



ECO AMET SOLUTIONS
Live Green

ACTION AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION IN AFRICA

Towards Effective
Implementation of Policies

Africa Eco-Research Report [AFRICER]
Eco Amet Solutions Limited

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Executive Summary

Eco Amet Solutions Limited (EAS) is officially registered under the laws of the Republic of Ghana since 2019 to operate in the space of environmental consulting, service and research. EAS is driven by the mission to be innovative and on the leading edge of technology to improve sanitation in local communities for individual contentment, ecological stability and national development. It provides professional environmental consultancy and services using Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to solve local community water, wastewater, and solid waste challenges.

Africa Eco-Research Report [AFRICER] is a team of professional researchers at EAS established in 2020. It provides professional services in research support (data collection & analysis; behavioural change), capacity building, education & training, consulting in circular economy, waste management & sustainability.

In this report, AFRICER summarizes the insight from a workshop held on the 3rd of December 2022. The "Action against plastics in Africa" workshop was part of an SDG Micro-Project that originated from the Ban Ki-Moon Centre's Global Scholarship Program, aiming to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. The workshop aimed to provide opportunities for those in the plastic waste management space to engage in conversations and discussions on effectively implementing plastic waste policies in Africa.

David Ewusi-Mensah

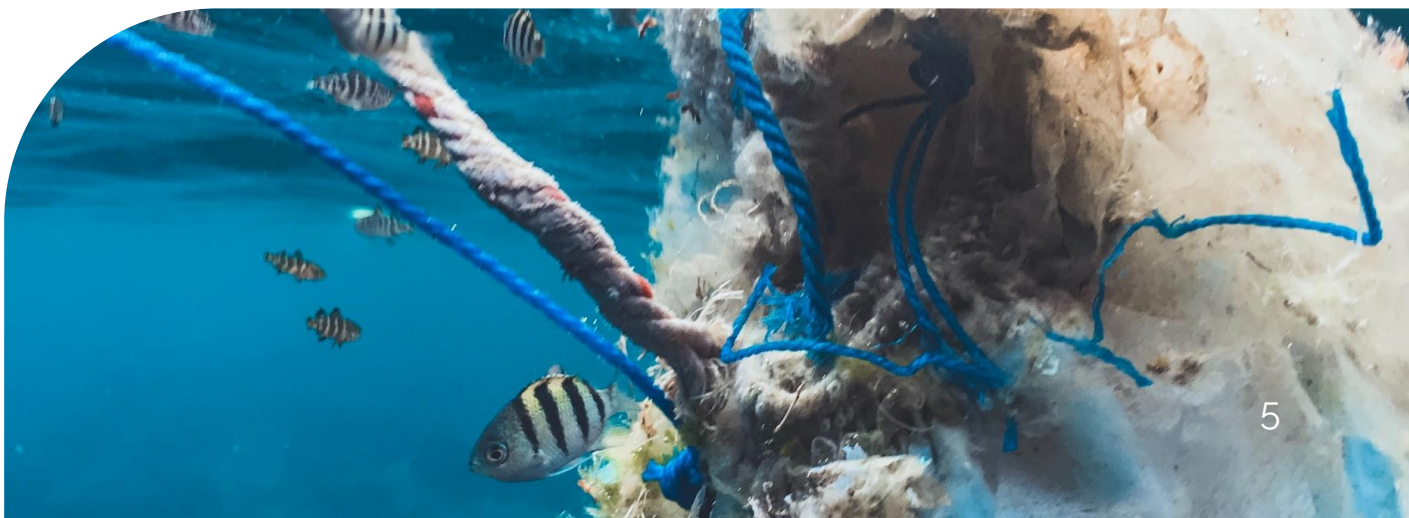
Lead research analyst, AFRICER.
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Introduction

Plastic pollution contributes to the triple planetary crisis: climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Increasingly, plastic pollution exacerbates the existing social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities that the world currently faces. Nonetheless, plastic waste across Africa is expected to increase geometrically in the next decade due to rising global production, importation, and usage. Many African countries are therefore enacting and implementing policies to deal with this menace, such as banning single-use plastics. These policy frameworks are geared towards achieving environmental sustainability and ending plastic pollution.

Given the scale of the plastic pollution problem in Africa, there is a need for continued research to provide data that bridges the gap between plastic waste policies and regulations on one hand and enforcement on the other hand. At Eco Amet Solutions, one of our goals is to engage in research on the African continent to generate relevant data that governments and their agencies can utilise to make informed decisions about regulating and enforcing plastic policies, creating awareness, and training local stakeholders on effective plastic waste management strategies.





