



PSI Municipal Waste Workers Network for English-speaking Africa

CALL TO PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

We, the trade unions affiliated to Public Services International (PSI) representing municipal waste services workers in the English-Speaking Africa Sub-region gathered in Nairobi, Kenya on 25-26 October 2018.

Noting that:

- Municipal waste services are an essential public service to guarantee public health, to promote local economic and social development, to preserve public space, and to generate decent employment opportunities and social inclusion for all men and women;
- This essential public service just cannot be carried out without the hard labour of waste workers: whether employed by a municipality or contracted out to a private company; permanent or precarious; formal or informal; each waste worker is an essential actor in the municipal waste service value chain;
- Waste services work is among the hardest, difficult and dangerous professions that exist, involving – among others - high incidence of health and safety risks including accidents, poisoning, injuries, occupational diseases, ergonomic problems and injuries from repetitive efforts, stings, contamination, poisoning, stress and violence at work;

Considering with deep concern that:

- The working and living conditions of municipal waste workers in the African continent (whether employed by a municipality or contracted out to a private company; permanent or precarious; formal or informal) are among the worst across any sector, among which stand out the following:
 - Extremely high rates of precariousness and informality
 - systematic exploitation and poverty wages that lock workers and their families into a poverty loop, often closely connected with service privatization and with the presence of long sub-contracting chains, middle men and gang-masters;
 - unsustainable workloads and working times;
 - lack of adequate protection material, tools and training to properly and safely deliver quality waste services to the community, while protecting themselves from OSH risks;
 - violence at work, harassment, inequality and discrimination, especially suffered by women waste workers;
 - the presence of child labour in the waste services supply chain
 - lack of recognition of waste workers' trade unions and active employer opposition to the fundamental human rights of freedom of association (ILO C. 87) and collective bargaining (ILO C. 98);
 - poor professionalization of waste service workers;



- widespread prejudice, marginalisation and stigma by service users, communities and institutions, which significantly contributes to strengthen and crystallize waste workers' poor working and living conditions and play against progressive change;
- Many governments and municipalities – also promoted by global and regional financial institutions, as well as parts of the United Nations system - continue to embrace a neoliberal approach to the "circular economy" - praising the privatization and commercialization of municipal waste services;
- Many of the social, labour and service quality problems routinely are found in municipal waste services are often due to:
 - lack of sustainable funding and adequate public investment in collection, sorting, disposal systems, equipment and infrastructure;
 - poor planning, policy and resource coordination, among the various levels of local, regional and national government;
 - the presence of corruption practices and conflict of interest within the government authorities and public institutions in charge of municipal waste service management;

Urge central, local and regional governments of African countries; UCLG Africa, the UN system and the international financial institutions (World bank, IMF); as well as regional organizations and institutions including the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADEC) and African Development Bank (ADB) to:

1. Adopt policies and practices that adequately acknowledge, recognize and value the fundamental role of all workers in the municipal waste service sector in Africa and fully respect and uphold their human, social and labour rights regardless of their status: formal or informal workers; in permanent or precarious employment; employed by public or either providers.
2. Duly recognize their representative trade union organizations as interlocutors with whom to enter meaningful, good faith collective bargaining over working conditions, including the creation of joint OSH committees to improve workers conditions as well as public service quality in waste sector.
3. Provide adequate occupational health and safety (OSH) and personal protective equipment (PPE) to all workers in the waste service sector.
4. Establish sustainable financing and collection systems for municipal waste services: options include progressive municipal tax systems including land value capture. To this end, address the issue of lost corporate tax and ensure appropriate recovery and rechanneling mechanisms to wire tax revenues back to the communities where they belong or where they are most needed.
5. Factor providing decent working to all municipal waste service workers (a living wage, social protection, OSH, non-discrimination and equal pay, and trade union rights) into the into the financing of municipal waste services;



6. Design and implement fair, integrated municipal waste systems and national frameworks that provide accessible, equitable, quality municipal waste services, while taking full advantage of potential represented by the circular economy to generate decent employment opportunities;
7. To do so, ensure transparent and democratic participation of all actors in the design and implementation of integrated municipal waste service systems and national frameworks – including trade unions representing municipal waste service workers; informal workers; urban, slum and rural dwellers; different ethnic groups and minorities among others;
8. Promote municipal waste services not as a profitable business and income opportunity for private companies and shareholder returns; but as an essential local public service that must be owned and managed in public hands; and accessible to all according to their income levels and operates in the public – not in the private - interest;
9. Stop the unsustainable practice of open dumps and unsustainable landfills. Promote public sustainable investment in integrated waste sorting and recycling systems rooted in transparent and participative approaches; and ensure separate, safe routes for toxic, medical and other hazardous waste in the interest of public health and the environment;
10. Establish reliable and comparable data collection systems and statistics for municipal waste management systems, including labour statistics for municipal waste workers; without which progress against related commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11 and 12 cannot be measured;
11. Ensure public policy coordination and coherence among different levels of governments and reconcile the responsibilities of different agencies (environment, health, public space management, etc.) in the development and implementation of relevant public policies;
12. Promote the inclusion of strong labour and decent work clauses designed in cooperation with waste workers' unions in public procurement contracts covering municipal waste services.
13. Put in place adequate legislative measures and enforcement mechanisms that prevent and halt corruption and unethical practices within municipal waste services, including in public procurement procedures whose details and contracts should be made accessible to all to enable transparency, accountability and proper performance assessment. This must include adequate measures for proportional and dissuasive sanctions, public seizure of profits and gains attained through corruption and unethical practices and the protection of whistle-blowers, their families and communities from harm and retaliation.



Public Services International
Internationale des Services Publics
Internacional de Servicios Públicos
Internationale der Öffentlichen Dienste
Internationell Facklig Organisation för Offentliga Tjänster
國際公務勞運



Municipal workers
Services municipaux
Servicios municipales

Adopted on 26 October 2018 by:

BOTSWANA - Botswana Land Board & Local Authorities & Health Workers Union

GHANA - Civil and Local Government Staff Association of Ghana

KENYA - Kenya County Government Workers Union

NIGERIA - Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees

SOUTH AFRICA - South African Municipal Workers Union

SWAZILAND - Swaziland National Public Services and Allied Workers Union

TANZANIA - Tanzania Local Government Workers Union

TANZANIA - Tanzania Union of Government and Health Employees

TANZANIA - Tanzania Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers

UGANDA - Uganda Local Government Workers' Union