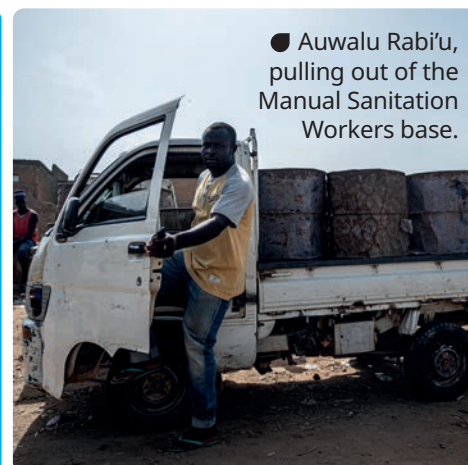


Health, safety and dignity of sanitation workers in Kano City, Nigeria

November 2022



● Auwalu Rabi'u, pulling out of the Manual Sanitation Workers base.

Sanitation workers provide services that are essential to public health, but often under terrible and hazardous working conditions. WaterAid Nigeria's assessment in Kano City highlighted the challenges they face and put forward the following recommendations for the Government and sanitation stakeholders:

- Reform policies, regulations, guidelines, and institutional arrangement.
- Construct, operate and maintain faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs).
- Provide support to sanitation workers (e.g., financial tools, equipment).
- Improve health and safety for sanitation workers.
- Revisit the health and safety guidelines for sanitation workers.
- Register and license the sanitation workers' organisations.
- Develop and implement a behaviour change campaign on the rights and dignity of sanitation workers.
- Establish partnerships with various stakeholders.

Overview

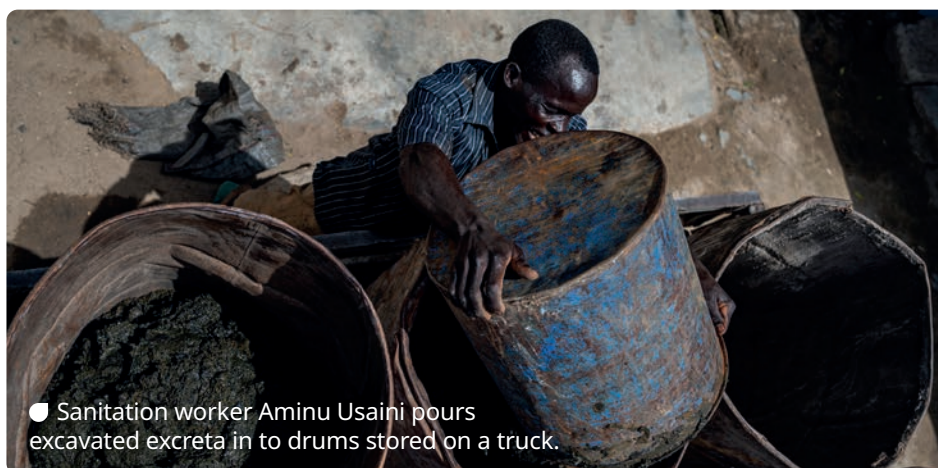
Despite their critical role in reaching Sustainable Development Goal 6.2, sanitation workers are a vulnerable group, often working without protective equipment, job security, proper access to preventive and remedial health care or social protection. A key barrier to providing support for this profession is insufficient evidence on their working conditions.

WaterAid Nigeria thus commissioned an assessment with the aim to explore opportunities to support sanitation workers in Kano City, Nigeria, including strengthening the enabling environment. The assessment had three key objectives to achieve this aim: (i) understand the current situation of sanitation workers along the service chain (ii) identify key challenges facing sanitation workers, and (iii) formulate recommendations and next steps to overcome these. The "Assessment of the Health, Safety and Dignity of Sanitation Workers in Kano City, Nigeria",¹ published in November 2021, included a literature review, 14 focus group discussions, and 33 key informant interviews.

1. <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/assessment-health-safety-dignity-sanitation-workers-kano-city-nigeria>



● Aminu Usaini injured his hand during preparation for evacuation.



● Sanitation worker Aminu Usaini pours excavated excreta in to drums stored on a truck.

Key Findings

1. A weak enabling environment

- The key stakeholders involved in faecal sludge management are: Ministry of Environment; Primary Health Care Boards (PHCBs), located within the state Ministry of Health; Departments of Pollution Control, located within the Ministry of Environment; and Sanitation Service Providers, including mechanical/gully pit emptiers, and manual pit emptiers, also known as Gidan Kowa Da Akwai.
- Whilst there is strong coordination among the manual pit emptiers, aided by hierarchical organisational structure a lack of coordination among the mechanical pit emptiers association, and between sanitation workers and the government.
- Whilst key laws and policies relating to sanitation exist, the legal and regulatory frameworks underpinning them are weak at both the national and state level.
- Despite state-level safety measures and guidelines, including on personal protection equipment (PPE) and medical examinations, they are poorly implemented.

2. Poor working conditions

- Most sanitation workers are aware of the associated health risks, and 94% of interviewees stated that they were forced into this profession due to economic hardship.
- Manual and mechanical sanitation service providers lack property for their businesses, resulting in sanitation workers often squatting on open land or near their trucks, or facing eviction due to temporary occupancy
 - Amongst 50 manual sanitation workers spots, with only the Jakara Spot is reported to own an office.
 - In terms of mechanical emptiers, the assessment revealed that 3 out of 12 vacuum truck companies rent an office but don't own a parking lot for their vehicles

- In terms of transport equipment, vacuum trucks, pick-up trucks, and wooden or metal carts are most commonly used, but most are not in good working conditions.
- Sanitation workers face occupational hazards, including close contact with faecal sludge and injuries and death sustained from equipment.
- Despite near-unanimous agreement from workers on its importance and necessity, only 25% of sanitation workers affirmed using PPE (particularly masks, gloves, and boots).
 - Key reasons include its inaccessibility; affordability; inconvenience and belief that God is protecting them.

Recommendations

- **Reform policies, regulations, guidelines, and the institutional arrangement**
- **Provide support to sanitation workers**, including access to finance and increasing the quality provision of tools and equipment.
- **Revisit the health and safety guidelines for sanitation workers, ensuring alignment with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.**
- **Register and license the sanitation workers' organisations, including** renaming, restructuring and officially registering existing organisations according to legally bounded principles.
- **Develop and implement a behaviour change campaign on the rights and dignity of sanitation workers**
- **Establish partnerships with various stakeholders**, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), civil society groups, and academics.



Read the full report: <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/assessment-health-safety-dignity-sanitation-workers-kano-city-nigeria>

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