	64,000	169,377	83,500
	<b>Total</b>	<b>463,460</b>	<b>250,000</b>	<b>318,691</b>	<b>176,000</b>	<b>410,147</b>	<b>230,000</b>

**Source:** Tanzania Integrated Labour Force Survey 2020/21, (NBS) [Tanzania] 2022

While more than half (54%) said the obtained income is insufficient for basic needs in their households, only 18% have other means of earnings apart from the solid waste work. 82% mainly depend on solid waste work without any other substantial means of earnings (see Figure 3). In-depth interviews revealed complaints about delays and defaulting salaries paid by employers. This was attributed to the challenges of payments by waste generators, bureaucracies in processing and disbursements of collected funds by municipal authorities and poor financial management among the waste management companies. Some solid waste workers who did not get their salaries could sustain their livelihood by selling valuable waste materials

**Figure 3: Income and its use**



## Old age pension and workers' compensation

The NSSF Act 1997 covers full and partial/early pensions for private sector employees. For a full pension, a worker must reach 60 years of age with at least 180 months (15 years) of pension contributions. More than six out of ten workers (62%) do not have access to pensions or related social security benefits when they reach their retirement age. Similarly, 67% of respondents reported that their next of kin/survivors will not get some benefits if they die in service. Also, the statutory workers' compensation fund does not cover 87% of the employed solid waste workers<sup>3</sup>. Employers must sign up and contribute to the scheme for each employee. Respondents from the service-providing companies expressed their challenge of granting long-term contracts to their employees given that their service contracts with municipalities are often for one year.

## Conclusions and policy recommendations

Solid waste workers are crucial to maintaining public health and environmental sustainability, especially in urban areas. Nevertheless, findings suggest that workers are exposed to several working conditions. The workers' compensation fund is a public social security scheme established to care for employees when they get injured and challenges, including low salaries to cover household expenditures.

<sup>3</sup>The workers' compensation fund is a public social security scheme established to care for employees when they get injured



They are hardly compensated whenever they work overtime, nor are they entitled to annual leave. Solid waste workers often face job insecurity due to outsourcing and contract-based employment. Lack of job security further exacerbates their working conditions and hinders their ability to demand better treatment. Improvements are needed to ensure the well-being and fair treatment of these workers who perform a critical service for society. This study makes the following policy recommendations:



*Government needs to enforce compliance with timely and just payment of wages to SWM employees*



*SWM companies need to be incentivised to provide longer term contracts to employees*



*Municipal SWM contracts should stipulate compliance with certain workers' rights including mandatory social security, paid leave, and overtime pay*

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