



East Africa Regional Workshop on Single Use Plastics (SUPs)

Capacity Building for Environmental
Authorities and Legislators in East
Africa on the Issue of Plastics

2023 Report



Sustainable Manufacturing and
Environmental Pollution Programme



Executive Summary

The East Africa Regional workshop on Single Use Plastics (SUP) convened environmental experts, legislators, and representatives from the private and civil society sectors in Nairobi, Kenya, to deliberate on the impact of SUPs on the environment and discuss current legislation in the region.

The workshop held on 11th - 12th April 2023 at ALN House, addressed the following areas to educate and inspire further action: the impact of SUP on the environment; insights into substitute materials which can replace SUPs in some functions; the state of single use plastics trade in Africa; the state of SUP legislation in East Africa Community and the enforcement of existing laws and importance of harmonisation. Three case studies from the region were also presented based on Rwanda's journey towards phasing out single use plastics as well as citizen approaches to tackling plastic pollution.

During the workshop, the legislators in attendance pledged action across the East African Community region, at national and regional level (through the East African Legislative Assembly) to combat the negative impact of single-use plastics on the

environment. The workshop concluded that the unregulated use of single-use plastics has severe consequences, including environmental pollution, health risks, and economic losses.

Harmonised regional legislation was identified as a crucial step towards addressing the issue, as it ensures consistent enforcement across borders, facilitates a circular economy, and enhances the voices of African countries in the ongoing negotiations towards a global binding instrument against plastic pollution under discussion at the UN. The workshop emphasised the importance of collaboration among stakeholders and the need for capacity building to enhance awareness and understanding of plastic pollution issues and their social consequences.



Legislators and facilitators who attended the workshop at ALN House.

Introduction

The use of single-use plastics (SUPs) in East Africa has had devastating consequences on the environment, human health, and the economy despite the ubiquity of regulations across the region. According to PlasticOceans.Org, 50% of all plastics produced, which now stands at 400 million tonnes annually, is for single use purpose only². The high rate of SUP production and consumption, coupled with inadequate waste management infrastructure, has led to an increase in pollution of waterways, soil, and air.

For example, flows of plastic waste into aquatic ecosystems are expected to nearly triple from around 11 million tonnes in 2016 to around 29 million tonnes in 2040¹. The improper disposal of SUPs has resulted in clogged drainage systems, flooding, and loss of biodiversity. Additionally, plastic waste has found its way into the food chain, impacting human health through ingestion of microplastics. Harmonized regional legislation is needed in East Africa to address the negative impacts of SUPs because environmental problems, like pollution and waste management, do not recognize national borders. In order to effectively address these issues, it is important for countries within a region to work together and adopt a common legal framework that sets standards for the production, use, and disposal of SUPs.

Regardless of each East African Community (the "EAC") member country having various laws and regulations on SUPs, cross-border pollution has become a major challenge. The EAC, whose member states are Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, have each taken legislative action in relation to certain SUP items (mainly plastic bags) in order to reduce the detrimental effects of plastic litter.



**29M
tonnes**

plastic waste into aquatic ecosystems are expected to nearly triple from around 11 million tonnes in 2016 to around 29 million tonnes in 2040.

A harmonised approach would ensure that SUPs are dealt with consistently across the region, with standard guidelines on production, use, and disposal. This would also promote cooperation and collaboration between countries, especially on enforcement, leading to effective implementation of policies to reduce SUP pollution. With a clear and comprehensive regional legal framework in place, it would be easier for East African countries to tackle the problem of SUPs and reduce their negative impact on the environment and human health.

In light of the above, ALN Academy, the International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF) Group and the Flipflopi Project Foundation organised targeted training activities for legislators and environmental authorities in East

Africa working on the issue of plastics, which was facilitated by UNCTAD with support from the UKAid SMEP Program.

The primary objective of the workshop was to help strengthen East African legislators' capacities not only with training, but also include presentations of country cases so regulators and legislators can learn from each of the seven EAC countries approaches or measures to reduce plastic pollution. This initiative aimed to raise awareness amongst legislators of developments at the multilateral processes on the issue of plastics and of relevant private sector initiatives pertinent to East Africa. The capacity building training made it possible for the beneficiaries of the workshop to have a stronger voice and understanding as it relates to the theme of plastic pollution.



