**Awendo's Waste Crisis: Ignored Dump Sites and the Rising Tide of Litter**

**By BONIVACE OYUNGE SCJ/205/2022**.

Awendo, a town once celebrated for its lush sugarcane fields and thriving agricultural economy, is now facing a growing crisis—waste disposal. While town authorities have set up designated waste collection points to keep the streets clean, residents are increasingly bypassing these facilities. Instead, garbage can be seen littering roadsides, clogging drainage ditches, and even piling up in public spaces, sparking concerns over public health, environmental degradation, and community well-being.

The issue is not one of negligence alone but speaks to a complex set of challenges facing the residents and officials of Awendo. As efforts to promote cleaner practices fall short, residents, business owners, and town officials share a mutual frustration with the pressing waste crisis that seems to be spiraling out of control.

Walking through Awendo's main streets, one is greeted by heaps of discarded plastic bottles, food wrappers, and decomposing organic waste strewn along roads and sidewalks. It's a stark contrast to the town’s natural beauty and agricultural pride. The scattered waste has become a common sight, but it’s also a persistent reminder of a community grappling with a larger issue.

Esther Nyaboke, a resident of Awendo who sells fruits in the market, expresses her frustration over the piling trash. “I see people throwing waste carelessly, even when the collection site is just a few meters away,” she says, pointing to a nearby garbage bin that sits largely ignored. “It makes no sense. They think it’s easier to just drop it on the ground and walk away, but the garbage is piling up everywhere, and it’s becoming unbearable.”

In residential neighborhoods, it’s not unusual to find vacant lots doubling as impromptu dump sites, where waste lies neglected for weeks or even months. With the rainy season, these piles create breeding grounds for mosquitoes, increasing the risk of diseases like malaria and water borne diseases. The uncollected trash also attracts stray animals, creating a health hazard and an eyesore for residents.

The town authorities have invested in waste collection points across key areas, hoping to encourage proper waste disposal. However, these sites often sit underutilized or are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of trash. Some residents are reluctant to walk the extra distance to reach these designated spots, while others feel that the collection points are too few and far between.

“Some collection points are located in remote places that are inconvenient for residents,” explains John Onyango, a local environmental activist who has been campaigning for more effective waste management. “When people see that they need to walk a long distance to throw away their trash, they simply opt to drop it anywhere.”

John argues that the existing infrastructure, though well-intentioned, does not address the actual habits and routines of the people. “People need to see waste collection points in places they frequent—markets, bus stops, schools—otherwise, they’ll just throw waste on the ground and move on,” he says.

Furthermore, the inefficiency in waste collection compounds the problem. Some designated sites are emptied irregularly, leading to overflowing bins that defeat their very purpose. The sight of an overflowing trash bin often dissuades residents from using it, as they assume that their waste will not be collected anytime soon.

The improper disposal of waste is not just an aesthetic problem; it has dire health implications. Littered garbage serves as a fertile ground for disease-carrying insects, and the lack of systematic waste removal allows toxic substances to seep into the soil and waterways.

“It’s worrying to see people so nonchalant about the impact of waste on their own environment,” says Dr. Samuel Odhiambo, a local health practitioner who has observed a rise in waterborne diseases in Awendo in recent years. “The garbage left in ditches clogs drainage and contaminates water sources. This not only poses a threat to people’s health but also has long-term environmental consequences.”

Dr. Odhiambo also points out the increasing cases of respiratory illnesses in Awendo, which he attributes partly to the practice of burning waste as a quick-fix solution. In the absence of proper waste management, some residents have resorted to open burning of waste, releasing toxic fumes that pollute the air.

The waste crisis in Awendo is, in part, a behavioral issue, and many agree that awareness campaigns could help change people’s attitudes. However, changing deep-rooted habits is no easy feat. Efforts by community organizations to educate residents on the importance of waste management have met with mixed results.

“People need to understand that throwing garbage anywhere is a reflection of how we value our own community,” says Alice Akinyi, a teacher at a local school who has been part of clean-up initiatives. “We can’t wait for outsiders to come and clean up our town; we need to start with ourselves and show respect for our environment.”

Alice believes that starting environmental education early in schools could instill a sense of responsibility in young people, shaping a generation that values cleanliness. “If children grow up learning that waste disposal is their responsibility, they’re less likely to become adults who litter indiscriminately,” she says.

For a sustainable solution, many locals believe that waste collection points need to be more accessible and regularly maintained. Improved scheduling of waste collection, combined with a higher frequency of garbage truck visits, could help address the problem of overflowing bins and encourage more residents to use them.

Some have also suggested imposing fines for littering, though enforcing such measures in a town like Awendo may prove challenging. Community-led initiatives, such as neighborhood clean-ups and waste recycling programs, could also play a role in managing waste while fostering a stronger community spirit.

Meanwhile, John Onyango believes that public-private partnerships could help alleviate some of the burden on town authorities. “If we had more collaboration between the government and private waste disposal companies, we could make a real difference in how waste is managed in Awendo,” he says.

As Awendo continues to grow, the need for effective waste management becomes even more critical. Addressing the waste issue requires a collective effort—an acknowledgment that clean streets benefit everyone and that every piece of litter contributes to the problem. Only by fostering a sense of shared responsibility can the town hope to reclaim its beauty and protect the health of its residents.

For now, the challenge remains: will the residents of Awendo step up and embrace cleaner practices, or will the tide of waste continue to rise?