

December 17, 2025

His Excellency,
Mr. Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu
Executive Governor, Lagos State
Lagos State Government House,
Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos State

Your Excellency:

OPEN LETTER: THE WORSENING SANITATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT CRISIS IN LAGOS STATE

On behalf of the Organisation for the Right to Health and a Clean Environment (ORHCE), we respectfully but firmly write to draw your urgent attention to a crisis that now confronts Lagos State daily, visibly, and painfully - the steady collapse of sanitation standards and the deepening failure of waste management systems across the State.

This letter is not just a reflection of ORHCE's observations, but a response to numerous reports, media investigations, and the lived experiences of residents across the State. The daily realities are undeniable: streets overflow with waste, canals and drainage channels are blocked, and communities are left exposed to environmental hazards. Lagosians are losing confidence in systems meant to protect their health and dignity.

Lagos Was Cleaner When You Assumed Office -Data Confirms the Decline

1. Your Excellency, evidence-based civic and environmental data show that sanitation outcomes in Lagos have deteriorated significantly during the period of your administration. At the start of your tenure in 2019, Lagos State's sanitation indicators were comparatively better:
 - a. Average waste evacuation: 13,000–14,000 tonnes/day
 - b. Streets with visible refuse overflow: 11–15%
 - c. PSP/LAWMA household collection visits: 2–3 visits weekly
 - d. Monthly public complaints: approx. 4,000–6,000
2. Today, the situation paints a different picture:
 - a. Average waste evacuation (2024–2025): 7,000 -8,000 tonnes/day, despite population growth
 - b. Streets with visible refuse overflow: 35–40%, with some areas exceeding 50%
 - c. PSP household collection visits: 0–1 weekly in many communities
 - d. Public complaints: over 18,000 monthly
3. This statistical decline mirrors what Lagosians experience daily: more waste generated, less waste collected, increasing illegal dumping, blocked drainage channels, and the slow normalization of filth in public spaces.

The Scale of the Waste Crisis -By the Numbers

4. In a year 2024 national ranking, Lagos was listed as one of the top 10 dirtiest states in Nigeria, despite its economic prominence and large population. This is a stark reflection of how the city's sanitation challenges are widely perceived across the country.
5. Specifically, in October 2024, Lagos State Government disclosed that the State generates 5.46 million tonnes of waste annually from 23 million residents. Most of this waste is household-generated and collected by LAWMA in partnership with 420 PSPs and 16,361 street sweepers.
6. In April 2025 and September 2025, Lagos State Government was reported to have disclosed that 13,000 tonnes of waste is generated daily in Lagos State, half of which waste is organic and the other 6,500 tonnes, poisonous, posing serious environmental risks. Of this 13,000 tonnes of waste is generated daily, only 7,000 tonnes is disposed of by LAWMA, while the remaining 6,000 tonnes is managed by informal workers, including over 5,000 cart pushers, most of whom have been discouraged or removed without viable alternatives.
7. While Government data shows that 53.8% of waste generated daily in the State is collected and disposed, available non-governmental data show a figure of 33%. However, it is worthy of note that inefficient waste management significantly contributes to climate change, with the waste sector responsible for 25.3% of Lagos State's total greenhouse gas emissions. Only 13% of collected waste in the State is recycled.
8. Lagos State Government's report (LAWMA report) indicates that the State produces 870,000 tonnes of plastics annually, contributing to Nigeria's 2.5 million tonnes, of which less than 10% is recycled, despite recycling generating about N18 billion in year 2021. An average Lagosian generates 1.2kg of waste daily, yet, Lagosian minimally participate in sustainable management, sorting, and recycling of generated waste. As of October 2025, recycling rates remain alarming: 3–6% of plastics, 5% of other recyclables, and less than 1% of organic waste are recycled.
9. There are Laws, notably the Lagos State Environmental Management Protection Law 2017, under which, among others, residents are mandated to maintain cleanliness, extending to 45 meters of the public sidewalk or face penalties including sealing up, fines and imprisonment terms. The law emphasized "spillers liability" principle which makes any person or organization that pollutes or degrades the environment responsible for the cost of its cleaning or remedying. It also created the Lagos state Environmental Trust Fund to finance environmental initiatives. Despite these laudable values, structural and systemic challenges hinder compliance.
10. Noted waste management challenges in Lagos State include inadequate infrastructure including waste collection trucks, storage facilities, dumpsites and recycling plants. High cost of waste bin is often overlooked but is a real factor as its availability would encourage waste sorting. Also lack of awareness of waste separation, open dumping and burning constitute others.
11. The bulk of what Lagos State need to effectively manage waste has been documented in a 240 paged year 2024 report of the World Bank -"Improving Solid Waste and Plastic Management in Lagos State: A Way Forward" with actionable, effective and tested recommendations to Lagos state. The implementation of these noble recommendations would transform Lagos into the cleanest city in sub-Saharan Africa.

Recent Public Reports Confirm the Dirty Lagos Crisis

12. Multiple credible sources document the worsening sanitation situation:
 - a. Vanguard (2025): "Unprecedented surge in uncollected waste"
 - b. Punch Newspapers (2025): Overflowing refuse from Ojota to Abule Egba, Agege, Iyana Ipaja, and parts of Surulere
 - c. Channels TV Environmental Watch: Blocked roadsides and canal banks in Lagos Island, Epe, and Ikorodu
 - d. FIJ Investigations: Waste left uncollected for up to four months in Alimosho's Aboru community
 - e. Community Social Media Reports: Overflowing bins and indiscriminate dumping in Lekki, Ajah, Gbagada, Mushin, Ketu, Oshodi, Badagry, and Ojo

These are not isolated incidents; they reflect the daily struggles of millions of Lagosians.