Consequently, this Africa Eco Research Reports (AFRICER) workshop sought to provide opportunities for those in the plastic waste management space (i.e., policy analysts, enforcement officers, plastic waste management practitioners and educators, etc.) to engage in conversations and discussions on how to implement plastic waste policies in Africa effectively. This current report provides information on the workshop's outcomes, which was titled, **Action Against Plastic Pollution in Africa: Towards Effective Implementation of Policies**. The workshop had four objectives, including:

- To provide an overview of plastic waste policies across African countries;
- To discuss the importance of data in developing, implementing, and enforcing plastic waste policies;
- To discuss behavioural change as an outcome of effective policy implementation; and
- To deliberate on building local authorities' capacities to enforce plastic waste policies.



Workshop Approach

This virtual workshop, which took place on December 3, 2022, utilised panel discussions, breakout room conversations, videos, and plenary discussions to address the set objectives. Panellists included Dr Prithish Behuria (Associate Professor, University of Manchester) and Ms Huldah Ateka (Corporate/Commercial Lawyer - Principal Associate at Anjarwalla & Khanna | ALN – Kenya). In addition, Dr Márcia Balisciano, Chief Sustainability Officer and Founding Global Head of ESG and Corporate Responsibility at RELX delivered the keynote address for the workshop. The full program recording can be rewatched via [YouTube](#).

Dr Márcia Balisciano delivered her keynote on the importance of plastic policies in Africa. She emphasised the importance of implementing evidence-based solutions to decrease the rate of plastic accumulation, pollution, and its impacts on our environment. Dr Balisciano advocated for a holistic approach to tackling the plastic pollution menace, indicating that the involvement of students, policymakers, NGOs, governments, and companies in the process is necessary for success. She also highlighted the need for consumers to make better choices to reduce plastic use per capita. Dr Marcia recommended the RELX SDG [resource center](#) – a leading-edge for information on sustainable development goals to all stakeholders.





Workshop Outcomes



Overview of plastic waste policies across African countries

The workshop found that rapid population growth and fast-growing economies in Africa have led to an increase in plastic use. However, African countries lack the infrastructure and resources to deal with the resulting plastic pollution that accompanies consumption effectively. Therefore, people litter the streets with plastics and leach into open drains, river bodies, and the environment making plastic waste a significant problem in many African countries.

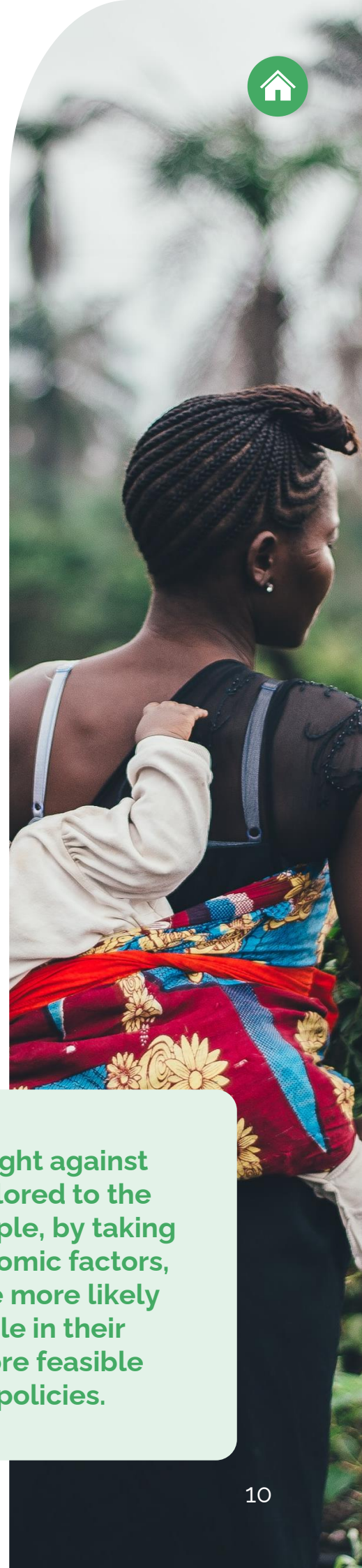
Panel discussions and breakout room conversations revealed that many African countries have developed plastic waste policies to respond to the plastics crisis on the continent. Overall, African countries have a mix of plastic waste management policies in place, such as a ban on single-use plastics and extended producer responsibility laws. While some countries are enforcing their policies, others have developed or are in the process of developing theirs.

As well others have yet to take significant action. In addition, many organisations have been working to raise awareness and educate the public about the impacts of plastic pollution and ways to reduce it. Panellists and workshop attendees emphasised that single-use plastic ban policies can be a valuable tool for reducing plastic pollution and encouraging the use of more sustainable alternatives.