Picture by James Wakibia

The wide reaching impact of plastic pollution

Health



Microplastics have been found in human blood and human breastmilk^{1,2}

Economic



\$80-120bn lost each year to plastic packaging material³

Climate



GHG emissions to reach 287 billion tonnes by 2100⁴

References

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2. <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4360/14/13/2700>
3. <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/the-new-plastics>
4. <https://materialeconomics.com/publications/the-circular-economy-a-powerful-force-for-climate-mitigation-1>

Workshop Approach

The workshop on East Africa Regional Legislation for Single Use Plastics was designed with a multi-faceted approach. Prior to the in-person sessions in Nairobi, Kenya, the legislators were provided with educational materials bi-weekly for two weeks to increase their awareness on the extent of plastic pollution, existing laws in the East African Community (EAC), and measures to curb plastic pollution from around the world. This approach ensured that the attendees were well-prepared and engaged better during the in-person sessions.

The structure of the in-person workshop comprised two full days, with each day being broken down into two parts. The morning sessions were reserved for presentations and high-level boardroom discussions, while the afternoons were designated for physical site visits to plastics recyclers in Nairobi to give a more concrete tone to the set objectives. This structure provided the attendees with a well-rounded learning experience that included theoretical knowledge, practical implementation, and on-site exposure to plastics recycling facilities and the challenges faced by the sector.



Hon. Rozaah Buyu,
Member of Parliament, Kisumu West Constituency, Kenya

The speakers included, but were not limited to Mr. Mamo Boru Mamo, the Director General of the National Environmental Management Authority of Kenya, the UNCTAD representative Mr. Henrique Pacini, Economics Affairs Officer and Mr. James Wakibia, a Kenyan environmental activist. In addition, Ms. Aisha Abdallah, director of ALN Academy and Hon. Rozaah Buyu Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Conservation Caucus - Kenya, gave the welcoming remarks during which she pointed out the importance of the role of law in successful enforcement of laws related to climate change, and plastic pollution. She highlighted the importance of targeted training, sharing best practices, and capacity building to better engage in parliaments across the region.

Workshop Outcomes

The Flipflop Project : The Tale of a Sailing Boat Made from Old Toothbrushes



Davina Ngei

Flipflop project telling the story of the Flipflop project

Ms. Davina Ngei, Flipflop Project Program Manager kicked off the workshop presentations and set the scene by telling the story of the Flipflop Project³, a SMEP⁴ co-sponsored initiative which leverages East African heritage to tackle plastic pollution in Lamu, a remote island in Kenya. An alarming 400 million tonnes of plastic are produced annually, with half of it being Single Use Plastics⁵ (SUP). Shockingly, less than 10% of these plastics are recycled, and the remaining 90% end up in landfills, waterways, and illegal dumping sites.

Although Africa has the lowest plastic production and consumption levels globally, at 5% and 4% respectively, the continent contributes 24% of global emissions due to mismanaged plastic waste⁶. Ms. Ngei highlighted that this has a severe impact on communities as the burning of plastic causes air pollution, and the plastic breaking down into microplastics causes health and environmental issues.



Africa is responsible for 5% of global plastic production and 4% of global plastic consumption

One of the lowest in the world



But contributes to 24% of global emissions from mismanaged plastic waste

Reference

UNEP, 2018: Mapping of global plastics value chain and plastics losses to the environment (with a particular focus on marine environment)

Furthermore, the presentation focused on the importance of implementing a circular economy and the need for waste management with communities. It was highlighted that training communities and improving their livelihoods is crucial to implementing an effective waste management system. According to Flipflopi's model, retaining traditional knowledge and skills and creating a closed-loop system where communities can derive value from waste can greatly benefit the environment and reduce the negative impact of plastics. However, the poor quality of plastic packaging in particular makes it challenging to recycle and highlights the need for better-quality control

standards, which is Flipflopi's main challenge and has resulted in them accumulating tonnes of plastic waste that they cannot recycle locally.

Even though the Flipflopi Project is using plastic waste to construct their iconic sailing vessels, and traditional furniture, it has taken a strong stance and resolutely supports the banning of unnecessary single-use plastics.

As they plan to set sail on their flagship, the Flipflopi Kubwa, they aim to use it as a symbol of Africa's commitment to adopting transformational legislation that will lead to a significant decrease in plastic pollution. Ms. Ngei's tale

provoked a number of concerns from the legislators related to the plastic products created by the Flipflopi team. These concerns include safety of the boats, durability, cost, disposal at the end of their useful life, and their environmental impact on aquatic life as they break down into microplastics and leach chemicals. Fortunately, many of these issues can and should be addressed at the manufacturing level, and education and environmental safety are key factors that need to be considered. Davina stated that by implementing measures to reduce the environmental impact of plastic products, we can ensure that we preserve our planet for future generations.