Lack of Clear Public Communication is Deepening Distrust

13. Lagosians are paying for waste collection, but do not receive service. From households to businesses, Lagosians are billed for waste evacuation. Residents are deeply concerned because:
 - a. PSP operations collapse with no explanation, despite its failure to visit homes for weeks.
 - b. Residents are forced to carry waste to illegal dumpsites.
 - c. LAWMA collection visits are inconsistent
 - d. Neatly packed household waste is often left uncollected
 - e. Cart pushers were banned, yet their replacement system and PSP coverage is failing
 - f. Markets and community associations report abandoned piles for days.
 - g. Lagosians want to understand what has gone wrong and how they can help.
 - h. Citizens are fulfilling their part of the social contract; the system is failing them.
14. Silence From Authorities Has Deepened Public Frustration. What fuels worry - even more than the waste itself- is the lack of transparent communication about:
 - a. What has broken down
 - b. Why PSP pick-up schedules have collapsed
 - c. What the new waste-management arrangement entails
 - d. What short-term actions are being taken
 - e. What citizens should expect next
 - f. Your Excellency, Lagosians deserve answers.
 - g. A cleaner Lagos begins with honest admission.

Public Health Implications Are Severe

15. According to the WHO and NCDC, poorly managed waste increases:
 - a. Diarrheal diseases by up to 53%
 - b. Malaria and Lassa fever transmission by 30–45%
 - c. Air and water contamination by up to 60%
 - d. With over 24 million residents, Lagos faces an escalating public health emergency.

Constructive Suggestions for a Cleaner Lagos

16. Your Excellency, while the sanitation challenges are serious, ORHCE believes the challenges are surmountable. We respectfully offer the following solution-oriented measures:

- a. A 14-day statewide rapid waste evacuation operation. This entails deployment of additional compactors/trucks
- b. LAWMA: rebrand LAWMA, which is in dire need of human capacity development and operational modernization. LAWMA should also enhance policy enforcement and engage with Lagosians better than it does. KPI should be monitored
- c. Reform the PSP Model: Assign operators to clearly defined zones with measurable targets, publish monthly performance reports, and swiftly replace underperforming contractors.
- d. Reintroduce Formally Licensed Cart Pushers: Use them for streets inaccessible to PSP trucks, issue uniforms and IDs, and integrate them into official waste management.
- e. Launch Monthly “Clean Lagos Days”: Mobilize communities, markets, CDAs, and institutions for coordinated clean-up exercises.
- f. Deploy a Smart Waste Reporting App: Enable residents to report uncollected waste, illegal dumping, and track PSP trucks for transparency and accountability. This improves transparency and accountability. This is obvious from a study of the neglect of the interdependence of formal and informal actors in the value chain, when over 15,000 informal waste workers were rendered redundant in the ill-fated Cleaner Lagos Initiative of the former administration
- g. Initiate Household Waste Sorting Pilots: Begin in Surulere, Eti-Osa, and Ikeja for organic, recyclable, and residual waste, reducing total volume and improving recycling. This aligns with your COP28 pledge to reduce methane emissions.
- h. Establish Market-Based Waste Management Committees: Each market signs sanitation compliance agreements; LAWMA provides oversight; fines for non-compliance.
- i. Expand Youth Environmental Corps: Recruit 10,000 youths to assist with street cleaning, monitoring, reporting, and community education.
- j. Transparent Monthly Public Reporting: Publish updates on PSP performance, LAWMA activities, and ongoing challenges to build public trust.
- k. Extended Producer Responsibility: Look towards the expansion of the extended producer responsibility principle of effective waste management where a producer of a product would be liable for any environmental degradation resulting from its products or its packaging. Attention should be paid to the National Policy on Plastic Waste Management in this regards. Producers should buy back waste from their products or make it lucrative for customers to return them than their ending in our streets.
- l. Ensure Policy Consistency: Policy consistency is paramount, so that Lagos would avoid the kind of wastages and tax payers' monies channeled into the defunct Cleaner Lagos Initiative

These measures are practical, actionable, and proven in other megacities across Africa and the world.

Call to Action & Partnership

17. Lagosians are not the enemy -they are partners in the clean Lagos project. The issue at stake is a combination of inefficient waste management practices, inconsistent government policies and few irresponsible Lagos residents. A comprehensive and community approaches is the answer, not any elitist approach that creates a disconnect with relevant stakeholders -especially, Lagosians

18. ORHCE is ready to support the Government in:

- a. Community mobilization
- b. Environmental monitoring
- c. Waste reporting systems
- d. Volunteer clean-up campaigns
- e. Public health and sanitation education

Conclusion: Lagos Must Not Normalize Filth

19. Your Excellency, Lagos is dirty -but it can be clean again. We appeal to your leadership, your humanity, and your commitment to the wellbeing of Lagosians.

We respectfully urge you to:

- a. Speak to Lagosians.
- b. Acknowledge the crisis.
- c. Lead the clean-up, boldly with transparency and accountability.
- d. Reorganize the system.
- e. Demand accountability.
- f. Invite Lagosians into meaningful partnership to reverse this trend
- g. Lagos belongs to all of us.

20. Lagos deserves better. Let us work together to restore a clean, healthy, and dignified environment.

With respect and in partnership for a healthier Lagos,



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