However, the policies need to be well-designed and implemented in a way that takes into account the specific context and needs of a community, region or country.



Rwanda has received international recognition for its ban on single-use plastic bags in 2008, and it is regarded as a progressive and environmentally-friendly policy. Recently, in 2019, the country passed a law to phase out all single-use plastics. Similarly, countries like Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Uganda have also developed plastic waste policies to varying degrees of enforcement success. However, there have also been reports of ineffective implementation of the plastic bag ban in some countries, such as Cote d'Ivoire, DR Congo, and Morocco, largely due to the unavailability of alternatives and inadequate enforcement. Several youth organisations in countries like Ghana have also been engaged advocacy to develop the country's single-use plastic ban, but authorities have not publicly announced any strategic plans.



While plastic policies are essential in the fight against plastic pollution, the policies should be tailored to the specific context of each country. For example, by taking into consideration cultural and socio-economic factors, policymakers can develop policies that are more likely to be effective, sustainable, and enforceable in their respective countries. This also makes it more feasible to implement and follow through with the policies.



This is now formulated from the perspective of policymaking; how policies can be effective and enforceable, possible to implement. It is worth adding the perspective of people and behaviour as well, as in creating sufficient opportunity and designing the environment in such a way that people are able to / that it is realistic and achievable for them to adopt new, more sustainable behaviours.

One of the panellists, Dr Prithish Behuria, mentioned that it is critical to examine the context in which plastic policies are implemented and enforced and their motivations. He suggested that countries may use green activists and policies to attract external interest and foreign investment and better integrate their green economies. These policies, while well-intended, are not always effective or equitable in dealing with environmental issues, such as plastic pollution.



Regulations now seem mostly externally driven, and the issue here is that this makes those regulations less responsive to domestic needs. That's something that needs to change in order for those regulations to be effective. We need to align with what's required for the specific context, culture, and behaviour of people.





Importance of Data in Developing, Implemented and Enforcing Plastic Waste Policies

The workshop revealed and affirmed data's pivotal role in making sound environmental management decisions.



As indicated by panelists and attendees, there is a need for African countries to invest in gathering qualitative and quantitative data and information about plastics, plastic pollution, and effective plastic management strategies if the continent would be successful in its plastics waste fight.

Since there is no one-size-fits-all solution to address plastic pollution, the availability of robust data is helpful in determining which solutions are feasible. Evidence-based data, therefore, eliminate financial waste that may result from developing and implementing policies that will not work.

Breakout room discussions emphasised the need to collect data at the local level about plastic pollution and solutions and populate the same into regional and national databases. This is because there is an opportunity to gather extensive and detailed data at the local level with more context, which will be missed in other settings. There was consensus that the local level should drive data gathering about plastic waste pollution.



More info at a local level to get a better understanding of what is needed for people to help them adhere to these policy changes.

In addition to gathering good data for decision-making and developing policies, it was noted that African countries should focus on politics in their countries when implementing and enforcing plastic waste policies. This involves applying pressure and pushing politicians to be at the forefront of leading plastic waste policy implementation. These pressures should also target changing the mindset of politicians about the environment to the extent that they have the political will to change the business-as-usual processes to they are accustomed to.

Dr Behuria further indicated that green activism and transnational activism, for instance, should give priority to the needs of countries and not the goals of funders of such activism, to ensure that appropriate changes are made in a country. He emphasised mobilising the power of domestic businesses, particularly those producing and importing plastics, in enforcing plastic waste policies. He also suggested that understanding the reasons governments are incentivised to take action against plastic solutions may help arrive at the best possible actions to take and those to avoid.



Behavioural change as an outcome of effective policy implementation

There are challenges to implementing plastic waste policies that many African countries have developed. Although many of these policies aim to change public attitudes and behaviours towards properly handling plastics, the workshop showed they are often challenging to implement.



We need to understand better: 1) why they are difficult to implement, and what are the barriers? and 2) How can we adjust these policies so it's easier for people to adjust their attitudes and behaviours.

Overcoming these hurdles requires comprehension of the policy's value and its purpose and buy-in at the local level. Thus, awareness creation and education are needed at both the local and national levels involving various stakeholders, such as youth, waste practitioners, local authorities, and activists.



There is also a need to increase people's competence in performing the 'right' behaviour. They need to be aware of it, but they also need to know how to do it / have the required skills.

Understanding the policy and what it means can bring about positive behavioural change towards plastic pollution.