The Flipflopi Dhow on its Lake Victoria expedition, 2021

The Importance of Legislation in Tackling Plastic Pollution with the Current State of Laws in the EAC: ALN

The ALN speaker, Ms. Rosa Nduati-Mutero highlighted the emergence of plastics as a cheap substitute for other materials with great technical performance, but which was adopted with a lack of foresight regarding the long-term environmental impact. Since plastics do not decompose, stronger laws are needed to address the issue at source. In analysing existing laws,



Rosa Nduati-Mutero
CO Managing Partner
ALN Kenya | Anjarwalla & Khanna

Rosa highlighted that Rwanda and Burundi have already implemented bans on single-use plastics, with exceptions for certain sectors, South Sudan struggles with enforcement due to a lack of alternatives, while Uganda is developing a national strategy for plastic pollution management⁷. The need for clear laws, stakeholder engagement, and political will was emphasised as crucial to ensure the success of any bans or regulations.

In addition, the presentation focused on the need for action points by legislators and corporate governance to ensure the role of law and sustainability are linked. The attendees shared their experiences in their respective countries, with Uganda planning a total ban on specific SUPs, and Tanzania reporting the continued use of single-use plastic bags despite a ban in 2018. The success of a ban was attributed to clear laws, stakeholder engagement, political goodwill, and enforcement.

The session examined the lessons learned from previous failures by East African Community to pass and adopt proposed bills on controlling pollution and emphasised the need for a more aggressive approach and careful language in the draft to increase the likelihood of success. The draft SUP bill, drafted by ALN for the East African parliament, presented at the workshop, aims to standardise the law and includes provisions for prohibition, recycling mechanisms, and information on packaging to curb cross-border infiltration.

Finally, policy gaps and enforcement issues related to single-use plastics policies in East Africa were discussed. Despite Kenya's nationwide ban on single-use plastic bags, along with a ban on SUPs in protected areas, and emphasis on educating the public and enforcing the law, it remains a challenge to implement the ban effectively due to

the difficulties of monitoring porous borders and changing consumer behaviour. The private sector was identified as having significant influence on legislation and enforcement, and the intersection of climate change and plastic pollution agendas was emphasised as an area where quick wins can be achieved.

Analysis of legislation on SUPs by East African countries

Country	Plastic Bag Ban	Single-use Plastic Ban	Notes
 Kenya	Enacted 2017	Specific SUP items - June 2020, only in protected areas	Considered well enforced
 Rwanda	All polyethylene bags (2008)	Banned in 2019 with some exceptions	Tightly enforced and implemented
 Uganda	Bag ban <30 microns took effect in 2018	Yet to ban	Implementation is inconsistent, use remains common
 Tanzania	Zanzibar: 2006 for bags <30 microns Tanzania: June 2019	Ban on plastic sachets and plastic packaging (with certain exceptions)	Limited data on adoption
 Burundi	Enacted in 2018; took effect in 2020	Yet to ban	Limited information on uptake/impact
 South Sudan	Enacted in 2015	Yet to ban	Struggling to enforce the ban
 Democratic Republic of Congo	Enacted in 2021	Ban on plastic sachets and plastic packaging (with certain exceptions)	Little enforcement

EAS efforts in the ILBI context

	Upstream	Midstream	Downstream
Burundi			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Decree prohibiting the import, manufacture, marketing and use of plastic bags and other packaging passed in 2018 and effective from February 2020. b. Environmental code, 2021
Kenya	Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan 2016-2030 shift towards sustainable consumption and production and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Kenya Plastic Action Plan by Kenyan Manufacturers, a private sector-led policy and Action Plan that seeks to enable a circular economy for the environmentally sustainable use and recycling of plastics in Kenya b. The Sustainable Waste management Bill (2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action on Circular Economy Municipal Solid Waste Management Approach for Urban Areas (2016) b. National Solid Waste Management Strategy (2014) c. Kenya Plastic Bag Ban Notice from 2017 - The Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act
Democratic Republic of Congo		Interministerial decree prohibiting the manufacture, import and marketing of non-biodegradable packaging throughout the national territory of the DRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Prohibits the production, import, marketing and use of plastic bags, sachets and other plastic packaging. The ban has been effective since the 1st July 2018
Rwanda	National Environmental and Climate Change Policy (2019) - Greening economic transformation includes a specific policy statement on promoting the circular economy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. National e-waste management policy (EPR) b. Prohibits the manufacturing, importation, use and sale of plastic carry bags and single-use plastic c. Updated Nationally Determined Contribution 2020-30 represents a more detailed and robust assessment of mitigation and adaptation measures
Uganda		National Environmental Act No.5 2019 provisions on EPR so that producers of any product have the duty to manage the design and disposal of the product and monitor its lifecycle in order to deliver the best overall environmental outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The National Environment Act No. 5 2019 prohibits the use of plastics b. National Urban Solid Waste Management (NUSWM) Policy c. Electronic Waste (E-Waste) Management Policy
Tanzania		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. National Solid Waste Management Strategy (i.e., product design that minimizes the waste generation) b. Reduce waste: Controlling e-waste imports in Tanzania (2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. National Solid Waste Management Strategy (2018) b. All plastic carrier bags, regardless of their thickness are prohibited from being imported, exported, manufactured, sold, stored, supplied and used

State of Single Use plastic trade in Africa: UNCTAD

The potential International legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution being negotiated under the UN was discussed during this session, with emphasis on the need for a binding instrument to facilitate a series of actions to address the plastic pollution crisis. The proposed ILBI should focus on circular economy policies and look at breaking the plastics wave. Trade dimensions will play an important role in the agreement and its eventual implementation. According to UNCTAD, global plastic trade is soaring with a 1.2 trillion USD trade⁸ in plastics vs the size of the material substitutes market (USD 388 billion), which suggests that more work needs to be done in promoting substitutes and alternatives.

Mr. Henrique Pacini, a UNCTAD official who is also a technical advisor to the UK-FCDO-UNCTAD Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution Programme, highlighted the overlapping upstream, midstream and downstream measures required to facilitate circular economy policies; such as product policy which related to design, manufacture and distribution of specific products and the waste management policies to encourage circular practices. Notably, Mr. Pacini made the distinction between plastic substitutes and plastic alternatives in terms of origin, properties, impact and safety, and presented SMEP's mapping of material substitutes⁹ for single use plastics.

Hon. Rebecca Joshua Okwaci, MP, South Sudan said "together with Africa and the international community, South Sudan would encourage higher adoption of alternative materials such as jute, sisal or agricultural residues, which can promote innovations based on the traditional knowledge which has been in our country for many generations"

The legislators raised considerations for substitutes/alternatives, such as life cycle, overlapping areas/issues of cost, public health implications, and environmental impact. Hon.

Dr. Woda Odok, South Sudan Member of EALA pointed out the conflict of interest and realities of developing or LDCs and called for consideration of such nuances in implementing alternative measures. Hon. François Nzekuye Kabarabuzza, Member of Parliament in DRC proposed a comparative study of the cost and responsibility of plastic manufacturers out of Africa for pollution in Africa. The consequences of non-enforcement of international obligations were also discussed, and it was hoped that the proposed plastics treaty can address this extensively.

The need to move conversations from boardrooms to the masses who actually consume was highlighted, and a workshop for educators and communicators was proposed, with UNCTAD mentioning plans underway to deliver this. Finally, the need for monitoring and evaluation on enforcement and compliance was raised, and the importance of transferring this knowledge to citizens at the grassroots level was emphasised.



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This was an important event which builds upon the experiences of SMEP-sponsored projects like FlipFlopi and regional legislators. It is important to bring African voices and their practical experiences into the multilateral processes at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and at the World Trade Organization dialogue on plastics. We look forward to seeing how this regional discourse around plastic legislation and material substitutes continues.”

Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD

Legislation on unnecessary single-use plastics in East Africa – Rwanda’s case: David Ewusi-Mensah, Eco Amet Solutions Limited

The AFRICER¹¹, is a project which aims to investigate Africa’s plastics policies and the challenges of behavioural change towards plastics presented the challenge of plastic pollution in various regions of Africa and the need for behavioural change towards plastics¹². The session analysed Rwanda’s successful approach, which included strict enforcement, education and awareness campaigns, stakeholder engagement, and innovation. Entry points, policy implementation, rural monitoring, different enforcement mechanisms, border control, and financial investment were critical to Rwanda’s success. The success of Rwanda’s approach provides an important case study for other African countries to learn from and implement effective policies to tackle plastic pollution.

This session highlighted the power of collective action, a concept well understood in Rwanda as “umuganda” which translates to ‘coming together in common purpose to achieve an outcome’¹⁰. Umuganda which has been implemented in Rwanda since independence, and reintroduced after the genocide is held on the last Saturday of every month, from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM, businesses close and traffic halts as citizens and tourists across the country take to their neighbourhoods and assist in a select community project, such as a clean up, cutting grass and repairing public facilities. Such an initiative, if adopted across the region, would be very useful in engaging the community and bridging the gap between the public and their elected and appointed officials in tackling social and economic issues.