It would help if people feel that the policymakers consider their situation and needs. People want to feel heard and understood. Only if their demands are recognised will policies be accepted positively

During panel discussions, Ms Huldah Ateka underscored the need for local authorities to build close relationships with communities to get buy-in on implementing plastic waste policies. She intimated that the 'people' are the critical resource that local authorities have, and all efforts should be made to build close partnerships and associations with them to implement policies successfully.

An example of the above approach was evident in **The FlipFlopi Project**, which is an East African movement with a mission to end single-use plastics and inspire a plastic reuse revolution through innovation hubs, positive storytelling and education, and campaigning to influence policy change at the local level.

Mr Dipesh Pabari is the projects lead at The FlipFlopi Project, Kenya. In his video documentary shared during the workshop, he indicated that the people of Lamu, Kenya, identified plastic waste pollution and its management as a huge problem in their community and felt the need to find a solution to the problem. Mobilising and finding a community-driven solution was essential to the community, mainly because the Kenyan government is slow to act regarding issues with plastic waste management. As a result, community-led action against plastic pollution resulted in building the world's first 100% recycled plastic sailing boat, the **Flipflopi dhow**, from plastics collected from the community by its residents. According to Mr Pabari, building the boat entirely from recycled plastics inspires and shows the people of Lamu and worldwide that local-level innovations can be utilised to combat plastic waste pollution.



Building capacities of local authorities to enforce plastic waste policies

The workshop discussed strategies to build local authorities' capacity and communities to enforce plastic waste policies. A key issue raised was the fragmentation of policy implementation approaches or strategies, which make implementation even more challenging. On this point, Ms Ateka advised:



African countries to think through the entire ecosystem/lifecycle of waste and waste policies to develop holistic frameworks to implement policies. Implementing policies in fragments means that they would not have the desired effect or impact because critical paths to implementation can be lost, missed and/or not considered.

Using the case of Kenya, Ms Ateka suggested that a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is needed to effectively address plastic pollution in Africa, involving government, industry, civil society, and community participation. In some cases, environmental policies that are disconnected from domestic realities and motivated by external transnational actions can detract from solving existing inequalities. For example, if a country does not have adequate infrastructure in place to implement a ban on plastic bags effectively, it could disproportionately impact low-income communities and small businesses. Additionally, if a country is motivated by external interest or investment, it may neglect to address other pressing environmental issues or prioritise them less.



Mass education was also identified as an important strategy needed to build capacity among local authorities and communities. It was discussed that an explicit curriculum would help the youth be knowledgeable about environmental issues and find appropriate solutions. Moreover, the intergenerational transfer of environmental knowledge from adults to children is essential to help shape the attitudes and behaviours of the latter. As a result, education about plastic waste should be easily accessible to the public and written in various local languages in a country.

Furthermore, local authorities can build community capacity by feeding news to the community about, for example, plastic waste generated per day and its impact on the environment. Another critical point revealed during discussions was the need to consider community context before implementing a policy.



What is the takeaway?

This workshop was extremely interactive and provided opportunities for policy analysts, enforcement officers, and plastic waste management practitioners to share, discuss, and deliberate on factors that would help implement plastic policies in African countries.



It was evident that different countries on the continent were in varying stages of developing and enforcing their plastic waste policies - while implementing plastic policies in Africa may be challenging, many countries are trying to address the issue and find sustainable solutions.

As a result, more needs to be done to ensure that the policies are effective and equitable and address the underlying causes of plastic pollution, such as inadequate waste management infrastructure and a lack of access to alternatives. These are all possible to achieve with strong quantitative and qualitative data on plastics, plastic waste, and plastic pollution.



Data collection at the local level presents the best chance of gathering detailed and context-specific information about communities- their current barriers, attitudes, behaviours, and what is needed to change to more sustainable behaviours."



Further to the above, implementing policies should not be done in fragments, but attention should be paid to the overall approach to make implementation and enforcement successful.

Building the capacities of local governments, communities, and other stakeholders through education and awareness creation were identified as crucial to successful policy implementation. Moreover, the involvement of politicians in enforcing plastic waste policies is crucial to consider.

That is to say that political will must be harnessed.





What is next for AFRICER? 2023

Our approach



Research and data collection

1. Policies related to plastics utility and waste management, behaviour change and implementation.



Education and Advocacy

1. Waste pollution and circular economy.
2. Action against plastic pollution in Africa.



Capacity building, mentorship and training

1. Extended polluter responsibility.
2. Grassroots and the informal sector.



Collaboration and partnership

1. Across Africa.
2. Within sustainability and circular economy.



Consultancy

1. Circular economy initiatives.
2. Waste management & sustainability.



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