The discussion also emphasised the importance of understanding behavioural aspects of plastic consumption and implementing strict policies with effective enforcement mechanisms to address plastic leakage into the environment. The concept of convenience and behavioural change is essential to solving the challenge of plastic pollution, and simply replacing single-use plastics with other single-use materials is not enough. Strict enforcement and fines, along with coordination with other bodies such as the Rwandan police, were key factors in the success of the policy. The success of alternatives and substitutes in the local market highlights the importance of convenience and behavioural change in solving the challenge of plastic pollution.

Hon. Françoise Uwumukiza, Rwandan member of the EALA, mentioned that “the key for our success (in Rwanda) in reducing plastic pollution was the strong enforcement of single use plastic ban, and public awareness of the benefits of a clean environment. Today, Kigali is known as Africa’s cleanest city.”



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The Republic of Rwanda was the first country in East Africa to ban the use of plastic bags. Rwanda started her efforts in 2004, and it continues to employ various strategies. As law makers, we need to make sure our legislations are aligned with the current strategies in respect to human beings, the environment, wildlife, and livestock”.

Hon. Uwumukiza Françoise, Member of EALA and Chairperson of the ATNR Committee, has been a long-standing champion of environmental issues.

Hon Caroline Rwivanga, Rwandan Member of EALA shared her personal experience as a citizen complying with the initial plastic ban, and how the government gave manufacturers time to phase out, limited exceptions to necessary products, and provided incentives to help the transition. She highlighted the challenges faced by both manufacturers and consumers, and the importance of continuous awareness and education efforts to promote behaviour change. Hon. Caroline emphasised the role of political will, community engagement, and the need for everyone to learn and contribute towards a sustainable future. She also discussed how the government led the change and enforced the policies strategically. Overall, her experience highlights the importance of commitment, collaboration, and sacrifice by all stakeholders in achieving sustainable outcomes.

Moving forward, AFRICER's focus will be on making policy work for Africa with Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), social policies, common continental standards, and policy support for innovations. These pillars aim to address the challenges of human behaviour towards plastics and achieve a sustainable future for Africa. Despite the challenges posed by the ban, Rwanda's success in tackling plastic pollution highlights the importance of research, education, and strict enforcement as essential factors for achieving sustainable outcomes. In conclusion, Rwanda's success in having Africa's cleanest city is a great example of effective policies and education campaigns, and efforts should continue towards creating a sustainable environment for future generations.



Hon. Caroline Rwivanga

Rwandan Member of Parliament in EALA speaking about her experience in complying with Rwanda's legislations on SUP.

Enforcement of Existing Laws and The Need For A Regional Approach: NEMA Kenya

Mr. Mamo Boru Mamo, the Director General of Kenya's National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), emphasised the importance of national environmental management agencies in overseeing and enforcing policies related to Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) not only in Kenya but also throughout East Africa. In his presentation on enforcement in Kenya, he explained Kenya's approach as a carrot-and-stick approach through utilising education and enforcement to tackle plastic pollution.

Despite facing challenges such as low levels of awareness and resistance from manufacturers, Kenya has established a compliance regime and implemented various interventions to address these issues. The government has emphasised the importance of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and has drafted a national plastic recycling strategy to encourage a circular economy. These efforts have led to increased awareness and availability of affordable alternatives, demonstrating the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach to environmental enforcement.

During the Q&A session following Mr. Mamo's presentation, several important points were raised;

- A coordination strategy as a regional block is needed, which could be facilitated through the available NEMA regional forum and EAC Environmental compliance network.
- The success of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) was also questioned, and it was noted that the Kenya PET Recycling Company is working with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers to enable EPR.
- Border control was also discussed, as well as the challenges of resistance from the private sector and consumers during the transition period, which was set at 6 months for manufacturers in Kenya.
- Population growth was mentioned as a challenge, and that it should be addressed as a major contributing factor to plastic pollution.
- Additionally, there were questions about how NEMA ensures alternatives are used, and NEMA's plans for dealing with political interference and influence.
- Finally, the need for specific youth-friendly and community sensitization programs was raised, and NEMA's efforts to conduct awareness on international environmental days and the Kenyan Green University Network were noted.



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“It is important that legislators and environmental management agencies across East Africa collaborate to develop, implement, and constantly improve regulations on single-use plastics in East Africa. Our practical experiences and lessons can be building blocks for the international plastic pollution treaty being negotiated by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) under the United Nations.”

Mr. Mamo Boru Mamo, DG NEMA Kenya

The Power of the People – Case Study of the Ban of Plastic Bags in Kenya through the Eyes of the Activist: James Wakibia

Mr. James Wakibia is a photojournalist and environmental activist in Kenya who advocated for the ban of SUP carrier bags in Kenya which was passed in 2017. During his presentation on the power of the people to influence change, Mr. Wakibia, who is also a Flipflopi ambassador emphasised the importance of visually communicating the problem of plastic pollution to mobilise people and achieve policy action. He emphasised the need for bottom-up mobilisation, where activists on the ground produce information to document the problem and raise awareness in broader society. He urged individuals to be the voice of change and demand accountability from the Government and private sector.

Mr. Wakibia emphasised the importance of being inclusive in environmental campaigns, including vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities (PWDs). He also stressed the need to go back to traditional and cultural sustainable practices as a way of promoting sustainable living. When asked about his approach in coordinating with other influencers, he highlighted the need for a strategic balance between diplomacy and advocacy when dealing with the government. As for financing such initiatives, he emphasised the importance of seeking partnerships and support from private sector actors who share the same vision.

In summary, James Wakibia's presentation highlighted the critical role that individuals and grassroots movements play in addressing the plastic pollution crisis. Looking forward, Mr. Wakibia discussed the challenge of capacity building in the environmental movement and the need to include activists from the wider region in future campaigns. By being inclusive in their campaigns and collaborating with others, individuals can help to mobilise the power of the people towards achieving a more sustainable future. He called on the attendees to be the voice of change, demand accountability from the government and private sector, create awareness using their platforms, and lead by example through volunteerism, community organising, and advocacy through petitions, open letters, sponsoring bills, and protests.



Mr. James Wakibia
Environmental Activist

Site visits: Mr Green & Gjenge Makers



Site visit to Mr. Green Africa

The workshop attendees visited Mr. Green Africa in Nairobi to learn about the company's plastic recycling process. During the site visit, the legislators asked and were informed about various aspects of the business, such as the machinery used, profitability, and process of washing and shredding the collected plastic waste. The company handles three types of plastics, namely PET, HDPE and PP and works directly with informal waste pickers, with collection and sorting centres across the country and a main processing plant in Nairobi. The legislators also inquired about the

company's environmental impact, including its operation clean sweep to ensure no pellet is lost and sorting on concrete to minimise emissions. Mr. Green Africa's capacity is currently at 6,000 tonnes per year and they hope to reach 20,000 tonnes by the end of next year, as there is high demand for their products. They also discussed how they keep up with the changing trend towards plastic alternatives and their waste management process.

The legislators raised concerns about the welfare of informal waste pickers and the role of the government in solid waste management. Mr. Green Africa has a loyalty program, buys directly from waste pickers (thus avoiding intermediaries), and provides protective gear. They also discussed moving waste pickers away from dumpsites as a way of improving their welfare. The company incorporates their CSR into their impact system by partnering with organisations like WWF and Danish Refugee Council to train refugees on waste recovery. The legislators asked about the government's role in creating awareness and enforcing new waste management laws, with Mr. Green Africa and other companies acting as the last stop. They also inquired about the status of awareness on plastic recycling in Kenya, with high awareness in the informal sector as a source of livelihood, but low awareness among consumers. The site visit provided the legislators with valuable insights into the plastic recycling industry and its potential impact on the environment and the livelihoods of informal waste pickers.

During the site visit to Gjenge Makers, a plastic brick manufacturer in Nairobi, the legislators had a chance to tour the recycling plant and observe their operations combining sand and recovered plastics for the production of construction-grade bricks. While the team appreciated the innovative use of plastic waste to create affordable building materials, the overall experience illustrated the challenges of SME entrepreneurs engaging in value-addition / upcycling of plastic waste. The company is encountering challenges related to production volumes as they are currently producing below their factory's maximum capacity, which is attributed to lack of adequate capital, machinery and poor marketing and sales performance. Quality and product development were still an ongoing process, especially since the factory machinery had to be developed on-site due to lack of commercial affordable alternatives and a suitable ecosystem for specialised maintenance services in Kenya.

However, the legislators recognized that Gjenge Makers have made significant strides in their recycling efforts, and they are creating a positive impact in the community. The team also appreciated the unique products that Gjenge Makers is creating from plastic waste and recognized their potential to become a major player in the industry, especially as product lines develop. While there is certainly room for improvement in terms of worker safety and plant ventilation, the team recognized the efforts of Gjenge Makers and encouraged them to continue pushing forward to establish partnerships in their mission to create sustainable solutions for plastic waste, especially with government support for their innovation.



Mr. Green Africa staff explaining the process to workshop attendees

Towards a regional legislation on SUP

A new draft regional bill was tabled that proposes a complete ban of specific non-essential single-use plastic items, including microbeads in cosmetics, cutlery, plates, cups, cotton buds, straws, stirrers, wet wipes, carrier bags, balloons, food containers and sweet wrappers. The proposed bill covers non-essential items that have been deemed particularly harmful to the environment and livelihoods, cannot be recycled and are readily substitutable.



Jacqueline Amongin

Chairs the EALA subcommittee of Environment and Climate Change and is the current Chairperson of the African Parliamentarians Network on Climate Action

The bill is distinct in that the products proposed to be banned are specific types of single-use plastic items. There was strong support for a new legislative initiative banning single-use plastics and a conclusion that this revitalised regional approach was critical in helping to solve the plastic pollution crisis. Further, there was a commitment by members of the EALA to table the bill once again and mobilise the council of ministers to take up the proposed bill and ensure prompt debating and passing.

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This workshop will be useful for the legislative agenda of the EAC region to harmoniously address the issue of SUPs. Along with the current climate change bill we now intend to move a motion to bring a SUP bill for the East African Community.”

Hon. Amongin Jacqueline - Ugandan MP, EALA representative.

Key takeaways

The need for regional collaboration to control the use of single-use plastics was highlighted and repeatedly emphasised during the workshop attended by legislators, representatives of regulatory bodies, private and CSO sectors. The East African Legislative Assembly has two bills on single-use plastics, namely the Polythene Materials Control Bill and the Single-use Plastics Bill. The first bill was introduced but wasn't ratified due to resistance by manufacturers, while the latter wasn't voted on and elapsed. Legislators noted that regional laws, if enforced by all partner states, would be effective in controlling single-use plastics in the entire East African Community. However, they recognized that member states cannot work alone since plastics do not recognize borders, and thus there is a need for stronger regional cooperation to fast track the bill.

The legislators identified key stakeholders and established that a common collection criteria to protect waste pickers is absolutely necessary. They also supported and promoted research through partnerships with universities to engage students to research and innovate. The legislators urged member states to fill loopholes in contemporary bills/acts and ensure sufficient allocation towards initiatives that promote alternatives to single-use plastics. It was acknowledged that a lot needs to be done socially and in the strengthening of solid waste management systems to drive behavioural change.

Regional cooperation was determined as key to tackling the issue, since plastic pollution knows no borders, especially in shared critical ecosystems like Lake Victoria, and where cross border trade remains a challenge. In an online survey filled by the workshop attendees prior to the physical convening, there was a unanimous consensus on harmonisation of legislation on SUPs in East Africa. Furthermore, Hon. Didier Molisho, Chairman of the Standing Commission for Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of the Pan-African Parliament committed to actively working with the Pan-African Parliament to prioritise and advocate for the establishment of a commission within the Pan African Parliament to address the issues raised during this workshop in collaboration with the East African Community.



The time for collective action has arrived. If action is limited to one country alone, there will always be a problem through borders with countries that do not act."

Hon. François Nzekuye Kabarabuzza -
MP, Democratic Republic of Congo

Conclusion

In conclusion, the workshop for East African legislators aimed to provide a platform for discussion and collaboration towards achieving regional integration and sustainable development. The boardroom sessions and site visits covered various topics ranging from trade and investment to environmental conservation and education. The discussions and debates were aimed at providing relevant information, insights, and advice to enhance the participants' understanding of the issues at hand. Overall, the workshop and the corresponding discussions highlighted the importance of regional cooperation, collaboration, and commitment towards achieving a common goal for the betterment of East Africa.

The caucus attendees are now exploring the proposal of a SUP law at the EALA level as well as at national level so that the most unnecessary single-use plastic items are eliminated from circulation in the East African community. They also expect the lessons will be important to inform the UN member state discussions related to the ongoing negotiations towards a global legally binding plastic treaty.

The workshop concluded with a commitment to regional collaboration and awareness-raising, particularly in heavily populated areas, by using schools as conduits for awareness and behavioural change. Legislators agreed that the fight against Africa as a dumping site for other countries is a responsibility they must take on. They committed to be champions of the East African Community draft SUP bill, to harmonise laws, and to use their

capacity as parliamentarians to take their voice to the executive. Finally, the legislators pledged to use their various offices and groups to continue advocacy and ensure African legislators are heard globally.

In the event's conclusion, Henrique Pacini from UNCTAD, stated: "This was an important event which builds upon the experiences of SMEP-sponsored projects like FlipFlopi and regional legislators. It is important to bring African voices and their practical experiences into the multilateral processes at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and at the World Trade Organization dialogue on plastics. We look forward to seeing how this regional discourse around plastic legislation and material substitutes continues."

Organizations' Background



The International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF) Group is a global non-profit organization that advances governments' leadership in conservation internationally by building political will within legislatures. The organization was established in 2006 to serve as an informal secretariat to the U.S. Congressional International Conservation Caucus (ICC). Currently, the ICCF Group supports more than 600 legislators around the globe, who are members of parliamentary conservation caucuses in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, France, the United Kingdom and the United States.



The Flipflop Project Foundation is a circular economy project registered as a charitable foundation in Kenya that operates across East Africa to promote alternate uses of waste plastic and the viability of a circular economy in the Region. They adopt a full-systems approach to beating plastic pollution: inspiring plastic-reuse innovation, education through activism, and influencing policy change to end single-use plastics. The Flipflop Project is also a recipient of the UKAID SMEP Program undertaking a project across the Lamu archipelago in northern Kenya to tackle marine ecosystem health and sustainability challenges by combining indigenous knowledge with modern innovation by constructing traditional sailing and motorised vessels from plastic waste.



The Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) programme has been established by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and is implemented in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The programme activities aim to generate cutting edge scientific evidence that can improve existing knowledge of the environmental health and socio-economic impacts of selected trade-exposed manufacturing sectors across target countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.



ALN is an integrated alliance of the preeminent full service corporate law firms in 14 African countries and a regional office in UAE. Together, ALN firms provide clients with seamless practical and business-focused legal, advisory and transactional services across Africa.

The ALN Academy provides unique legal training and expert exchange opportunities on the continent of Africa, blending technical and practical rigour, tempered with a degree of social consciousness that promotes smart action. It is set up as a separate body corporate with sustainability and social enterprise being core to its overall function.

Acknowledgment

This report is the a result of the workshop organised for the purpose of targeted training activities for legislators and environmental authorities in East Africa working plastic pollution. The workshop was organised by ALN Academy, the International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF) Group and the Flipflopi Project Foundation and facilitated by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development as part of the Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) Program.

This report was authored by Fardosa Mustafa with contributions from Henrique Pacini, Glen Wilson, Dipesh Pabari, Carlotta Dal Lago, Rebecca Faber, Maliha Sumar and Ken Govoga.

The workshop attendees are as follows:

Name	Role	Country
Hon. Flavia Kabahenda	Member of Parliament	Uganda
Hon. Okot Boniface Henry	Member of Parliament; Chairperson Uganda Parliamentary Forum On Youth Affairs.	Uganda
Hon. Amongin Jacqueline	Member of EALA	Uganda
Hon. Christine Katempa Mwando	Senator/Senatrice	DRC
Hon. François Nzekuye Kabarabuza	Member of Parliament	DRC
Hon. Didier Molisho	Senator/Senatrice	DRC
Hon. Apollinaire Sindyikengera	Member of Parliament	Burundi
Hon. Epimény NIBIZI	Member of Parliament	Burundi
Hon.Chantal BARAMPAMA	Member of Parliament	Burundi
Hon. Caroline Kayonga	Member of EALA	Rwanda
Hon. Uwumukiza Françoise,	Member of EALA	Rwanda
Hon. Dr. Woda Jeremiah Odok	Member of EALA	South Sudan
Hon. Rebecca Okwaci	Member of Parliament	South Sudan
Hon. Thoar Gatpan Gideon	Member of EALA	South Sudan
Hon. Esther Nicholas Matiko	Member of Parliament	Tanzania

Name	Role	Country
Hon. Fatma Toufiq	Member of Parliament	Tanzania
Hon. Mwangi Godfrey Maina	Member of EALA	Kenya
Hon. Charity Kathambi Chepkwony	Member of Parliament	Kenya
Hon. Rozaah Buyu	Member of Parliament	Kenya
Hon. Jerusha Momanyi Mongina	Member of Parliament	Kenya

Presenters

Name	Role	Organisation
Henrique Pacini	Technical Advisor	UNCTAD
Rosa Nduati-Mutero	Managing Partner	ALN Kenya Anjarwalla & Khanna
Davina Ngei	Program Manager	Flipflop Project
David Ewusi-Mensah	Co-founder	Eco Amet Solutions Limited
James Waikibia	Environmental Activist	
Mamo Boru Mamo	Director General	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)

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